



Citizenship in the Curriculum

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Sue Unstead on useful books.

A recent survey amongst 14-year-olds revealed a distinct lack of interest in politics and a correspondingly low opinion of MPs whom they describe not just as 'uncool', but positively 'boring, long-winded and untruthful'. It is perhaps no surprise therefore that the impetus for the recent introduction of Citizenship into the curriculum came from a politician, one David Blunkett. Whether this new subject will succeed in raising poor electoral turnout 'only 39% of 18-25 year olds voted in the last general election' is yet to be seen, but if it succeeds in its aim of producing responsible and active citizens for the future, one can only applaud. **Sue Unstead** explores.<!--break-->

A new Curriculum

When the Government announced the framework for the revised Curriculum 2000, there was a new emphasis on promoting a definable set of social values:

'Education influences and reflects the values of society and the kind of society we want to be. It is important, therefore, to recognise a broad set of common values and purposes that underpin the school curriculum and the work of schools? these include valuing ourselves, our families and other relationships, the wider groups to which we belong, the diversity in our society and the environment in which we live? The school curriculum should pass on enduring values, develop pupils? integrity and autonomy and help them to be responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development of a just society.' **The National Curriculum Handbook**

Citizenship was introduced under the broad umbrella of PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and is part of the non-statutory framework at Key Stages 1 and 2 'ie optional, like modern languages, at primary level. It has to be said that much of what is covered in the curriculum at this lower age group is something that all good primary schools were already tackling 'encouraging pupils to express their own views, respect others? viewpoints, the promotion of good relations among different age groups through playground buddy schemes or paired reading, as well as community involvement and policies to deal with bullying. It just wasn't called Citizenship.

Citizenship at the youngest age, at Key Stage 1, aims to give children 'the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident and independent lives, preparing them to become informed, active and responsible citizens?. Properly introduced as part of a whole-school policy, it helps children to develop not just as members of their school community but of the local neighbourhood and the wider community. It is concerned with issues of right and wrong, rights and responsibilities, conflict and cooperation 'all in preparation for an understanding of democracy. The framework has been designed to be flexible, to allow schools to build on what they are already doing well and to adapt it to make it relevant to their children, their backgrounds and abilities.

Several primary heads I spoke to bemoaned the lack of good materials for the youngest age group, but a plea to publishers to send material to **BfK** for consideration brought an overwhelming response with books, videos and other materials for all age groups. Much support has been given by organisations such as the Citizenship Foundation, an

independent educational charity, while other resources have been produced with sponsorship from major retail businesses and industry. One excellent starting point is **Introducing Citizenship: A Handbook for Primary Schools** by Don Rowe, Director of the Foundation. This paperback aimed at teachers is accompanied by a 60-minute video showing teaching strategies being put into practice. Produced alongside the pack is *'Thinkers'*, a series of four specially created picture books, deceptively simple open-ended stories designed to encourage children to think about and discuss the issues that arise such as fairness, loyalty or responsibility.

The role of picture books and stories

Once you have seen the possibilities afforded here, you start to realise that you probably already have a shelf of picture books that offer the same kind of rich stimulus for discussion – like **Tusk Tusk** by Elmer's creator David McKee, a pictorial lesson in conflict and tolerance. Then there are those that tackle topics such as freedom, like the gentle **Mole and the Baby Bird**, or the values of different cultures such as Mary Hoffman's **The Colour of Home**, a moving story of an uprooted child settling in a new country, the perfect springboard for a discussion on asylum and refugees (see this issue's Editor's Choice, p25). There are opportunities for encouraging very small children to articulate their own emotions and respect others' sensitivities in **I Have Feelings** by Jana Novotny-Hunter, while the concept of self esteem is nowhere more beautifully explored than in Max Velthuis's **Frog is Frog**. Frog reappears to challenge ideas of stereotyping and fear of the outsider in **Frog and the Stranger**. (**Introducing Citizenship** includes some useful booklists for identifying issues tackled by story books, and publishers might consider doing the same for the school market.)

Sharing and caring

Community involvement is one of three strands that are interwoven in the curriculum at all age groups. Children learn that they are members of a class and school community and that this has links with the wider community. At the youngest level **Five Little Fiends** shows clearly in simple picture-book format how each part of our environment is linked and relates this to the concept of sharing. Bernard Ashley's **Growing Good** celebrates the work of a community as a group of neighbours triumphs over the town planners to transform a waste site into a communal garden. At a more sophisticated level suitable for Key Stage 2, **Yellow-Eye** tells a story based on real events of the interdependence of two habitats and ultimately two communities in Australia's Northern Territory, where the aborigines have much to teach the scientists and ecologists.

Respecting differences

Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people is one of the most important strands of Citizenship. At Key Stage 1 this is grounded in home, family and friends, but at Key Stage 2 the focus is broadened to people living in other places and times. Frances Lincoln's series *'Child's Day'*, photographic accounts of different children's daily lives around the world – from a Peruvian village to a Ghanaian town, has an immediacy with which children will quickly identify. Britain's own cultural melting pot is celebrated in Benjamin Zephaniah's **We are Britain!** a collection of poems about twelve children from many different backgrounds living in Britain.

Suitable role models can also be found in Barefoot's **Heroic Children**, a companion title to **The Barefoot Book of Heroes** and **The Barefoot Book of Heroines**. Verna Wilkins' biography **The Life of Stephen Lawrence** gives a quietly dignified and sensitive account of his life and tragic death. It concludes with a quotation from the recommendation of the Inquiry into his death, that 'consideration be given to amendment of the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism in order better to reflect the needs of a diverse society'.

Racism is one of a number of issues given extensive debate in a series from Hodder Wayland. Suitable for KS2 and up, **Why are People Racist?** explores the topic with plenty of real examples and good quotes. For a more reflective approach, a number of outstanding novels have recently been published including **The Edge** by Alan Gibbons, a tense and deeply affecting story that encompasses racism and manipulative violence (reviewed in **BfK** No.135). For a similar age group Gaye Hıçyılmaz wrote **Girl in Red** (reviewed in **BfK** No. 122), touched by news coverage of Romanian asylum

seekers arriving in Dover, and the result is a powerful novel about exclusion and belonging.

Political literacy

The main emphasis in the primary years is on the development of social and moral responsibility. A general understanding of what democracy is and the local and national institutions that support it is required at the upper end of Key Stage 2, but the political literacy strand is given greater weight once pupils start secondary school. From September 2002 Citizenship becomes a separate foundation subject and a statutory part of the curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4. Belitha's recent series **'Shooting Stars'** tackles each of the four strands of Citizenship with titles on relationships (**Radical Relations**), personal development (**Powerful People**), health (**Healthy Habits**), while the fourth in the series, **Cool Citizens**, covers the practices of democracy, of local and national government. There are simple explanations of the legal system, of a citizen's rights and responsibilities in a breathless cartoon-illustrated approach that includes a story to foster debate as well as quizzes and fact boxes. Hodder Wayland's **'A Young Citizen's Guide'** series takes a more serious approach suitable for Key Stage 3 and up, but the coverage of different aspects of the subject, individual titles focusing on **Central Government** or **The Criminal Justice System** for example, is thorough and well informed, with a strong panel of authors and consultants. Plentiful use of photographs helps to make the books accessible, and there are useful ideas for school and community based activities in each book. Philip Steele's **Citizenship** will be another useful resource for Key Stage 3, since it follows the curriculum so closely, but it takes a much broader sweep than Hodder Wayland's series.

Role play

For a really practical approach to the topic, Franklin Watts' **'Taking Part'** series includes **A Pupil Parliament**, following the children of a junior school learning about democracy by holding their own election. Candidates have to campaign and stand for election to represent their school at the Pupil Parliament that involves all schools in the Richmond-on-Thames area. It provides a very positive message about the importance of taking on responsibility and the children mentioned have clearly enjoyed their year in office. Other titles in the series cover different aspects of citizenship such as community work, school newspaper and town twinning.

The introduction of Citizenship into the curriculum was an ambitious aim and it is still in its infancy in many schools. Publishers' responses are frankly mixed - some offering resources that are disappointingly didactic, failing to reflect the 'light touch', flexible approach that is recommended in all the curriculum support materials, while other publishers disarmingly own up to not knowing what citizenship is really about! Teaching citizenship is of course no guarantee that the newly enfranchised will rush out and vote, as a comparison with the US Presidential election clearly shows, but if pupils absorb only a fraction of the new curriculum, they should be better prepared to take their place in the adult workplace and in society as a result.

'In our school, citizenship is central to all that we do. All our children contribute to decision-making and organisation, taking more responsibility as they get older. Citizenship is more than a part of our curriculum, it is a way of life for the whole school community.' **Dame Mavis Grant, Headteacher**, Canning School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Four key strands covered by PSHE and Citizenship

- * Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of one's abilities
- * Preparing to play an active role as a citizen
- * Developing a healthy safer lifestyle
- * Developing good relationships and respecting differences between people

Sue Unstead was a publisher of children's non-fiction for 25 years and is now a freelance editorial consultant and writer.

Books mentioned

Introducing Citizenship, Don Rowe, A & C Black, 0 7136 5857 6, £16.99 pbk and video

?Thinkers? series: **The Sand Tray** (Don Rowe, 0 7136 5843 6), **Joe?s Car** (Annabelle Dixon, 0 7136 5846 0), **The Scary Video** (Gill Rose, 0 7136 5844 4), **William and the Guinea-pig** (Gill Rose, 0 7136 5837 1), ill. Tim Archbold, A & C Black, £3.99 each pbk (big book also available)

Tusk Tusk, David McKee, Red Fox, 0 09 930650 6, £4.99 pbk

Mole and the Baby Bird, Marjorie Newman, ill. Patrick Benson, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 5883 3, £9.99 hbk

The Colour of Home, Mary Hoffman, ill. Karin Littlewood, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1940 0, £10.99 hbk

I Have Feelings! Jana Novotny Hunter, ill. Sue Porter, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1734 3, £5.99 pbk

Frog is Frog, Max Velthuijs, Andersen Press, 0 86264 696 0, £8.99 hbk

Frog and the Stranger, Max Velthuijs, Andersen Press, 0 86264 625 1, £4.99 pbk

Five Little Fiends, Sarah Dyer, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 5949 X, £4.99 pbk

Growing Good, Bernard Ashley, ill. Anne Wilson, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 4700 9, £4.99 pbk

Yellow-Eye, David Spillman, ill. Mark Wilson, Era, 1 86374 607 2, £8.99 hbk

?Child?s Day? series: **Enrique?s Day**, Sara Andrea Fajardo, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1933 8, £10.99 hbk (10 titles in series)

We are Britain! Benjamin Zephaniah, photographs by Prodeepta Das, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1764 5, £10.99 hbk

Heroic Children, Rebecca Hazell, ill. Helen Cann, Barefoot, 1 902283 22 8, £14.99 hbk

The Barefoot Book of Heroes, Rebecca Hazell, Barefoot, 1 84148 201 3, £7.99 pbk

The Barefoot Book of Heroines, Rebecca Hazell, Barefoot, 1 84148 200 5, £7.99 pbk

The Life of Stephen Lawrence, Verna Allette Wilkins, ill. Lynne Willey, Tamarind, 1 870516 58 3, £10.99 hbk

Why are People Racist? Cath Senker, Hodder Wayland, 0 7502 3717 1, £5.99 pbk

The Edge, Alan Gibbons, Dolphin, 1 84255 094 2, £4.99 pbk

Girl in Red, Gaye Hiçyilmaz, Dolphin, 1 85881 490 1, £4.99 pbk

?Shooting Stars ? Citizenship? series: **Radical Relations** (1 84138 431 3), **Powerful People** (1 84138 430 5), **Healthy Habits** (1 84138 429 1), **Cool Citizens** (1 84138 428 3), Rosie McCormick, Belitha, £8.99 each hbk

?A Young Citizen?s Guide to? series: **Central Government**, (Richard Tames, 0 7502 3777 5), **The Criminal Justice System** (Sean Sheehan, 0 7502 3778 3), Hodder Wayland, £10.99 each hbk (10 titles in series)

Citizenship, Philip Steele, Evans, 0 237 52431 7, £8.99 pbk

?Taking Part? series: **A Pupil Parliament**, Sally Hewitt, photographs by Chris Fairclough, Franklin Watts, 0 7496 4367 5, £10.99 hbk

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