



Developing Citizenship in an independent school



Introducing the school

Oakham School in Rutland is one of the largest independent co-educational boarding and day schools in the country. Its student population is roughly equally split between boys and girls and boarders and day pupils. It occupies a significant site with 40 acres of sports pitches; 150 classrooms, studios and laboratories; and 16 Houses, which provide the focal point for pastoral care and support. The House system provides the focal point for students, and even day students have access to a House from 7.30 in the morning to 7.30 in the evening, with meals, pastoral support, activities, homework / prep support, and spaces to socialise with friends. In 2021 Oakham was accredited to provide the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme; it offers 26 GCSE subjects; and a combination of A levels, BTECs and the IB Diploma. 57% of A level grades are A or A* and 58% of GCSE grades are 9-7. 89% of students gain grades 9-5 in Maths, 92% in English Language and 100% in Citizenship Studies. Beyond the academic curriculum the school organises 216 sports teams across 30 different sports; offers over 125 activities and clubs each week; and all students from Form 4 (year 10) commit to one major extra-curricular activity through the Duke of Edinburgh Awards (DoE) Scheme, the Combined Cadet Force, or Voluntary Action programmes.



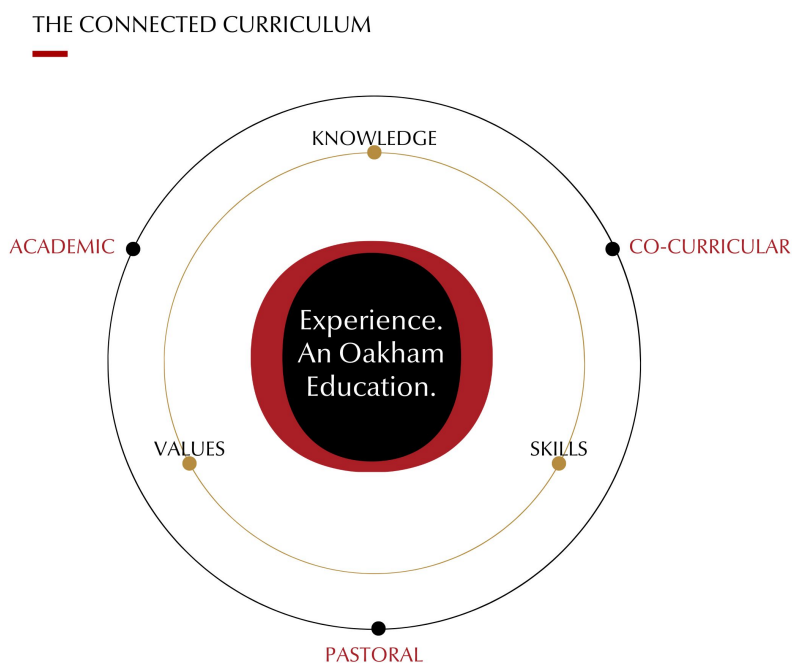
The Oakham Curriculum

Oakham School has devised a 'Connected Curriculum' to pull together what it calls three 'fundamental pillars' of learning. These pillars are the academic curriculum; the co-curriculum (which is more commonly referred to as extra-curricular opportunities); and pastoral care (which is fundamental with hundreds of children boarding on the site).

A recent curriculum review has led to the identification of five core skills / capacities that run across all three pillars of learning. This is enabling the senior staff responsible for each of the three pillars to map their provision against these common skills, and to use a common rubric that describes young people's progress from beginner to expert in:

1. Communication
2. Research
3. Thinking
4. Self-management
5. Social skills

This is being rolled out across the school from 2023-24 with the intention that it will provide a structure to enable teachers and students to act on the observation that young people learn lots of valuable knowledge and skills from aspects of schooling beyond the formal curriculum. This has also led to revisions in PSHE curriculum provision and the current Head of Citizenship is uniquely placed to play a part in these developments as she combines this curriculum leadership role with pastoral responsibility.



As part of this review, from 2023-24 the school has reduced the number of GCSEs taken by students to encourage them to focus on fewer subjects (8-10) and reduced the number of A levels (from 4 to 3) to leave more time for co-curriculum activities and for reflection and planning against those five skills rubrics. For example, students on the Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) Awards Scheme might share their DoE experiences but be consciously trying to address different aspects of the connected curriculum, with one using it to develop their social skills and another focusing on self-management. The intention here is to help students focus more explicitly on the overall balance of their experience of Oakham and tutors will be able to review each students' circumstances and experiences and help them address missing elements.

In this context, it is still important for Citizenship to hold its own against other subjects in the school, to ensure parents and students see it has credibility. Students' GCSE scores in Citizenship are always broadly in line with other subjects and even with the reduced number of GCSE options, Citizenship has continued to recruit a healthy GCSE cohort of two classes.



Citizenship in the Curriculum

When Viv Lamb, the Head of Citizenship, arrived at the school in 1989 as a Business Studies teacher she joined the Social Science Faculty which included one Politics teacher, a small Economics department, and a Business Studies department. Most of the staff had significant additional pastoral responsibilities, including being Housemasters, running the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme, running the Lower School and one colleague even led the local County Council. At the time Oakham was the national centre for Business Studies, hosting much of the national CPD and collaborating with the Institute of Education in London.

The Faculty offered GCSE Social Science which was taught to everyone who did not take a second language. This GCSE had three units focusing on Economics, Politics and Sociology. Like Citizenship, it provided a vehicle for students to engage with the wider world, and to think about contemporary issues. This had been running for several years when Viv met Bernard Crick, who was sceptical that Citizenship would be adopted by 'schools like Oakham'. Viv took it as a challenge and, as the Social Science GCSE was phased out, the Department adopted the Citizenship Studies short course GCSE as an experiment to see if anyone would choose it as an option. For the Department, this enabled them to maintain an option where students could explore the kind of broader engagement with the wider world they had secured through the Social Science GCSE. Starting with a small cohort of six students, the Citizenship course built over time and now generally recruits two classes in each year group.

In conversation with some of the students, they reported a variety of benefits from studying Citizenship at GCSE. Some used Citizenship as a foundation for A level Politics, but others felt it had been useful in helping them to open their eyes to the wider world and boost their level of general knowledge and awareness of contemporary issues. They all felt that Citizenship had been useful in their subsequent subjects, whether that be in relation to content in History and Economics or learning transferable academic skills, for example, writing discursive essays and using case studies to illustrate arguments.

In terms of organising the curriculum, there are a number of elements which have developed over time. The Middle School curriculum map (Years 7-9) below is somewhat of a mosaic, reflecting the fact that the school is largely free from national curriculum requirements and has a host of semi-formal activities which are scheduled but sit beyond the academic curriculum.

For example, on Monday and Friday afternoons the school has activities, which in the Middle School includes the DoE scheme, and various other service / volunteer opportunities. In Year 9, the Head of Citizenship negotiated a formal lesson in that period, combining PSHE and Citizenship. This provided a foothold in the key stage 3 curriculum, but this was ultimately lost when Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) became compulsory, as the school re-purposed the lesson to meet these new requirements. In Year 7 to Year 9 the coverage of Citizenship has included lots of cross-curricular opportunities such as hustings activities, one-off projects etc. but from 2023-24 this is being further formalised through the tutorial programme, in addition to the IB Middle Years Programme community project (outlined below).

Form time is taught once a week, as a timetabled lesson, by a small specialist team of five, with all the lessons planned by Viv Lamb (she is also Head of PSHE). This includes RSE, plus elements of PSHE. In the rest of the school this is called 'Perspectives'.

Tutorial time happens in 25 minute blocks on Monday and 45 minutes on Wednesday just before lunch. Monday tends to be taken up with organisational processes, but Wednesday includes a more formal programme, where students often engage in discussion of topical issues. Viv Lamb coordinates this programme, which makes good use of 'The Day' (an online newspaper for young people). These sessions are taught by a wide team of tutors, including international staff who may be unfamiliar with aspects of UK government. In 2023-4 the Wednesday session moves to Friday morning as a 50 minute lesson.

Students also follow the IB Middle Years Programme, which leads to a community action project in Form 3. This has an international dimension, so meets Viv's original objective about engaging students with the wider world.

The curriculum map also highlights the connections between content across different departments. For example in History the curriculum gets as far as the formation of the UN, but Citizenship looks at how the UN works to achieve its aims. In Religion and Philosophy lessons consider punishment from an ethical perspective, whilst Citizenship picks up the procedural knowledge around the criminal justice system.

Key stage 3 Citizenship Map

Form time

Religion & Philosophy

Community Action (MYP)

History

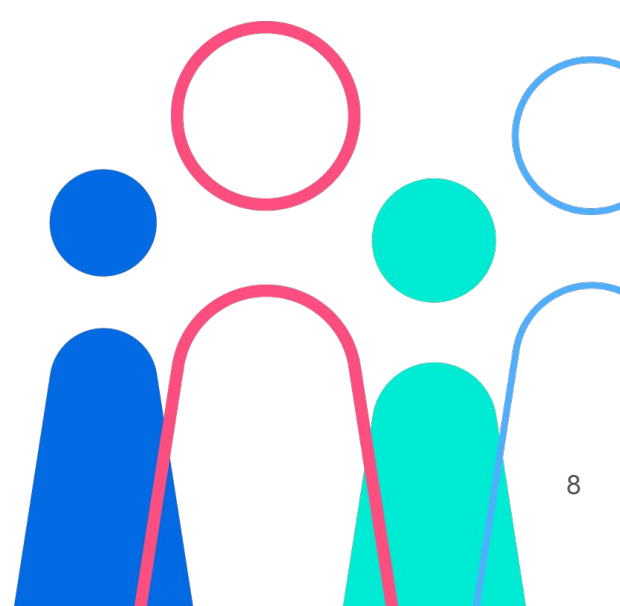
Tutorial

	Form 1 (year 7)	Form 2 (year 8)	Form 3 (year 9)
Winter	<p>Identity & community.</p> <p>Magna Carta.</p> <p>Introducing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) & thinking about implications for action.</p>	<p>Islam & women; the hijab; diversity within religions; Islamophobia.</p> <p>Migration stories: reasons for migration; different migration statuses / experiences; responding through art.</p>	<p>Equal opportunities, protected characteristics; tribunals.</p> <p>Service weekend supported by off-timetable time.</p>
Spring	<p>Chinese New Year, food & diversity.</p> <p>SDGs refresher; IB learner attributes.</p> <p>Democracy, Monarchy, Westminster.</p> <p>Social justice; Jesus' golden rule; Martin Luther King; charities.</p>	<p>Media literacy.</p> <p>Windrush; empire; commonwealth.</p> <p>MPs, elections, getting your voice heard.</p> <p>What organisations support migrants & refugees? What can we do to help?</p>	<p>Media literacy.</p> <p>Rules, laws, parliament, courts.</p> <p>Starting to plan your action project. Team strengths / weaknesses analysis. Investigation of issues for action. Identifying appropriate actions, justifying action and identifying objectives.</p>
Summer	<p>Economy; finance; poverty.</p> <p>Ethics; morality; social contract.</p> <p>Service & Action Day at Rutland Water: litter picking; orienteering; photography.</p>	<p>Laws & rules in contexts of (i) consent & (ii) ethical consumption.</p> <p>Suffragettes.</p> <p>Organisation of fund-raising and awareness-raising events for migration / refugee organisations.</p>	<p>Medical ethics & human rights: cloning; euthanasia.</p> <p>Holocaust.</p> <p>Completion of action projects: including documenting & evaluating process; presentations' prize-giving.</p>

Active Citizenship and Service



A key principle underpinning the International Baccalaureate is the concept of shared guardianship of the planet and common humanity. The Middle Years Programme (MYP) is a skills-based curriculum which includes a community action project and students are required to engage in a sustained inquiry, including an element of service / action in the context of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a precursor to the 'Creativity, Action, Service' (CAS) element of the IB Diploma, which provides one of the distinctive aspects of the programme. Whilst this has many advantages, it does downplay the idea of a spiral curriculum developing depth in knowledge about action, and the school has tried to compensate for this by introducing a more structured programme in Form 1 and Form 2, to ensure students think about different types of action for different purposes. The project itself is broken into four stages: investigating, planning, taking action and reflecting. These stages are divided into different skills, each of which is assessed against a separate set of level-descriptors (with eight levels of attainment). Within the IB Diploma, these kinds of activities are not formally assessed and they are designed as a counter-balance to the academic



pressures of the programme, although students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and provide evidence of what they have achieved. Similarly, the MYP project provides a structure for aspects of Oakham's co-curriculum and encourages reflection on how students have worked together and what they have achieved. This aspect of the curriculum is only in its second year at the time of writing (2022-23) but once it is fully embedded it will provide a firm foundation for the active citizenship project in the GCSE Citizenship Studies.

This MYP project is largely based in off-timetable days and some tutorial and prep (homework and independent study) sessions and the project coordinator keeps track of each group's project, which involves meeting 120 students (divided into groups of 2-3) over the course of Form 3. In order to build students' capacity to complete the investigation and action there are sessions in Form 1 and Form 2 to address relevant content and introduce students to the skills profile and project structure.

As this project is relatively new, the model is being refined. In 2021-22 students were better at planning than implementation and so in 2022-23 the school has allocated a focus day for students to undertake some kind of action, although they can implement the action over a more sustained period if they prefer. This year the students were challenged to do something related to sustainability and popular projects include awareness-raising; litter-picking; arts-based projects; and up-cycling second-hand clothes. Whilst the IB programme requires students to work in small groups of 2-3, in practice, these popular options tend to attract several small groups, making it easier to support students in larger clusters.

Students in GCSE Citizenship groups have always had complete flexibility to choose their own topics. The MYP project should help provide a trial run of this process and so the team are hopeful this will make it easier to manage in the future.



Discussions with staff and students highlighted several types of project:

- *Alumni network:* Sometimes opportunities arise through alumni networks, for example, an ex-student had established a charity in Eswatini to support girls and wanted to establish a netball league. A group of students chose this as their active citizenship project and collected and sent the equipment and team kit required.
- *School safety / well-being:* Other projects arise from students' experiences in the school, for example, access and inclusion are recurrent topics, as students are often aware of safety / access issues around the large school site. Some students mentioned working on aspects of mental health or physical health awareness.
- *Local community:* Some other projects are rooted in the local village, for example, one group of students had conducted a listening / consultation campaign in the local village in relation to a road layout problem they had identified, and then lobbied the local council to take action. Other projects have included researching local foodbanks and supporting them; and visiting a homeless charity to meet service users and organise a collection for quality winter clothes.
- *Parental links:* Sometimes parents provide connections to relevant organisations, for example, a parent sent his daughter on work experience to a primary school in a deprived area of Nottingham where he was a Governor. When she noticed the school had no library, her group organised a collection of books to help set up a book loan scheme for the children.
- *International issues:* Some groups mentioned specific international issues as well, for example, one student spoke about a campaign group working on the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; whilst another worked with a student from Ukraine on raising awareness of the experiences of refugees from there.

Students present their projects to parents during Speech Day, which is a major event in the school calendar and provides them with a real audience for their work. This also helps to make parents aware of the Citizenship work in the school.



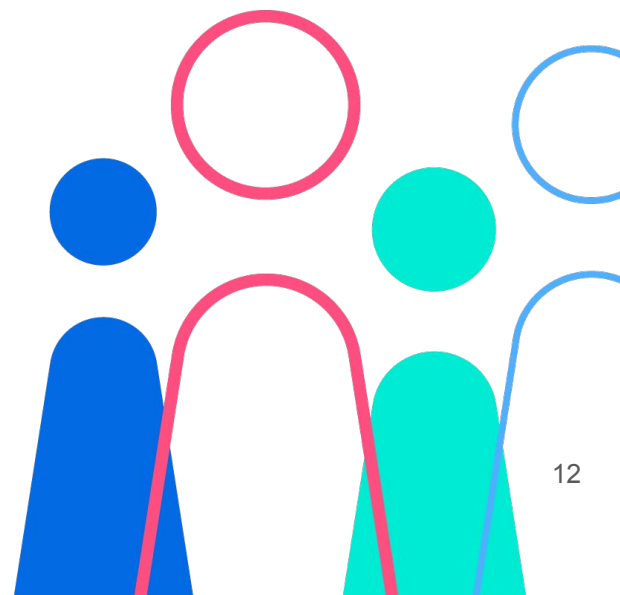
Staff

Viv Lamb is Head of Citizenship. Separately, she is also Head of PSHE, partly because she has a strong background in pastoral provision, with several years' experience in a Boarding House and has her office in the school's pastoral centre. About 50% of her timetabled time is dedicated to these roles. Effectively she leads the pastoral curriculum, whilst other colleagues lead on the provision of pastoral care through the House and tutorial system. She was the youngest and first woman examiner of the numeracy paper for Business Studies and joined Oakham because of its national reputation.

The other GCSE teacher, James Farrar, trained as a Citizenship teacher and teaches Politics and Citizenship. He has been at the school for ten years and has taught for 17 years in total. He says Oakham feels like the most developed Citizenship school of the three schools where he has taught. He helps coordinate the Citizenship trips, including to Parliament and the National Justice Museum, including mock trial experiences.

They are joined by an Early Career Teacher Josh Arnold with a degree in History and Politics who is registered on a History ITE route but is gaining substantial experience with a Form 4 (Year 10) Citizenship Studies GCSE class. Whilst the content is familiar, the biggest teaching challenge for him has been learning how to switch to facilitator mode to support students through the active citizenship project.

The Head of Library coordinates the MYP community project.



Teacher Tips

1

Focus the students on the quality of their active citizenship work. If they are producing a poster about refugees or a health issue, remind them that the quality of their work needs to reflect their respect for the people involved and the seriousness of the issues.

2

Whenever possible build in opportunities for presentations to external stakeholders to help focus the students on taking their work seriously and making a compelling case about their issues. Using speech day at Oakham ensures students prepare thoroughly for parents' questions. It also has the benefit that parents see the impressive range of projects undertaken in Citizenship.

3

Setting regular homework for students to keep up with the news helps to keep Citizenship on their agenda and also ensures they have up to date case studies to discuss. It also helps them to see the relevance of the subject to the world around them.

4

Be open to a wide range of projects for active citizenship. Interest and motivation are important and Oakham's experience shows students can be inspired by issues that affect them in school, in the local area, in charities, and international news.

5

Make sure students understand that mistakes and loose ends in active projects are valuable opportunities to demonstrate that they have learned from their experience.

6

The students at Oakham felt that it was important that their teachers helped them to write discussion style essays as this seems to be a unique form of writing. Balancing arguments from different perspectives and relating them to relevant contemporary case studies is an art that needs practice.

7

If you are asking students to put themselves on the line, through presenting to peers or adults, then be prepared to deal with the ways anxiety might manifest itself. Sometimes this means cutting the students some slack if their emotions get the better of them.

8

Be prepared to take a back-seat in the classroom when students are working on their projects. There's a balance between holding back and not imposing yourself on students, whilst remaining open to their questions and requests for help. It can be difficult not to fill the time with little tasks (there's always marking and planning to be done) but it is important to be studiously un-busy so students can access you as a source of support as and when they need help or reassurance. This is also a useful time to observe the group dynamics at play, so you can follow up with students who may be losing focus or falling behind.

9

Never assume you don't need to attend subject CPD. Even if you have lots of experience (the Head of Citizenship has been teaching for 35 years), attending CPD can be useful as time to reflect and think about next steps, and you will often pick up a new tip or nugget of information.



ACT is the subject association for all those engaged in leading, teaching and supporting high quality Citizenship education in schools and colleges.

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