

How social action is being applied to good effect in a selection of schools and colleges



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Chief Inspector's message: social action

'Ofsted's new common inspection framework, introduced in 2015, places emphasis on the need for schools and colleges to provide a curriculum rich in personal development to enable children and young people to contribute to wider society and life in modern Britain.

During 2016, Ofsted will work with 'Step Up To Serve' and the #iwill campaign to highlight publicly examples of good social action practice in schools, colleges and other education providers.'

Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted

Ofsted and youth social action

Ofsted worked with #iwill to conduct interviews and visits to a small sample of primary and secondary schools and colleges, in order to improve our understanding of how social action is interpreted and being applied.

These slides do not provide a qualitative overview, but draw out the features and characteristics, shared or otherwise, which give prominence to social action.

Inspectors noted that in the places visited, social action:



- was an implicit, if informal, principle of school or college culture
- more formally, was viewed as part and parcel of:
 - enrichment and extra-curricular activities
 - tutorial programmes
 - personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE)
 - citizenship
 - student union work
 - accredited awards
- was often interwoven distinctly within the curriculum, especially in primary schools.



Outcomes of social action

Teachers and leaders viewed social action as having links to:

- improved academic standards
- better attendance
- reduced exclusions
- students developing high levels of responsibility and understanding of the diverse society they live in
- strong outcomes in personal development, behaviour and welfare
- helping create a learning environment of high expectations
- real political engagement by students in real issues with which they identify.

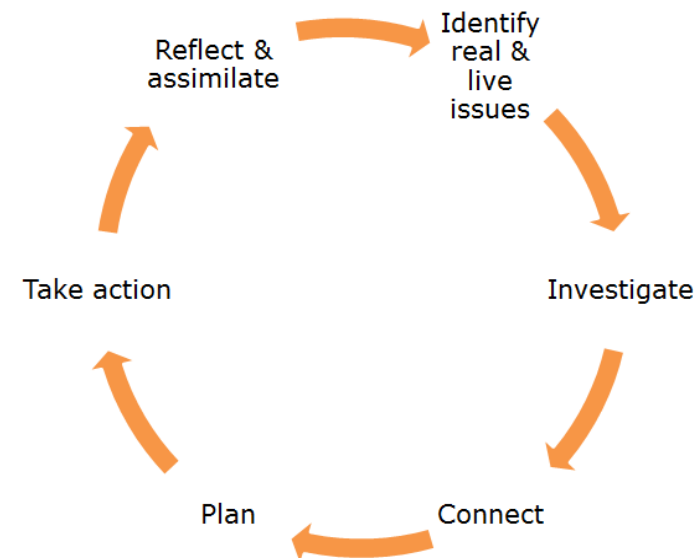
The better examples of social action in schools visited by Ofsted:

- were designed with the intention of enabling young people to develop the spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects of their learning
- had a 'golden thread' of developing skills, knowledge and understanding.



The core educational elements of these better examples were:

- real and current issues
- connecting directly with the community
- learning through planning activities
- learning through 'doing'
- reflecting on and assimilating learning.



Leadership actions in
securing high-quality social
action: some findings by
inspectors

Be intentional and authentic

In the eyes of young people, the most memorable and effective projects had a clear link with issues that they thought were important.



Get the culture right

- Teachers said that their institutions had allowed them to develop clubs, societies and activities that tapped into their own interests for the benefit of young people.
- Some teachers said that this culture was what had attracted them to the institution.

Develop standards and quality assurance processes

Practitioners told us about interesting approaches to setting standards and improving the quality of social action activities. They were keen to identify how to maximise learning for young people.

Examples included:

- staff videoing and sharing with colleagues lessons that had good social action outcomes
- a school development plan that included a social action focus.

Train and develop teachers

- When trained and supported, teachers felt better equipped to tackle the controversial issues that social action activities often unearth.

Measure and benchmark young people's progress: findings

Inspectors found that teachers were determined to find ways of developing in-house means of recording and reporting progress.

They noted that such formal mechanisms helped give parity of esteem to social action.



Measure and benchmark young people's progress: findings

Examples included:

- students recording their volunteering hours through an online record of achievement portfolio
- effective recording of learning through diaries and set work
- a student passport logging social action challenges
- formal reporting to governors about social action by pupil need and benchmarked against previous years
- gaining GCSE citizenship education.

Curriculum – a planned sequence of learning experiences

Elements that helped create a distinctive and discernible social action curriculum included:

- teachers' good knowledge of the work of local community groups and charities – this extended the range of volunteering opportunities on offer and helped tailor the opportunities to the needs of specific groups of learners
- the social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum and the personal development curriculum extending to the quality of volunteering and extra-curricular developments
- developing pupil capacity to engage in social action by giving pupils responsibility within school.

Social action curriculum: characteristics as viewed in primary schools

- Social action in primary schools was often described as being 'interwoven' with the curriculum. A primary school headteacher stated that 'social action is structured but structure need not imply formality'.
- Primary schools located in areas of challenge and deprivation told us about the importance of parents:
 - being actively involved in school life and understanding that social action was as relevant to their lives as to their children

Social action curriculum: characteristics as viewed in primary schools (2)

- broadening their understanding of further and higher education as the potential next steps for their children, developed using school-based projects
- understanding the diversity of today's society
- being engaged in school activities. An example included targeted strategies such as a 'school virtual bank', where if parents attended school events, including training workshops, they received 'donations' into their virtual school accounts, which they could use to purchase items such as a school uniform.

Social action curriculum

The characteristics as viewed in secondary schools included:

- an overall curriculum informed by strong links and a good knowledge of the work of local community groups and charities. This extended the range of volunteering opportunities on offer and responded to the needs of specific groups of learners.



Social action curriculum – characteristics as viewed in secondary schools

- The 'social, moral, spiritual, cultural' curriculum placed emphasis on values, tolerance, diversity and understanding major global issues.
- Social action was celebrated in house assemblies.
- It was a distinct element of the school's action plan to governors.
- Drama students took productions to local primary schools, often based on their social action activities.
- Social action had a quality assurance system to check the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- Teachers ensured that the school council had a balanced representation of young people and activities that were suitably challenging for all its members.

Social action curriculum – characteristics as viewed in a further education college

- Inspectors noted the positive steps taken in FE to embed social action. For example:
 - a college curriculum that encompassed not only a sufficiently broad range of social action related activities within the college day, but also out of college hours
 - a vast ‘menu’ of activities produced by a teacher who had an in-depth knowledge of local charities, voluntary organisations and businesses where students could volunteer
 - the list of social action opportunities was sufficient to enable students to make an informed choice, pitched sensibly for the age range.

Institutions surveyed

- The Wroxham School
- Uffculme School
- Bishop Bridgeman CofE Primary School
- The Bourne Academy
- Central Foundation Girls' School
- Exeter College
- Star Academy
- Rookery Primary
- North Ormesby Primary Academy

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