

Written evidence from the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) – CCE0003

1. Update since 2018 inquiry

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. Citizenship education today provides an invaluable opportunity for teachers to explore such issues with their students.

20 years of Citizenship

1.2 As ACT marks its 20th anniversary and 2022 also marks 20 years since the introduction of the national curriculum for Citizenship, we are taking time to discuss where the subject needs to go next through our 'Future of Citizenship' series of events. We also believe that this House of Lords committee and its inquiry has served the subject well and ask that there continues to be a regular forum for discussing progress with those working on this committee, those who support the subject and with those responsible for national policy.

Citizenship and Climate education

1.3 Since our last evidence we have seen some progress for the subject. The Secretary of State referred to Citizenship in his media briefings when the **draft strategy on Climate Education** was announced at COP26. The strategy signals a key role for Citizenship in both subject teachers with subject knowledge through effective CPD and developing the curriculum to teach pupils about climate change and the environment and the important role citizens play in taking action for a more sustainable future.

1.4 In the same week as COP26 we held a conference over three days which included inputs from Lord Knight of Weymouth on his proposed Bill for Sustainable Citizenship education and an enhanced role for statutory Citizenship education, which we support.

1.5 We have been in regular conversation with DFE officials regarding the Climate education strategy, and how to take it forward. We very much hope they will take our suggestions forward and support us in helping to implement the ambitions of the strategy in schools.

Citizenship and the Covid pandemic

1.6 As part of their advice to schools on the Covid pandemic, the DFE published guidance '**Teaching a broad and balance curriculum for education recovery**' which included Citizenship and states that,

'To make good progress in citizenship, pupils should develop a secure knowledge of key concepts which are important to future learning.

At key stage 1 this is likely to include:

- a focus on securing key knowledge of a small number of ideas, including belonging, fairness, and simple rules and laws that help us live together in a community.

At key stage 2:

- the focus is on securing pupils' knowledge of a broader range of concepts, such as rights and responsibilities, democracy, and community, since these will be the most important for future study.

At key stage 3:

- prioritisation should focus on securing pupils' knowledge of key concepts, such as civil liberties, Parliament, and laws, and how this can be applied in a range of complex situations and cases, including those that are new or unfamiliar.

This will include checking pupils' misconceptions and making sure they can use key terms in citizenship, specifically and in appropriate contexts.'

1.7 We know anecdotally from our teacher network that in some schools, despite the DFE advice, there has been a narrowing of the curriculum to focus on catching up pupils in core subjects. The DFE have published a report about their early findings, '**School recovery strategies: Year 1 findings**'.

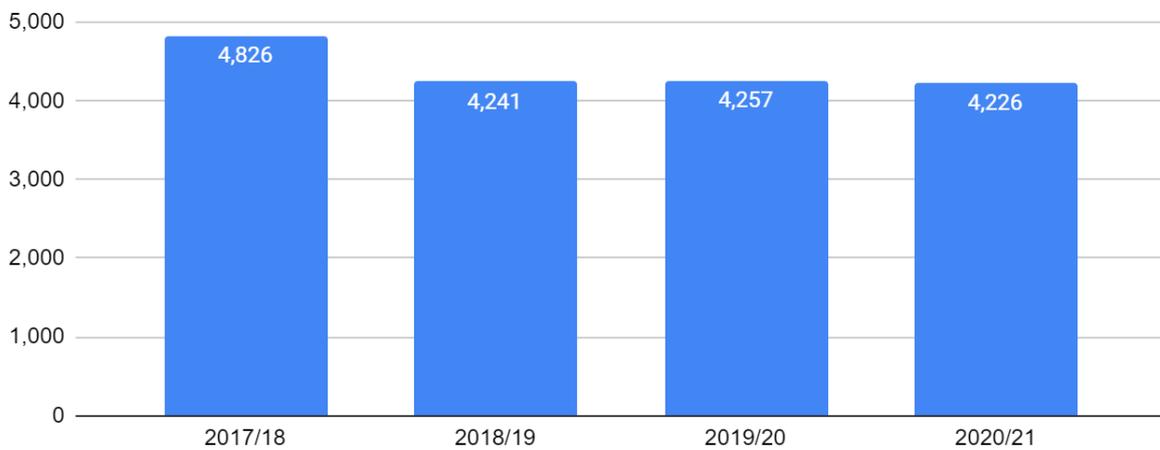
1.8 The pandemic has also brought some opportunities for Citizenship, such as discussing the role of government in protecting citizens, the need for media literacy education in relation to conspiracy theories, and the anti-vax protests.

1.9 Teachers have also found creative ways to continue to take forward active citizenship, which would normally involve students in engaging with members of the wider community and many believe this kind of work contributes positively to overall student well-being. ACT provided advice on taking action during the public health crisis and this has also been a regular feature of CPD and network meetings.

DFE workforce data on Citizenship

1.10 Since 2018 the available data from the DFE in terms of numbers of teachers teaching Citizenship indicates a stabilisation at around 4,200. There is a slight increase in the number of hours that the subject is taught. However, these figures remain low when compared to a decade ago, when there were 9,958 teachers.

DFE Workforce Statistics: Number of teachers teaching Citizenship



NB: 2020/21- 10,630 (Years 7-9: 5,691 (+5% from 2019), Years 10-11: 4,341 (+7.7%) and Years 12-13: 599

Hours of Citizenship taught



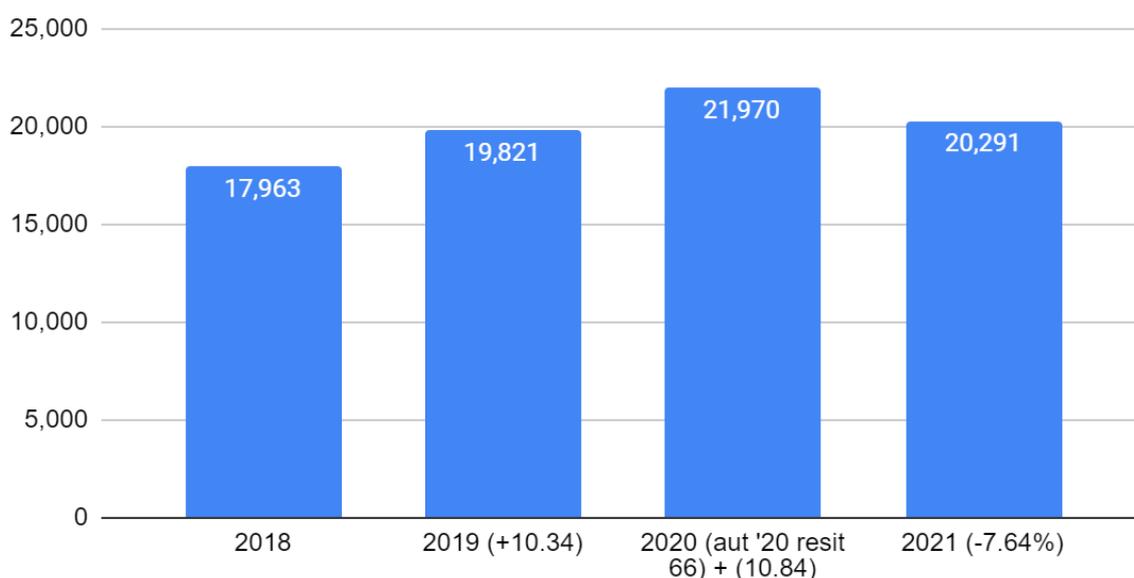
2020/21- 10,630 (Years 7-9: 5,691(+5% from 2019), Years 10-11: 4,341 (+7.7%) and Years 12-13: 599 (+43%))

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>

GCSE Citizenship Studies numbers

1.11 Between 2018 and 2020 the number of candidates taking the qualification continued to rise at over 10% a year. There are currently some gaps in the data available from the DfE which would tell us the number of schools offering the qualification, but from the available data it appears to have stabilised at over 600 or 16% of secondary schools. Despite the challenges presented by the Covid pandemic and the extraordinary disruption that schools, teachers and students are experiencing in relation to the curriculum and examinations, the numbers achieving GCSE Citizenship has also remained stable at over 20,000.

GCSE Citizenship Studies candidate numbers from Joint Council for Qualifications



Source: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/>

2. ACT's new programme, 'Embedding Citizenship in Schools' - what we hope to find out

2.1 In 2021, ACT secured funding to develop and run our 'Embedding Citizenship in Schools' programme. The development programme aims are:

For schools

- **to build a movement** of schools, colleges and teachers committed to integrating **citizenship and democracy education** over the long term; and
- demonstrate how **active citizenship and social action** support a

high-quality education and provide a pathway to ongoing action and NCS.

For young people to develop

- **political literacy** - demonstrating knowledge about and interest in local, national and international political matters, including to participate in democracy through voting and other forms of democratic action and active citizenship
- **personal development and well-being** - confident in their ability to take action with others for positive change, speak out on injustice and value diversity and social inclusion; and
- **improved employment prospects** and support the development of life skills.

2.2 To achieve this, we will identify:

- the kinds of curriculum model/s and teaching that best support **regular, sustainable active citizenship and social action** in secondary schools
- the most effective **role for teachers** in supporting regular and meaningful active citizenship with students
- how schools can ensure that as many **students as possible engage in and benefit** from regular active citizenship opportunities; and
- new approaches to demonstrate **how regular active citizenship provides a pathway to ongoing action and democratic participation**, including through the NCS programme.

2.3 The first year of the programme involves expanding ACT's team to carry out the programme. This includes: developing ACT's expert Citizenship curriculum and teaching support; expanding our offer of continuing professional development teacher courses and conferences; designing curriculum resources to support high quality teaching; all of which contribute to the overall goal of deeply embedding Citizenship in schools.

2.4 Alongside the practical support, we are capacity-building and working with initial teacher educators. Our work is targeting two key audiences: first, those who are new to teaching or new to teaching Citizenship; and second, those who are using the GCSE Citizenship Studies qualification but are yet to develop a fully embedding approach to the curriculum subject for all students.

Research and evaluation with the University of Middlesex

2.5 In conjunction with these activities, we also need to know what makes Citizenship education effective and what supports lifelong engagement in democracy. To this end, we have partnered with the University of Middlesex to research the contributing factors for good citizenship education in schools. The research will take a particular focus at what can also be done to level-up democratic engagement in areas of democratic and socio-economic deprivation. It would be good to keep committee members apprised of the findings over the following 4 years.

2.6 The research will focus on documenting and generating insights into the range of participative Citizenship experiences that students access through school as well as through participation in NCS, volunteering and other forms of community action, but also more political forms of engagement such as campaigning, supporting petitions, awareness raising, online democratic activity, etc. The research will use a combination of surveys and interviews with teachers and students.

2.7 We will seek to illustrate how these activities are perceived in terms of accessibility (how easy is it for students to participate and for teachers to facilitate?), experience (what was the participation like?) and impact (what do teachers and young people feel were the costs and benefits of participation?). This will be connected to a comprehensive literature review on the impact of various forms of participation to inform the development of a set of resources and training materials. These materials will support teachers to evaluate and develop their schools' participation and citizenship programmes.

2.8 In subsequent years we will be able to collect data on the kind of activities the schools offer, and the students engage in. We will collect two types of data.

i) The range of activities offered in each school. This will include opportunities for participation across the curriculum, school culture and community. The data from teachers will include:

- a. teachers' confidence / concerns
- b. teachers' audit of provision: school-wide planning / provision (the school participation profile, including NCS participation).

ii) Individual student level data. This will enable us to compile an 'individual participation profile' which will include data about:

- c. student demographics
- d. the actual activities experienced (type, frequency, duration, intensity, experience of diversity etc.), and
- e. the students' attitudes towards the full range of experiences, such as likelihood of participation in future (e.g., intention to

vote; participate in NCS), and whether they feel they would make a difference (e.g. measures of efficacy).

2.9 These will enable us to track some of the more overtly 'citizenship' outcomes of participation.

Early positive progress with Citizenship in schools

2.10 Although in the infancy of its 4-year programme, which we began setting up in September 2021, ACT is seeing some green shoots. Teacher membership has increased by 122% compared to the same period of the 2021 academic year, and event/CPD registrations are up 90% (YoY). We have a long way to go to reach our ambitious goal of engaging with one third of secondary schools by the end of 2025, but this suggests another indication of progress.

3. Ofsted's approach to inspection of citizenship

3.1 The Ofsted Inspection Handbook describes the main activities undertaken during inspection and sets out the evaluation criteria that inspectors will use as a basis for their judgements. The Handbook acknowledges the status of citizenship as a national curriculum subject but does not reveal that it will not be inspected in the same way as other subjects. In 2021, Ofsted advised us in correspondence that:

'we have decided therefore to judge Citizenship through personal development, rather than through QE.'

3.2 We believe this approach undermines rather than supports the entitlement of pupils to high quality Citizenship education and shows that Ofsted are now out of step with the DfE and other education system leaders in their expectations for the subject.

Quality of Education

3.3 When subjects are inspected as part of quality of education, there is a thorough investigation of provision through a 'deep dive' to test whether the evidence a school presents is supported in practice. A range of specific criteria are used to hold school leaders accountable for:

- following the national curriculum and basic curriculum or, in academies, a curriculum of similar breadth and ambition
- how carefully leaders have thought about what end points the curriculum is building towards, what pupils will be able to know and do at those endpoints, and how leaders have planned the curriculum accordingly.

3.4 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.

Personal Development

3.6 The inspection criteria for Personal Development are far more limited when contrasted with the inspection criteria for the Quality of Education. The Ofsted handbook says,

'The personal development judgement evaluates the school's intent to provide for the personal development of all pupils, and the quality with which the school implements this work. It recognises that the impact of the school's provision for personal development will often not be assessable during pupils' time at school....Schools are crucial in preparing pupils for their adult lives, teaching them to understand how to engage with society and providing them with plentiful opportunities to do so. In this judgement, therefore, inspectors will seek to evaluate the quality and intent of what a school provides (either directly or by drawing on high-quality agencies and providers, for example the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, Cadet Forces and the National Citizenship Service), but will not attempt to measure the impact of the school's work on the lives of individual pupils'

3.7 In fact 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 This highlights how little there is within the evaluation criteria that encourages inspectors to comment on the actual quality of the curriculum or learning outcomes for pupils in relation to the subjects and curriculum areas included under Personal Development. At present Citizenship is the only subject with a statutory basis for which no deep-dive information is available. Both RE and RSHE/PSHE, which are also listed as contributing to Personal Development, are inspected regularly through 'deep dives' using the criteria from the Quality of Education measure. A detailed subject report has been published already for RE, and for most subjects Ofsted have produced subject research reviews which promote the inspectorate's view of effective teaching and curriculum design.

3.9 Having reviewed inspection reports for 25 schools rated as 'Good' between October 2019 and November 2021 and where Citizenship appeared in the published inspection report we find typical comments such as,

Form tutors confidently deliver a skilfully designed personal, social, health and citizenship programme to all pupils and students. (The Knutsford Academy, Inspection report, 3 November 2021)

Ethics and citizenship lessons and assemblies teach pupils about the wider world, for example how government works, mental health and eating healthily (Willowfield Humanities College, 5 October, 2021)

Pupils receive a thoughtful programme for citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education (Royal Docks Academy, 28 September 2021)

3.10 Although comments in inspection reports only reflect what is in the public domain, by implication, these schools will no doubt feel their provision for Citizenship is sufficient and others reading them will take these as a precedent for what is expected.

3.11 In preparation for the inquiry, we spoke with four schools about their experiences of recent Ofsted inspections under the current framework. Teachers made a number of important comments and observations about the process. None of them were involved in a 'deep dive' into citizenship. Citizenship was considered by inspectors under 'personal development'

and sometimes only because of the insistence of the teachers interviewed to move the conversation beyond questions about PSHE. Those we spoke to are lead Citizenship teachers with significant experience in teaching the subject. All had provision in their schools which included explicit curriculum provision in 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.

3.12 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.

3.13 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. They also hope that Ofsted will undertake a rigorous subject review and report into the quality of Citizenship, again to support good practice and to raise the bar for those who make limited provision or ignore the subject altogether. Several questioned why Ofsted seems to pick up schools for failing to comply with requirements to provide other subjects listed in the Personal Development section of the framework (Religious education and RSHE) but don't apply the same standard to Citizenship.

3.14 The following comments were offered on the inspection process.

'I think that the final report demonstrated they understood Citizenship BUT I think 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. There 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.'

3.15 The exclusion of Citizenship in this way sends a message to schools about what Ofsted believes to be important. It is hard to see the logic of the decision they have taken to treat Citizenship differently to every other curriculum subject and appears to dismiss the fact that Citizenship is part of the national curriculum with the same legal status as the other foundation subjects.

3.16 Inspections should provide a useful evidence base to support the quality of Citizenship where it is being taught well, and highlight to other schools what they should be doing to 'level up' their curriculum provision and to ensure Citizenship 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 question is, why.

14 January 2022