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Good practice in Key Stage 3 citizenship: Bury Church of England High School

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Brief description

This example shows how Bury Church of England High School has used humanities specialist status effectively to develop an outstanding citizenship curriculum at Key Stage 3 through a well-considered integrated humanities approach.

Overview – the school's message

'We chose to become a specialist humanities college because, as a Church of England high school, we felt this was the specialism that best matched our ethos. Our strength in citizenship has grown out of that and is key to fulfilling our stated aim of "helping our students become fulfilled self-motivated, independent, responsible and caring members of society". The three lead subjects, geography, religious education (RE) and history, have been major contributors to our delivery of citizenship. Citizenship teaching is everybody's responsibility guided by the enthusiastic and energetic leadership of our Head of Citizenship. Every half-term we 'stop the clock,' by suspending normal timetable, and we all engage in citizenship teaching and learning. The humanities departments give the lead to our 'being British' and 'global issues' strands, as well as delivering key aspects of the citizenship curriculum within their own subjects. The success of our citizenship days has led to a radical reappraisal of our delivery of the whole curriculum, and from September we will be running whole-day experiences for all subject areas.'

The good practice in detail

The rationale for integrated humanities delivery for citizenship at Key Stage 3

The Key Stage 3 programme empowers students to critically analyse topical and controversial issues and engage in discussion and debate; it encourages respect for cultural diversity and identities; addresses issues relating to social justice, human rights and global

interdependence; and inspires students to develop political literacy and gain an insight into justice and the law. As a result, students play a dynamic role in the life of the school, the local community and wider society as active and global citizens.



Background

Citizenship was originally taught by form tutors for a one hour session, once a fortnight, alongside personal, social and health education (PSHE). This was considered inadequate practice by senior management and using the school's specialist humanities college status to spearhead developments, an integrated approach to citizenship education was born.

The new approach

The humanities specialist subjects of citizenship, geography, history and RE all contribute to the delivery of citizenship by working collectively to provide an integrated and co-dependent programme at Key Stage 3. The curriculum map can be viewed [here](#).

On 'stop the clock' days, the normal school timetable is suspended and each year group focuses on one of the citizenship or PSHE themes. Staff are organised into specialist teams to ensure high-quality delivery of each theme and all the materials are posted on the school's Learning Platform one week prior to the event, for staff to access.

Citizenship themes include:

- **being British:** government and politics, voting and elections, laws, justice, anti-social behaviour, human rights, celebrating cultural diversity within the UK
- **global citizenship:** sustainable development, fair trade, international aid agencies, environmental concerns, terrorism and extremism
- **active citizenship:** active projects within the school and the local community, and global issues



The citizenship days are well supported by the humanities teachers who share skills, knowledge and understanding. Each specialist subject provides a discreet learning environment which interlinks with each of the other humanities subjects to ensure that students develop broad conceptual knowledge and understanding which can be applied to their active citizenship.

The programme is enhanced by visits and visitors to the school. Students meet people from a range of cultures and backgrounds different from their own, and place their developing

understanding of current issues such as asylum, child labour and human trafficking, in context.

Some of the resources that are used to deliver this work can be viewed and downloaded via the links below:

- [Being British](#)
- [Global issues](#)
- [Active citizenship](#)
- [Humanities lead subject - geography](#)
- [Humanities lead subject - history](#)
- [Humanities lead subject - RE](#)

Planning and assessment

All students are required to complete an online prior learning task. This enables teachers to assess individual needs, provide a baseline assessment level and plan lesson materials accordingly. As a homework challenge, students complete an online quiz via the school virtual learning area, which self-marks and generates a National Curriculum level. Teachers then formally assess students' progress on each 'stop the clock' day, providing National Curriculum levels based on standardised criteria. 'Assessment for Learning' is used to support students' learning and to generate peer- and self-assessment levels.

Students also undertake a formal assessment for citizenship in each humanities specialist subject. Each department completes one citizenship assessed unit per year during Key Stage 3. Combined with teacher assessments and online tests, this provides a comprehensive assessment framework for the citizenship programme.

Participation and responsible action

Much of the programme is initiated and led by the students. Below are examples of some of the activities during 'stop the clock' days, which are then continued by students after the event.

- **Recycle, renew and reuse project:** Year 7 students clear the local community of rubbish by spending a day litter picking.
- **Charity work:** such as wrapping presents, making food hampers, cards and shoebox parcels for soldiers, asylum seekers and the homeless.
- **Engaging with the local community:** visiting a local care home for the elderly.
- **Earth Summit:** this year, Year 8 students re-enacted the Copenhagen Summit and made decisions about how they would influence climate change.
- **School council:** the citizenship programme has inspired students to change the school council so that they are more involved in the running of the school.
- **Show racism the Red Card:** students create work that challenges racism within football and society.



- **Leadership:** students complete the ASDAN leadership qualification and manage a minimum 10-week leadership activity.
- **Namibia expedition:** 30 students have been planning, fundraising and training for the trip for two years. They will spend their time trekking and working at their partner school in Namibia, teaching pupils English, PE and how to use computers, as well as renovating classrooms and an outdoor area.

What the students say

On learning about democracy: 'We understand why it is important to vote and get a say in what happens and that people in the past have died so we can do this.'

On 'stop the clock' day when students met with refugees and asylum-seekers: 'It was so emotional...really daunting...I learned about the brutality of asylum-seeking...the woman's stories have really stuck with me...afterwards I had quite a debate with my mum and dad about the political side of asylum...I talked to friends about it from other schools and they hadn't a clue – my dad had no idea either.'

On debating issues such as capital punishment in RE lessons: 'You go in thinking you understand but you don't – everything you thought has just been changed around...if we could, we would go on debating for days – we always carry on after the lesson.'

On Multi-faith Day: 'It was just amazing – we met all kinds of people like a Sikh and a Buddhist and they were great.'

On the integrated humanities approach: 'You learn about issues from lots of different perspectives – in tests you can bring in examples from what you have learned in all the humanities subjects...it makes you a more rounded person – open to new ideas and different cultures.'

On approaches to teaching and learning: 'In some lessons like the slave trade when we did role play you can really understand how it worked and how all the different people involved felt about it...teachers give us the opportunity to interpret what we want in different ways – even in religion...the Anne Frank exhibition was amazing...we listened to a survivor tell her story so we learned from her first-hand experience...it was good because we were revisiting some of the work we had done in Year 7 but in more depth...when we are older I think we will want to change things because we have had the experience and learning.'

The school's background

[Bury Church of England High School](#) is a smaller than average sized school. Most students are of White British heritage. The number of students eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also lower than average, although there is a higher than average proportion with a statement of special educational need. The school has been a specialist humanities college since 2005 and has achieved the Geographical Association's Secondary Geography Quality Mark.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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