

## **Association for Citizenship Teaching – Written evidence (EDU0063)**

**In summary our submission focuses on:**

- **The factors affecting the teaching of Citizenship as a subject in the curriculum for 11-16 year olds**
- **Challenges for the subject including recruitment and retention of Citizenship teachers and the Ofsted inspection regime**
- **What the DfE should do to address the challenges for Citizenship and enhance the subject.**

### **1. Context for Citizenship Teaching**

1.1 The need for education for effective Citizenship is vital if we are to collectively tackle the challenges we face in society and to create a more inclusive democracy. Issues such as climate change, race equality, global migration and the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy theories highlight the relevance of the subject and the need for current and future generations to have the skills and knowledge to address complex and sensitive issues. In 2022 we marked 20 years since the introduction of the national curriculum for Citizenship which continues to provide an invaluable subject within which to explore such issues with students.

1.2 Citizenship, which is a compulsory national curriculum subject at key stages 3 and 4, and GCSE qualification. There is a primary programme of study published by the DfE that has non-statutory status. The subject is structured around key concepts including political literacy, democracy and government; rights and responsibilities; justice and equality; identities, diversity and communities; financial and economic education; media and information literacy; and active citizenship. The issues, case studies and context for teaching the subject may change according to what is topical but the essential intellectual backbone of the subject remains clear. The range of pedagogy and practices required for teaching Citizenship make demands of any new or more experienced teacher, requiring them to remain in touch with new and challenging areas of politics, law and societal change; as well as knowing how to

handle sensitive and controversial issues in the classroom and maintain impartiality when teaching political issues.

1.3 The positive increase in interest in political issues and Citizenship as a subject is exemplified in below. But there are still too many schools who do not provide high quality Citizenship as part of a broad and balanced curriculum that helps prepare and develop students for life and work as informed, active citizens. The reasons for this are complex but include:

- policy confusion about the status and role of the subject which rarely appears in DfE published data on the curriculum in its own right
- a lack of clarity from Ofsted reporting on what schools are expected to provide; and
- too few specialist Citizenship teachers who have the subject knowledge, pedagogy and curriculum expertise to deliver the subject in schools.

We urgently need to take action to address this imbalance.

## **2. Citizenship trainee teacher recruitment and DfE workforce data on Citizenship**

2.1 Since 2011 the available data from the DfE in terms of numbers teaching Citizenship shows a very dramatic decline from 9958 in 2011-12 to 4156 in 2021-22. Over the past 4 years there has been a stabilisation at around 4200 teachers. Figures for 2021 to 2022 are slightly below this which is likely to be as a result of some schools dropping the subject during the covid period to catch up on 'core' subjects. The overall demise is in part a result of policy which gives preferential treatment to Ebacc subjects at the expense of those not in this performance measure category and in part because of ongoing confusion among some schools about what is expected in Citizenship. This is further exacerbated by a confusing approach in the current inspection regime (see section 3 below).

2.2 The DfE data on teaching vacancies appears inclusive showing there were no or very few vacancies in the past few years. It is not clear what this is based on but we know from direct contact with schools they have been struggling to fill Citizenship vacancies when these arise.

2.3 Data on the numbers of trainee Citizenship teachers also remains hard to find. The DfE currently excludes subject specific data on Citizenship from the information published on the .gov.uk website. We have made a freedom of information request to the Department for Education but as yet are to receive a reply. However, evidence provided by the two largest PGCE course providers suggests numbers have not really moved for the past 4 years and that Citizenship continues to attract a diverse cohort of trainees into the profession - something we know needs to be supported and encouraged across the sector, subjects and phases. Overall, we are a very long short of having at least one trained Citizenship specialist teacher in every school.

2.4 In July 2019 Minister Gibb answered a parliamentary question about Initial Teacher Trainees in Citizenship. He stated,

'The annual Initial Teaching training census provides data on the number of trainee teachers recruited each year in which citizenship trainees are included in the 'other' subject category. Analysis of the underlying data shows that in the academic year 2018-19, 37 postgraduate trainees began training in Citizenship. Of the 385 trainees included in the 'other subject category, 146 trainees do not fall into any of the available subject categories and therefore it is not known if any of these are citizenship trainees.'

2.5 The fact that the government doesn't actually know how many trainees there are each year for Citizenship, which is the only National Curriculum subject to be excluded from official data, is deeply concerning. Our research also shows there are now just a handful of providers for Citizenship ITE across the county. We fail to see how this fits with the desire of the DfE to prioritise teacher recruitment and retention and their stated priority to 'make it easier for people to become great teachers'. (DfE Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, 2019) If the government does not know how many Citizenship trainees there are, does not publish data on the numbers of vacancies or whether these are filled, then it remains hard to see how they will know how many specialist Citizenship teachers are being recruited into school posts, let alone retained.

2.6 Urgent action is needed to ensure every school has access to high quality Citizenship Teachers and to ensure pupils are not denied the opportunity to

study the subject. We expect that some of this decline may be down to the labelling of subjects for example where Citizenship teachers/teaching may be part of PSHE rather than recorded separately. However, we strongly urge the committee to interrogate this matter and ensure the DfE provides greater transparency around the figures. We believe it is simply unacceptable not to know how many trainees there are for a National Curriculum subject in secondary schools.

### **3. Ofsted accountability framework discourages Citizenship teachers and teaching**

3.1 The DfE Teacher Recruitment and Retention strategy published in 2019 stated,

'The current system of school accountability can be confusing for school leaders, which sometimes leaves teachers unsure about what they need to do, and in turn creates extra pressure and unnecessary workload. We are working with Ofsted to simplify the accountability system and reduce any unnecessary pressure it places on teachers. This includes clarifying when a school will receive an offer of support and consulting on removing the floor and coasting standards. In addition, the new Ofsted framework will have an active focus on reducing teacher workload.'

3.2 We have raised serious concerns about the way the current accountability framework inspects the subject of Citizenship and discourages Citizenship teachers and teaching in schools. The Ofsted Inspection Handbook acknowledges the status of Citizenship as a national curriculum subject but in practice the subject is not inspected in the same way as other subjects. A recent [Ofsted video](#) presented Citizenship as part of 'the school bag of personal development'. We believe this description is confusing and the approach presented undermines rather than supports the entitlement of pupils to high quality and rigorous Citizenship education based on the national curriculum and GCSE Citizenship Studies requirements.

3.3 When subjects are inspected as part of the Quality of Education measure in the inspection framework, there is a thorough investigation of provision through a 'deep dive' to test whether the evidence a school presents is supported in

practice. Evaluation by inspectors in relation to the implementation of the curriculum focuses specifically on evaluating whether teachers:

- have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach. If they do not, they are supported to address gaps in their knowledge so that pupils are not disadvantaged by ineffective teaching
- enable pupils to understand key concepts, presenting information clearly and encourage appropriate discussion
- check pupils' understanding effectively, and identify and correct misunderstandings
- ensure that pupils embed key concepts in their long-term memory and apply them fluently and whether the subject curriculum is designed and delivered in a way that allows pupils to transfer key knowledge to long-term memory. It is sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and pupils can work towards clearly defined end points
- use assessment to check pupils' understanding in order to inform teaching, and to help pupils embed and use knowledge fluently and develop their understanding, and not simply memorise disconnected facts.
- their approach to teaching remains rooted in evidence and the key elements of effective teaching.

3.5 Using these criteria to comment on a subject gives a school feedback to use to improve teaching and the quality of curriculum design. This is simply not happening for Citizenship.

3.6 Instead Citizenship is inspected under criteria for Personal Development which are far more limited when contrasted with the inspection criteria for the Quality of Education. The only reference to curriculum subjects is in relation to the evidence of

- how curriculum subjects such as citizenship, RE, and other areas such as personal, social, health and economic education, and relationships and sex education, contribute to pupils' personal development.

3.8 At present Citizenship is the only curriculum subject with a statutory basis for which no 'deep-dive' or equivalent information is available. In addition, Ofsted have produced subject research reviews which promote the inspectorate's view of effective teaching and curriculum design. Citizenship has no research review either.

3.9 Recently we were contacted by a number of schools about their experiences of Ofsted inspections under the current framework. Teachers made important comments and observations about the process. All had provision in their schools which included explicit and timetabled Citizenship teaching at key stage 3 and an offer that includes GCSE Citizenship Studies at key stage 4. Citizenship was mentioned, albeit briefly, in the final inspection reports of three of the four schools who got in touch.

3.10 The teachers felt that there was a general lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject by inspectors of what Citizenship is, how it is best planned, sequenced and taught and, how it is different and distinct from PSHE education. They expressed frustration with the lack of subject understanding of those inspecting their provision and with the depth and seriousness with which some inspectors appeared to give their evidence.

3.11 All commented on how they felt there is an urgent need for Ofsted Inspectors to be properly trained in Citizenship to ensure they better understand the requirements of the national curriculum and how the subject should be sequenced in the curriculum to provide meaningful knowledge and learning for pupils; this would also enable final reports to spotlight high quality Citizenship provision to exemplify the standards for other schools.

3.13 The following comments were offered on the inspection process.

'I think that our final report demonstrated they understood Citizenship BUT this is only because our students pushed the subject. When I spoke with inspectors they were mistaking it with PSHE. Students' power demonstrated what the subject is and the impacts.'

'Inspectors spoke to me at the time about Personal Development. The one interviewing was a CEO of a MAT. He had little knowledge of Citizenship as a subject and was clearly institutionalised into how the

subject is normally delivered from his own setting (I got the impression that this was through form time).'

'There is a genuine issue about those Inspectors working as leaders within existing MATs when it comes to subjects like Citizenship. Their experience of the subject very much flavours how seriously they take it. I get the impression that they have little idea about what outstanding Citizenship looks like and circumstances where it's likely to be more successfully delivered.'

'I think there was very little understanding of Citizenship. It felt like there was little expertise in any of the social sciences....we need more subject expertise in the area and an appreciation that Citizenship is taught in so many different ways within schools. I would love to see inspectors ask more about it rather than lumping it with their understanding of PSHE. I don't think many inspectors know the difference.'

3.14 Ofsted tells us it is not their remit to determine *what is in the curriculum*, and that is the role of government. However, the current inspection regime signals to schools, teachers and wider society what Ofsted believe to be important and therefore what they expect to see in schools. It is hard to see the logic of the decision they have taken to treat Citizenship differently to every other curriculum subject, or why they appear to dismiss the fact that Citizenship is part of the national curriculum with the same legal status as the other foundation subjects. The current Ofsted regime has the effect of diminishing the subject of Citizenship, disempowering Citizenship teachers and depriving pupils of their entitlement to a high quality Citizenship education within a broad and balanced curriculum.

#### **4. Citizenship is a growing subject but more must be done to guarantee high quality teaching**

4.1 Despite the lack of specific data from inspection or from DfE Initial Teacher education data there is other evidence to support the growth of Citizenship as a subject. For example, the number of schools who offer the subject at GCSE has increased by 37% in the past four years from 492 to 720 (out of 3400 secondary schools). Candidate numbers taking the qualification have also continued to rise

significantly at a similar level. The FFT data lab supported by the Nuffield Foundation, this year reported,

'Entries in citizenship studies have increased sharply across the UK over the last six years. The +37.9% change compared to a change of +4.9% in all GCSE entries over the last six years. Over the same period, the 16-year-old population has changed by approximately 9.3%. Across the UK, a broadly similar proportion of students achieved good passes in citizenship studies in 2022 as did so across all GCSE subjects. A total of 72.2% of pupils achieved grade 4/C or higher in citizenship studies compared to 73.2% for all subjects.'

4.2 Our own monitoring and evaluation data shows an increase in engagement with Citizenship resources and CPD with a 20% increase in visitors to our website which provides guidance, resources and training over the past 12 months.

4.3 In preparation for this evidence, we surveyed teachers across the country. They fed back to us about the value of the subject in the curriculum, how it prepares students for further study and career choices as well as the challenges they face in securing support and time for the subject.

'This subject has inspired and encouraged so many young people to move forwards to study/work in a variety of related subjects such as politics, local government, sociology, law, criminology, public services, military services, policing, economics, finance, social work, charity work and teaching. These young people have such a solid grounding in how our society works, appreciating the benefits of living by our democratic values and a real passion for making our society better. I do not think there is any other subject like Citizenship. It's long term beneficial role is in producing thoughtful, informed, interested and active citizens. It is not surprising that this subject is increasingly popular, not just at my school but across the country, and therefore the Government should be encouraging teacher training providers to include Citizenship in their offer of courses. With that in mind, I have been encouraging the University of Gloucestershire to consider offering PGCE Citizenship this year.'

(Secondary teacher, Head of Citizenship, Gloucestershire)



'It seems that politicians despair that there is a deficit in political knowledge amongst the electorate. In particular, young people are less politically engaged and as a consequence, this threatens the democracy of the UK. Yet Citizenship is an essential and undervalued subject which can address this.' (Secondary teacher, Director of Achievement, Coventry)

'In all my years teaching, I have never just had citizenship on my timetable unlike History, English and every other subject. [Citizenship] has a growing community which is supportive. It is so important to have ACT as it can be very isolating day to day and [ACT] offers support to the many non-specialists teaching citizenship. Sometimes those not trained in citizenship are outstanding citizenship teachers but there are far too many that just don't understand the subject and students receive an experience they do not deserve.[I'm] constantly battling for curriculum time. The GCSE is not given the status deserved in schools and often loose students who are taken for "more important " subjects such as English Maths and Science.' (Secondary teacher, Head of Citizenship, Leicester)

'I regularly get into the top three of GCSE subject performance in my school - mostly I put this down to the engagement from pupils and the enthusiasm for the subject content. The subject is very highly rated by students and is absolutely essential in the National Curriculum and beyond.' (Secondary teacher, Head of Citizenship, Bournemouth)

## **5. Citizenship could reinvigorate the teaching profession - ACT's recommendations on what the DfE can do**

5.1 Many teachers enter the profession because they want to make a difference. They are committed to making a positive change in society and believe in education that is broad, inclusive and fair for all. This is particularly true for Citizenship teachers, whose role is to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding young people need to play a full part in society as active, responsible citizens.

### **Recommendation 1: Introduce funded bursaries for initial teacher training in Citizenship**

5.2 As a subject, Citizenship attracts a broad range of people to the teaching profession, from all walks of life and backgrounds. Many go on to take leadership roles in schools thanks to the skills and expertise they have developed through Citizenship. Others make an additional contribution to their schools by teaching different social science and humanities subjects.

5.3 Let's build the diversity of the trainee teacher community through Citizenship. For numbers and providers to grow, we need to support the emerging specialism by providing subject funding in the **form of bursaries and salaried trainee roles**. We need to level the playing field by reducing the gap between subjects with a perceived higher status and Citizenship – the 'have' and 'have not' subjects.

### **Recommendation 2: Expand subject knowledge enhancement to Citizenship**

5.4 As already noted, Citizenship attracts people from a wide range of degree subjects and life backgrounds to the teaching profession. We need to ensure that every prospective Citizenship teacher has the opportunity to grasp the basics of the subject as a discipline rooted in politics but also law, sociology and economy and the skills to design and sequence a high quality curriculum. We recommend that **a new subject knowledge enhancement module** is offered before teacher training, to align Citizenship provision with other shortage subjects. The module can also be made available to any teacher who wishes to specialise in the subject. As the subject association for Citizenship, ACT would be happy to lead the development of this.

### **Recommendation 3: Raise CPD professional standards and entitlements for Citizenship**

5.5 Over the past 12 years, professional standards and CPD entitlements have been degraded in non-EBacc subjects like Citizenship. It is time to reverse this trend with an enhanced package of funded support for small and shortage subjects.

5.6 Schools need to be clear about the minimum expectations for subject-specific CPD for every teacher of Citizenship. We recommend that:

- **revised professional development standards ensure every teacher has a basic grounding in Citizenship**

- **Citizenship subject teachers have at least five hours of funded, subject-specific CPD each year**
- **all CPD is certificated and ACT can lead the way on this initiative if some seed funding is provided.**

**Recommendation 4: Introduce funded lead practitioner status for Citizenship**

5.7 We should recognise and value the role of Citizenship teachers who not only lead the subject – often with peers who are non-specialists – but also take on responsibilities for wider, whole-school issues. This demands adopting a similar approach to that used for careers education and guidance, which has led to a step change in many schools.

5.8 Putting in place a [salary level commensurate with lead practitioner status](#) will incentivise trained Citizenship teachers to stay with the subject. Too often, Citizenship teachers are either promoted to leadership roles or sadly leave the profession. Lead practitioner status would elevate Citizenship subject leaders, provide enhanced career opportunities, and offer motivation to teach for longer.

5.9 The funding could be held by the Chartered College of Teaching and linked to ongoing CPD in subject leadership and subject knowledge (provided by ACT in partnership with the Chartered College).

**Recommendation 5: Reform the current inspection framework and ensure that the inspection of Citizenship is fair to teachers, schools and society**

5.10 Inspection should provide a useful evidence base to support the Quality of Education that includes Citizenship. The reporting process should exemplify what schools need to do to 'level up' their curriculum provision and ensure Citizenship teaching is progressive, sequenced and meaningful. While inspectors comment on the inadequacy or absence of provision for other subjects, in particular RE, it is noticeable that this is not the case with regard to Citizenship. The inspection regime needs urgent reform to ensure that there is balance and equity in the treatment of subjects and that there is clear and regular reporting for Citizenship and school leaders are held to account where the subject is low in quality or missing entirely. Schools should come out of inspection feeling supported in

developing a rich, rigorous and robust curriculum, that includes Citizenship for every child and that every teacher feels proud to be a part of.

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