

The ACT Building Resilience Project

Case Study: Political Ideologies

School: Chalfonts Community College, Buckinghamshire

Chalfonts Community College is a comprehensive school with 1800 pupils aged 11-18. The students are predominately white British. The project work took place with classes of Year 9 students, about 60 in all.

Aims

- To enable pupils to explore different political ideologies and evaluate them
- To critically appraise notions of protest and challenge by citizens
- To consider different examples of political extremism using national and international case studies and question what, in a democracy, may be considered appropriate political action.

Actions

The pupils examined the role of citizens in engaging with political choices. They discussed the controversial issues of freedom fighting, extremism and popular uprising in both national and global contexts such as the London Riots in 2011 and the Arab Spring. Pupils considered definitions of extremism and the forms of direct action a democracy can tolerate and then presented and shared their ideas with their peers.

Impact

The pupils' Citizenship knowledge was reinforced by the project. Their skill at forming and asking questions became more robust and they are more willing to challenge portrayals of information as fact. It became apparent that their prior learning in Citizenship helped pupils cope with the project themes and they demonstrated a maturity in considering difficult issues where topics, definitions and perspectives were often complex. Teachers reported that they were surprised at how maturely and critically the pupils engaged with the big ideas of the project.

Next steps

The project showed the value in having trained Citizenship teachers and that the school needs to invest more time in supporting non specialist teachers in tackling controversial issues like extremism. Non specialist colleagues who taught this work coped well but often commented that they found the diverse nature of pupil discussion a challenge - hence the need for confidence building training.