

# DELIVERING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AT DEPTFORD GREEN SCHOOL

At Deptford Green, we like to think of citizenship as a way of life. Our framework for understanding citizenship at work in the school can be summarised as the 3 'C's':

- Citizenship in the curriculum
- Citizenship in the school's culture
- Citizenship in our interaction with the community.

## **Audit**

When we began our citizenship project, in addition to ascertaining the level of staff commitment – through consultation at various levels of meetings, through questionnaires and through 2 voluntary weekend residentials for staff – we attempted two kinds of audit. One was an audit of student knowledge and experience of citizenship based on interviews with a sample of students across the year groups. The second was a curriculum audit similar to that advocated in various publications including *The Citizenship File* and the QCA documents. This involved asking Heads of Department to indicate where their subjects delivered aspects of the knowledge and understanding and two skill areas of citizenship listed in the National Curriculum documentation. Although this process was useful we soon concluded that any audit which separates knowledge from skills could quickly lead schools into the comfort zone of thinking 'We do most of this already.' In fact, we think citizenship education is special precisely because it should involve acquisition of knowledge THROUGH EXERCISING the skills of enquiry and participation. Aside, perhaps, from Drama, it is the only NC subject that stipulates evidence of participation as a criterion for assessment. We also maintain that, wherever possible, citizenship activities should have a change outcome – a change of minds at the very least.

## **Making citizenship special**

We do value the learning elsewhere in the curriculum – for example, debating genetic engineering in Science, exploring values in RE, developing empathy in History – which contribute to the students' base of knowledge and experiences to inform work in citizenship. But we are convinced that pupils must experience learning about, through and for citizenship: by engaging in joint endeavours designed to develop their sense of agency. For this reason, we have sought to create specific and separate learning activities for citizenship in the formal ('taught') and non-formal ('caught') curriculum.

Our first objective is to enable students to see citizenship as something special and to think of it as fun. For this reason, we have organised annual Citizenship Days. On these days the whole school timetable is suspended and students are invited to choose from about 40 different activities undertaken mostly in cross age groups. These include citizenship graffiti workshops, painting and

decorating the global classroom, working to improve the school grounds, drama workshops on culture and identity, cycling workshops, and numerous other activities. Feedback from the days has shown that students associate citizenship with fun and that one of the most popular benefits has been developing our sense of community through work in mixed age groups. Of course, we acknowledge that events like these can only supplement citizenship learning as they have limited value in developing aspects like political literacy.

### **Citizenship Studies at KS4**

Deciding that citizenship is best delivered as a subject in its own right, we have introduced an hour of Citizenship Studies in years 10 and 11. Drawing on the experience of KS4 RE which demonstrated, alas, the necessity of accrediting through examination so that subjects have equal status for students, we decided that it must result in a GCSE qualification. The short course, taken alongside an equivalent in RE, will provide an extra exam grade. We chose to work with Edexcel in developing this course as we found the board very open to making the course student and teacher-friendly. We supported the notion of ensuring that coursework, the active citizenship component, comprise as large as possible a percentage of the final grade. We have taught the syllabus in a way which works from issues and questions through to concepts. For the coursework component we have insisted that students seek a change outcome, and we have allowed them, working in peer selected groups, to choose their own topics. Creating meaningful opportunities for a whole year group to engage in community issues is not straightforward, but many students have embraced the opportunities to investigate an issue that concerns them directly. These have ranged from crime to school meals and from local leisure facilities to the school grounds. They have researched their issue using surveys, photographs and video and will present recommendations to a panel of local decision-makers. The last stage will be to evaluate their own work, including reflection on how they collaborated with other students.

The two quotes below are from students who were initially quite sceptical and very critical of Citizenship Studies. They were written in response to a question about whether individuals can make a difference:

#### **Darren**

*If you are dedicated to your cause then there is a chance you will achieve your goal. Some students who presented their coursework to our local MP and police officer were told that they gave an impressive presentation and they would look into the matter deeply and try to do what they asked. Some students also changed the minds of some of the students and now we know how other people feel about the issues we face in society.*

*And now some of the teachers know how some students feel about the issues and our of school and maybe now they will do something to make a difference which means we have made a difference.*

#### **Sam**

*When me and a group of boys produced our coursework to a local policeman our MP Joan Ruddock and Mr. Ajegbo and the Year 10 pupils we got a very positive reaction from the*

*policeman and Joan Ruddock saying that it is a very nice idea for this to happen. But it was just a little group of us who wanted it and not everybody agreed that it would have been the best idea to build a skatepark in our area. Although we made a difference because instead of just sitting down doing nothing about it we got up and made our voices be heard and now it may have influenced more people to agree with our idea or even start to ride themselves. It also made teachers realise what we were doing was no bad thing. It also keeps us out of trouble and occupied from being indoors and bored.*

### **Citizenship at KS3.**

At KS3 we found that we could not fairly identify a subject which should lose time to citizenship. We also wanted to hold on to the idea of citizenship as something special – not to be routinised or to become victim to ‘death by worksheet’. For this reason we decided that from September 2002 all year 7 and 8 classes would spend 3-hour morning sessions each half term on citizenship activities. A member of our small team of citizenship specialist teachers will lead each of these, supported by the teachers who would normally be teaching the classes involved. The activities we have undertaken have involved developing skills in team and group work and investigating leisure facilities in the local area. This has involved fieldwork and photography. The students have made presentations on their views about what they would like to see change locally, how this can be done, and who they will work with to achieve the changes. Each class is working on a focus project to this end through a process which parallels the KS4 coursework model. We are using Hyperstudio to enable pupils to build up an electronic portfolio of their citizenship achievements. This will link to PSHE and, we hope, eventually replace the old fashioned Records of Achievement when pupils leave school.

The citizenship activities are planned with a progression of learning outcomes in mind. The task of recording pupils’ progress and achievement will be shared between the teachers leading the citizenship activities and the pupils, with pupils shouldering the main burden. Once each term, we intend to get students to work in groups using a ‘Student termly/twice yearly assessment grid’ and to complete the form: individually on the first side and in discussion with members of the group on the back. They will then decide as a group on each person’s action point for the next phase of citizenship learning. These are recorded by the pupils on their Hyperstudio cards. They will be referred back to for action points at the start of the next citizenship activity, perhaps half a term later. When reports are produced for each student twice a year, the teacher responsible for that class will use the information on the grid to indicate whether students are:

- Working towards the expectations (W)
- Achieving the expectations(A)
- Working beyond the expectations (B)

### **Citizenship across the curriculum.**

Departing from the conventional audit approach to citizenship across the curriculum, we decided to start small but think holistic. Last academic year, as part of the whole school development plan,

we asked each subject area to produce a lesson or a few lessons as part of schemes of work in their own subject which showed learning about, through and for citizenship – i.e. which sought to develop skills and knowledge together. This has resulted in some unique developments in the school's curriculum, some of them gaining momentum from the Citizenship Day when departments pioneered citizenship activities linked to their own subject areas. So, for example, there are Maths Schemes of Work entitled 'Citizenship through Maths' which explore data on human rights and poverty. A Year 8 PSHE Scheme of Work looks at fair trade and has led to the pupils' marketing of Fair trade chocolate at break times. Year 7 PSHE has explored safer routes to schools and made proposals in influential personnel locally. ICT at KS4 and KS5 includes a critical look at the Data Protection Act. This process is being repeated as part of this year's development plan. The most striking recent example has been a Year 9 Geography project focusing on regeneration in which students critically appraise land use proposals for the regeneration of the massive local Convoys Wharf site. Pupils are now putting forward their own ideas about how the site could best be used to benefit the local community. In this, they will work with representatives of local community forums.

### **Community Context.**

Funding obtained through links with local community organisations has enabled us to employ a citizenship outreach worker. Part of his work has been as a 'school-community broker' – building contacts with the local community and facilitating links between the community and our school. We have invested in our links with our local feeder primary schools, in particular Childeric Primary School. Our students have led citizenship lessons and an assembly at the school. They have interviewed their students to inform their design and technology coursework and hosted Year 6 students for the afternoon to introduce them to life at secondary school. Our Year 8 students put on a special performance of their end of term pantomime for Childeric children. We are particularly keen to involve our students in the local community regeneration process. Our students have contributed to a local community magazine, they have set up a project to recycle aluminium cans (and donated the proceeds to a local special needs school) and will shortly be supporting local children to develop their skills in music and drama through the Young Arts Leaders Award. With a grant from Sport England and Learning Through Landscapes, students are also leading a project to improve our school's grounds.

Other examples of the community dimension of our citizenship work include:

- Our Sixth Formers worked on a project raising money for a local charity which led to their being awarded the Lewisham Young Citizens' Award.
- Our pupils participated in an event for local young people organised by Deptford Youth Forum

- Our year 7 pupils last year participated in a Creative Citizenship conference for year 6 and 7 pupils in the north of Lewisham, which we played a leading role in organising. This is linked to the work of our mini EAZ, 'Creating Success' which covers our school as well as 6 local primaries
- Several of our pupils participated in producing *Oi!* – a magazine by, about and for young people in the local area
- We are working with our students to put forward candidates for the local community's Council of Champions
- All our students have been invited to put forward their views on how they would like to see Deptford High Street Change. This has included various consultation sessions including lunch time displays and opportunities to put views directly to the planners.

### **Citizenship in the School Culture.**

We are striving to develop a democratic culture in our school: one in which teachers feel they are valued and have a say as well as one that encourages and values student voice. We are currently involved in a school-wide consultation process towards a code of conduct agreed by all members of the school community.

The main vehicle for developing student voice is through the Student Council. Our school council is the first and most fundamental vehicle for this. Before 1999 we did have a small-scale school council, but its effects had been limited. From 1999 onwards we began to regenerate it. We got School Councils UK to run training days for both staff and pupils and began to develop a model of an empowered student council. This was strengthened during the academic year 1999-2000 when we introduced proper hustings and secret ballots and some meetings were held in school time. Pupil evaluation in July 2001 took the form of an away day at UBS Warburg's plush headquarters in the city. School Council representatives produced a Power Point presentation for the senior team detailing their achievements and recommendations for further empowering the student council during the following academic year. During 2001-2002 the number of council meetings per term was increased – to 2 year council, 2 whole school council, 2 council representative meetings with the senior team and one meeting with governors every half term. Assembly time is also being set aside for feedback by representatives to year groups, and we are trying to promote the increased use of registration and some PSHE lessons.

Success breeds success, and we attach a great deal of importance to the evaluation days in which school council representatives analyse their successes during the past academic year. Last summer they listed these achievements:

- Further concessions on uniform

- The beginning of a process to draw up a whole school Code of Conduct for all members of the school community
- A series of meetings with the school catering service resulting in a greater variety of food being available at dinner time
- Use of assembly time for interactive assemblies during which the representatives summarise achievements to their year group and members of the audience have a say via a roving microphone. We call these ‘Jerry Springer assemblies’
- Re-decoration of some classrooms and annexe toilets
- Working clocks installed in all annexe classrooms
- School council involvement in a project to develop and improve the school grounds
- Year 9 and 10 school councils organised end of year summer parties – the first time pupils have been allowed to have proper evening parties on school premises.
- Year 7 school council petitioned for and helped organise a trip for the year to Thorpe Park.

Increasingly, issues being discussed at School Council meetings relate to learning and lessons. This spring we are embarking with our year 9 students on a Students as Researchers initiative, with the help of the Bedfordshire School Improvement project. This will be the beginning of a process in which students research effective lessons and learning and feed back to teachers to enable them to more effectively address students’ needs.

Anne Hudson

Citizenship Coordinator

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