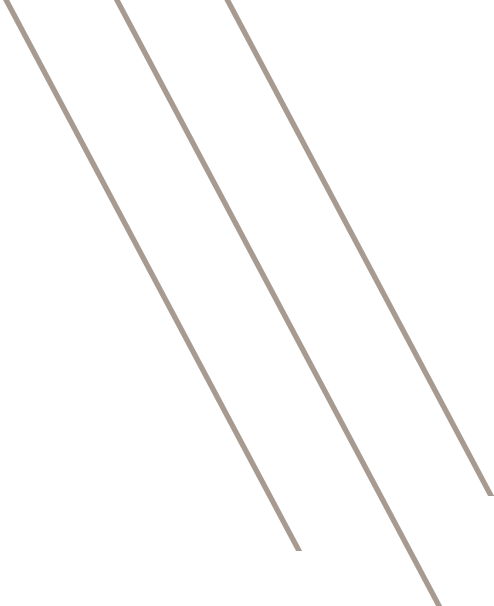
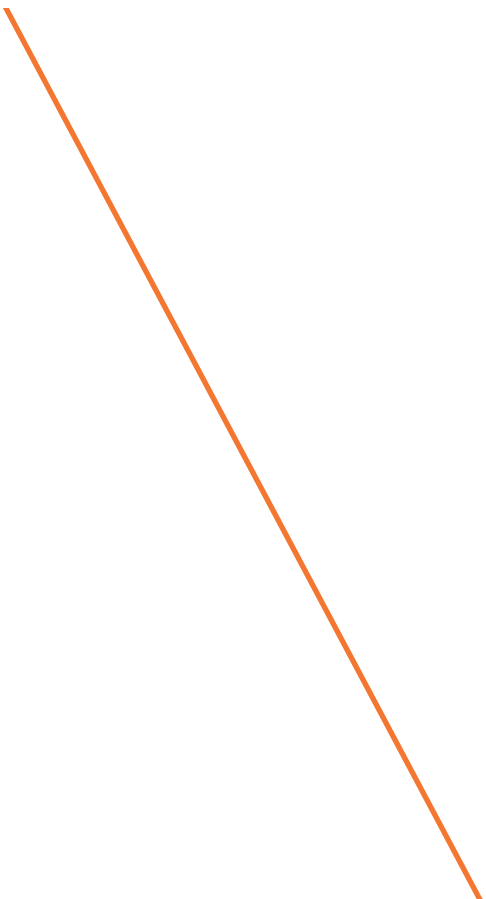


REPORT



CITIZEN SCHOOLS

LEARNING TO REBUILD DEMOCRACY



Jamie Audsley (Clare social fellow), Clyde Chitty, Jim O'Connell, David Watson and Jane Wills

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FOREWORD

A decade of work with children and young people has left me convinced that, despite popular belief, this is a generation that cares passionately about the future. However, young people often lack the knowledge and the tools to shape the world, leaving them disillusioned, apathetic and angry.

This is a loss for them and a disaster for us. It is not just that we need their energy and creativity to solve the problems we face – problems which, left unresolved, they will inherit. Rather, this widespread lack of confidence in politics and its power to change the world has left democratic politicians struggling to justify their mandate. Put quite simply, democracy can't survive like this.

We have long recognised this problem and the need to tackle it. Bernard Crick's 1998 report, which led to the introduction of citizenship education in schools, highlighted the lord chancellor's prescient warning that: 'We should not, must not, dare not, be complacent about the health and future of British democracy. Unless we become a nation of engaged citizens, our democracy is not secure.'

Despite this, 15 years on, the introduction of compulsory education in citizenship has not produced the secure democracy he demanded. This is in part for the reasons recognised half a century ago by the Newsom report, which found that citizenship education was too often arid, boring and abstract.

That's why Citizen Schools matter – because we learn to play an active part in society not by thinking, but by doing, as the studies in this report demonstrate. This is especially true for those young people for whom the law and parliament seem – and often are – a world away. Over recent years we have seen how initiatives like the Centrepunt Parliament, which gives homeless teenagers power to make decisions locally and to influence the national agenda, have opened up a world of possibilities for talented, passionate young people. Given the stale world of Westminster, politics needs an injection of youthful energy.

But too few young people have these opportunities, to their detriment and ours. So, where better to start than in school? In good schools horizons expand, minds open and young people learn to think, dissect, analyse and argue. In the process they learn independence of thought, tolerance and courage. Too often, in pursuit of a narrow academic agenda, a broad curriculum is portrayed by politicians as the enemy of success. In fact, the reverse is true: the qualities that Citizen Schools engender are the very basis of a fulfilled life and a good society. Schools are among our strongest civic institutions, rooted in their communities. Engaging the passion, energy and creativity of young people creates not just better schools, but better communities too.

Above all, this report reminds us of two important things we have lost sight of in recent years. First, that active engagement matters – as Isaiah Berlin wrote, to choose and not to be chosen for is an inalienable part of being human. But, at the same time, we are social by nature and our individual fulfilment is dependent on our collective wellbeing. These are facts we have too quickly forgotten, and as a result we have left too many young people without the confidence, skills and power they need to live fulfilled lives and build a better society. Let's change that now.

Lisa Nandy

Labour MP for Wigan and shadow children's minister

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is a Citizen School?

A Citizen School is a school that explicitly creates a democratic culture through its role as a civic institution. It does this by enabling young people and other members of the school community to develop their citizenship and their ability to participate in public life.¹

This report confirms that schools can be the key institution in society for fostering a democratic culture. It makes the case for broadening the current purpose of schools to include this fostering role, and for understanding that this need not detract from – and may in fact enhance – academic or vocational purposes.

Why now?

In 2002, under a Labour government, citizenship was introduced as a statutory subject and schools were required to support their communities through the extended schools programme. In 2007, through legislation, government determined that schools have a duty to promote community cohesion. While these state-led initiatives did support some work beyond a school's four walls, many schools struggled to undertake active citizenship activities within their communities. As a result, embedding citizenship education through links with the community was identified as an unfulfilled goal.²



Meet the team

Prendergast Ladywell Fields College's 'Young Citizens' gather before a community walk

In 2010, the change of government led to a change of emphasis. The Coalition government set up the National Citizen Service for 16 and 17-year-olds to create opportunities for young people to develop skills for life and work and to put this into practice by engaging with their communities. They choose to deliver this initiative via a centrally funded network of providers (mainly large charities) rather than using schools as the key institution. In the case of so-called free schools, communities are given the chance to engage with the planning of new provision in their area on a micro scale, but there is no guarantee of continued, structured interaction after the school is up and running. As a consequence, rather than building on previous policies to address the problems which existed, there is a danger that these new programmes will be disconnected from ongoing work. Indeed, there remains a significant gap between schools, civil society and various efforts to renew democratic culture.³

We saw this as a rich area for research, to address four key questions:

1. How are active citizens developed in the school?
2. How does the school involve its local community in making decisions about the school itself?
3. How do these active citizens then take action in their community?
4. How does the school contribute to decisions in the community?

1 See section 1.4

2 See section 1.2

3 See sections 1.1 and 1.2

Our research

Our report is a practice-oriented piece of research developed using a range of social research methods.⁴ Four schools demonstrating good practice in developing citizenship were selected for the study. They were selected following advice from the Institute of Education and because they embody different approaches to citizenship education:

- **Nower Hill High School**, which possesses an excellent citizenship curriculum
- **St Clere's School**, a cooperative school that emphasises these values
- **RSA Academy Tipton**, which has citizenship as one of its strategic purposes
- **Prendergast Ladywell Fields College**, where young people are trained in community organising.

Over 80 in-depth interviews were carried out with students, members of the senior leadership team, teachers, governors, parents and community leaders across these four schools.⁵

Highlights from analysis of the case studies⁶

We found that each school:

- **Ensured citizenship was an integral element of the school's purpose:** Citizenship, in some form, has been identified as crucial to the school's vision and therefore success.
- **Created a democratic and participative culture of citizenship:** Processes of internal democracy have evolved whereby young people, teachers and community members participate in the life of the school.
- **Enabled learning through action:** Citizenship has been taken beyond the classroom to achieve tangible changes in the community.
- **Connected citizenship education to the school's improvement strategy and work to raise overall educational standards:** High-quality citizenship education supports a culture of raising standards.

Recommendations⁷

- **Headteachers and their governing bodies should be supported to become engaged with the idea of Citizen Schools and to organise their own Citizen School development plans** based on the principles and key features of best practice identified in this report. Relevant educational agencies – including Ofsted, the National College for Teaching and Leadership and the National Governors' Association – should consider how to support leaders of Citizen Schools, including the sharing of best practice and resources between Citizen Schools.
- **Regional and area-based curriculums should be updated** to include relevant active citizenship opportunities and map civil society actors to support schools to take practical action with their communities.
- **Current and future government citizenship initiatives should be devolved to a more local level and Citizen Schools encouraged to deliver them** to ensure that this work is institutionalised, sustained and shared. Current programmes of this type include the National Citizen Service and the Cabinet Office Democratic Engagement Programme.

4 See chapter 2

5 For full case studies, see chapter 3; for analysis, see chapter 4

6 See section 5.1

7 See section 5.3



Taking action

After the 2011 riots, Prendergast and their local Lewisham citizens alliance worked to spread Citizens UK's CitySafe Haven campaign across the borough

Next steps⁸

- Members of the Citizen Schools research team continue to support Citizen Schools' activities – follow our work or join us at <http://citizenschool.org.uk/>
- Learn more about:
 - Citizens UK – <http://www.citizensuk.org/>
 - Cooperative Schools – <http://www.co-operativeschools.coop/>
 - RSA education – <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/learning,-cognition-and-creativity/education>
- Further research on active citizenship and its contribution to academic success is being undertaken by London Youth and Ofsted – see <http://www.londonyouth.org.uk/>
- The independent Campaign for Youth Social Action is supporting Citizen Schools – see <http://youthsocialaction.co.uk/>

⁸ See section 5.4

INTRODUCTION: SCHOOLS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Over the past 30 years, we have been telling our young people and each other a very particular story about education. The story goes something like this: work hard, get good qualifications and you can be a success. After that, though, we usually stop. We agree with this story as far as it goes: we can affirm that it is vital to achieve good levels of English and maths in order to make progress academically and vocationally; to develop good social skills; and to gain the necessary skills for work and life. It is vital for our children to achieve the best possible outcomes from our education system – and vital for our country that they do so.

However, that story focuses on the success of the individual rather than of the collective. By contrast, the notion of Citizen Schools makes the case for broadening the purpose of education through the role that schools can play as civic organisations – that is, as institutions that develop their students' citizenship and ability to contribute to democracy. This is not to neglect the academic or the vocational, but to augment it.

In the current system, young people who achieve educational success are more likely to move away to attend university or college. There is an implication, then, that those who do not have somehow failed to succeed and are being left behind, often in places that are themselves failing.⁹ We think that a renewed focus on the civic potential of schools can help to reinforce the value of all students, their locality and its people, as well as helping to raise academic standards in schools.

It is time to start telling a new story, one that focuses on the role our schools can play in delivering justice in their local areas, both in terms of education itself and in relation to the wider issues that affect our everyday lives. With a greater focus on schools as civic organisations that develop their members as citizens, the division between the journey of the individual and the journey of the community can be interwoven, reducing the current imbalance. Schools can educate for a social purpose and the educational needs of a democratic polity, as well as meeting the particular needs of their students (see Englund 2000).¹⁰



More than two at a time

Working to build relationships with shops has changed how Prendergast's students are seen in the community

Revitalising the individual's contribution to society and renewing our democracy are objectives our political leaders talk about in speeches but rarely root in the realities of our school system. Talking about his 'big society' concept, David Cameron (2010) called for: 'a huge culture change ... [I]f it unleashes community engagement – we should do it. If it crushes it – we shouldn't.' Ed Miliband (2012) has spoken of his mission to change how people see politics: 'Because millions of people have given up on politics, they think we're all the same. Well I guess you could say I am out to prove them wrong.'

9 Wilkinson and Pickett 2009 – see chapters on educational performance and social mobility and their relationship to geographical segregation; Shirley 1997 – see introduction for an explanation of the failure to consider the state of civil society in urban reform programmes.

10 According to the British Social Attitudes Survey 2009, 98.5 per cent of respondents felt it was 'essential', 'very important' or 'fairly important' when asked 'How important is it that schools aim to develop the qualities of being a good citizen?' – see Park et al 2009.

Yet for all the rhetoric, the practical ideas for embedding this work within schools are currently lacking. As Chris Waller of the Association for Citizenship Teaching has said, there is a complete disconnect between the government's aim to build a 'big society' and the direction of our education system (cited in Shepherd 2011). We want Big Society Conservatives and One Nation Labourites to think about how they can work with teachers to realise the civic potential of schools.

In the next chapter, we explore the history of schools and citizenship. 'Citizenship' and 'active citizenship' are terms with various and competing meanings. In terms of citizenship, we follow the analysis by Michael Freedon (2003) of liberal theory to see citizenship as 'a set of attributes nourished in civil society, and a set of practices that does not necessarily – certainly not wholly – engage the state ... civil society on that view constitutes the most important sphere of socially responsible activity.' When referring to active citizenship in terms of an approach to learning, we mean 'learning by doing' to enable active participation in a modern democratic society. When referring to an active citizen, we mean someone who takes practical action in their local community and society in order to contribute to the building and maintaining of democracy (see Lawton 2000).

Based on this understanding, then, we develop the concept of the 'Citizen School'. By this, we mean individuals working together in the school and with the local community to effect change. We want to see the creation of schools that enable a better society and provide the space for the development of new citizens who are able to engage in public life as a long-term solution to the problems that exist in their communities (see Pring 2011). Education alone cannot solve pressing collective issues such as poverty or inequality (see Marsh 2011). Solving such issues, as educational reformer John Dewey insisted, requires democratic debate and action, and that depends upon the culture in which we all live (see Dewey 1916).

By this view of democracy, schools are centre-stage. They are the key institutions that can foster a democratic culture and allow it to flourish into the future. Every child in Britain has contact with a school. It is statutory: a right of the child and a responsibility of local authorities. If citizenship is important and universal, it would be baffling to consider delivering it anywhere other than in schools or developing an infrastructure for doing so that isn't wholly integrated with schools. This is why we believe that in educating the next generation of citizens, schools should have a mandate to develop the skills that allow young people to work for changes in their own communities and beyond.

We know that many teachers already place this vision at the heart of their understanding of the importance of education. But we also understand that, in practice, this activity is often ad hoc, easily squeezed out of the working day by time pressures and inadequate support. The pressure to raise academic standards is often cited as one of the biggest barriers to developing any kind of fuller, broader curriculum (see Keating et al 2009). However, in our case study schools civic engagement is being used to support school improvement and the academic success of students. Our research suggests that undertaking active citizenship activities with the community boosted motivation levels, increased confidence and created learning with greater relevance to student's lives, in turn enabling increased academic and social development.¹¹

11 See also Warren and Mapp 2011, which explores in much greater depth the relationships between community organising approaches and school improvement – see for example pages 52, 259–260.

Based on these indicative findings, we argue for an approach which combines academic success and civic engagement. Schools can take simple steps to develop enhanced civic capacity that will also contribute to greater educational success. Moreover, improved citizen involvement in schools can lead to a greater role for parents and other members of the community in raising educational standards and improving accountability.

As the findings of our research show, schoolchildren are not just young people, they are young *citizens* as well. Failure to recognise this and the potential for schools to be places of participation in civic life will continue to deny the full development of our nation's children and their communities. By and large, this is the current reality, which leaves this crucial development to chance and to the strength of local institutions outside of school (see Milburn 2012, Putnam and Feldstein 2003).

We argue that schools make ideal sites for the development of citizenship because they are necessarily public institutions. They develop governing structures and a local culture with the aim of reconciling differences and conflicts – whether socioeconomic, ideological or moral, both within and outside the institution – in order to advance their common purpose. This happens through governance processes, parent and pupil action, and the moral boundaries set by teachers, as well as via the board of governors who oversee the work of the school. Schools, then, are civic institutions, and through participating in decision-making and the creation and propagation of their unique culture, schools offer young people the opportunity to learn and practise the craft of active citizenship. In telling the story of Citizen Schools we combine an historical perspective with practical philosophy and primary research to arrive at recommendations for good practice to support the citizenship remit of our nation's schools. The focus of these recommendations is we citizens, not government – citizens, not the state, must be at the heart of this agenda.

1. TELLING A NEW STORY: THE CONCEPT OF CITIZEN SCHOOLS

1.1 Lessons from history

Citizenship and education have long been closely associated with one another. Even before the establishment of the state school system, citizenship was seen as something to be taught – through religious, political, and other voluntary organisations. Trade unions, in particular, represented a novel understanding of the relationship between the citizen and the state, and sought to promulgate this through workers' education. Often, this was aimed more at adults than at children. As state provision of education increased, these social movements maintained their influence either by continuing to provide supplementary education or by becoming involved with school governance. Faith groups, the state and trade unions have always competed for supremacy of vision and delivery of citizenship and education (see Simon 1965).

Throughout the 20th century, the education system has developed against a background of increasing influence by the state, both at local authority and national government levels. Indeed, the very notion of a 'state school' seems to imply a didactic function with regard to citizenship – if the state is the teacher then the student is surely a citizen.

Denis Lawton and his co-authors have argued that after 1945, there were essentially two main views of the nature and purpose of citizenship education: the passive citizen view, involving training for conformity and obedience, and the active citizen view, involving education for active participation in a modern democratic society (see Lawton et al 2000). In Lawton's words: 'the first approach runs the risk of provoking boredom; the second the risk of facing accusations of subversion' (Lawton 2000).

It was certainly a sense of boredom and alienation that was provoked by the teaching of 'civics' or 'social studies' in secondary modern schools in the 1940s and 1950s. Young boys and girls were meant to leave school with a respect for authority and a clear sense of where they fitted into the social hierarchy. The 1963 Newsom report expressed concern about the way citizenship, civics, current affairs, modern history and social studies was taught in secondary modern schools. It argued that 'they need lively presentation in terms of people and events, if they are not to seem arid and boring abstractions to most boys and girls' (CACE 1963).

The influence of the state continued to rise during the late 1970s and 1980s. This period of development saw the interpretation of citizenship as the right to education, through the comprehensive schools system, and the idea that all students should receive access to the same curriculum opportunities in the same schools. However, grammar and private schools remained popular with many parents and continued to thrive (see Lawton 1973). Citizenship, meanwhile, remained implicit rather than explicit.

The Thatcher, Major and Blair governments generally promoted an increasingly diverse school system. Now, this comprises at least 20 types of secondary school, and this process of diversification has again opened up questions about our rights to equal access to schools and curriculums (see Chitty 2012). With the development of free schools and the extension of academies, we now need to rethink how justice can be ensured within this system and how schools and citizens can work together to ensure all our children have the chance to thrive and achieve their best.

While we want the state to play a significant role, we also believe there is a greater role for civic participation and community governance to ensure that freedom, plurality and

diversity are effectively combined with the competing values of democracy, accountability and cooperation. Indeed, the values of the market have an increasing influence on the values of the school as an institution and the curriculum that is delivered, producing citizens as successful entrepreneurial individuals able to contribute to the demands of a globalised economy. It is therefore vital that our communities play a greater role to ensure that citizenship is also shaped by civil society (see Ozga and Lingard 2007).

1.2 Citizenship education in recent times

In 2002, the Labour government introduced citizenship as a statutory subject in the English national curriculum for all students aged 11–16. In doing so, it was implementing the recommendations of the 1998 Crick report, which aimed to respond to concerns about declining democratic involvement, the weakness of social identity and the need to encourage collective responsibility. The national curriculum for citizenship comprises three key components: democracy and justice, rights and responsibilities, and identities and diversity. It sets out teaching requirements across a wide range of content areas, including politics; parliament and government; the operation of the legal system; how the economy functions; the role of the media; human rights; Europe and international relations. The citizenship curriculum also focuses on skills and aptitudes (critical thinking; analysing information; expressing opinions; taking part in discussions and debates; negotiating; conflict resolution and participating in community action) and values and disposition (respect for justice, democracy and the rule of law; openness and tolerance; courage to defend a point of view and a willingness to listen to, work with and stand up for others).¹² Students are able to take a GCSE and A-level in citizenship.

Schools have delivered the requirement for citizenship in different ways, many teaching it through tutor periods and combining it with personal social health and economic (PSHE) lessons. Others have developed it as a discrete subject. The Citizenship Foundation has identified the most effective form of learning in citizenship education as being active, emphasising learning by doing; interactive, with the inclusion of discussion and debate; relevant, by focusing on real-life issues facing young people and society; critical, encouraging young people to think for themselves; collaborative, by employing group work and cooperative learning; and participative, to give young people a say in their own learning.¹³ A key emphasis of the citizenship curriculum has therefore been on ‘active citizenship’, to teach students to work together and take practical action, using their citizenship knowledge and understanding to contribute to a better society. In order to enable ‘active’ learning that is connected to the world beyond the classroom, leading citizenship practitioners have emphasised the importance of weaving together the citizenship taught within the curriculum with the wider culture and community of a school. This ensures that learning is properly reinforced and made meaningful through personal experience (see Hammond 2009).

The subject has developed over time. Schools have improved their programmes, increasingly embracing it within their curriculum and providing training and leadership development to teachers to improve their practice. While significant progress was made over the last decade in terms of establishing citizenship, it did take time for aims to become clear, standards to be understood and leadership within the subject and schools to strengthen. Quality and impact are still uneven across the country, and it has never been clear that all schools have actually met the requirements of the curriculum.

¹² See <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/secondary/b00199157/citizenship>.

¹³ See <http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/page.php?286>.

In addition, and most importantly, many schools have struggled to facilitate active citizen participation outside of school and to forge links with their local communities (see Keating et al 2009, Ofsted 2006).

Later in the period of the ‘New Labour’ government, schools were also expected to actively support community cohesion and provide ‘extended schools’, whereby the school became a base and a resource for activities within the wider community.¹⁴ These legislative duties worked in some schools but in others they failed to take off (Keating et al 2009).

Now, under austerity conditions and with the withdrawal of funding combined with a renewed focus on raising academic standards, the focus on active citizenship is in danger of disappearing from the agenda. There is, therefore, the need for citizenship to be recast, primarily in relation to the culture and engagements of the whole school community rather than as a discrete part of the curriculum (a point that Jonathan Sachs (1999) emphasised with his analysis of the implementation of citizenship as a subject).

Citizen Schools are about embedding citizenship in the culture of the school, so that it can influence the way that things are done and the nature of relationships and aspirations rather than being seen merely as another contained part of the curriculum. This means it will look different in every school – but, crucially, it will be meaningful to participants, rather than being experienced as something imposed ‘from above’ that is delivered primarily to meet the demands of the state. While those at the heart of the Crick citizenship agenda emphasised the importance of combining curriculum, culture and community, too often in schools the ability to develop community links and actually take action to effect change was deemed to be an area of weakness. Citizenship as a subject itself often failed to gain sufficient prominence within a school to stimulate wider culture change, and embedding citizenship education through links with the community remains an unfulfilled goal in schools (see Hammond 2009, Keating et al 2009, Ofsted 2006, 2009).

The current Coalition government has brought its own particular approach to this area, largely focusing on trying to give more power to communities by expanding the academies programme (which, concurrently, has led to a removal of power from local authorities) and, more controversially, introducing the free schools application process. This latter policy has provided a way to involve citizens at a local scale in devising new education provision in their area. Yet because it is only the process by which free schools are set up that makes them distinct from academies, there is nothing intrinsic to their structure to encourage strong citizen relationships once the school gates open for the first time. This is especially pertinent given the number of free schools in operation now that were never community-led even in their creation. If citizenship was to become central to what all schools do then free schools could be expected to have a head-start in doing it well – but only if they were community-led endeavours in the first place and only if the citizen involvement extends beyond opening day. The free schools policy represents, therefore, an opportunity that is currently being missed.

In addition to school-focused reforms, the Coalition also set up the National Citizen Service for 16 and 17-year-olds. This programme (usually four weeks in length) aims to develop young people’s skills for work and life and to support them to put the skills they learn into practice by taking on a project in their community. It involves a residential visit to an activity centre during the school holidays and can be undertaken in spring,

¹⁴ Community cohesion was introduced as a statutory requirement in September 2007 and removed as a statutory requirement in 2010. The extended schools programme was launched in 2002.

summer or autumn. It is delivered via a centrally funded network of providers (mainly large charities) and while it does engage with schools, schools have not been the key institution through which the work has been delivered, nor has it been integrated into the citizenship curriculum. A disconnect therefore remains between citizenship education in the school and the potential for citizenship education through links with the community – which is one of the central points made in the evaluation of citizenship education in England (see Keating et al 2009). In essence, the pathway for young people to transition from learning citizenship in their school to taking action in their communities remains uncompleted.

1.3 Community organising and schools

In a parallel set of developments, some schools in the United States – and to a limited extent also in London – have experimented with the techniques of community organising as a way to change their culture of civic life and practice of civic engagement (see Shirley 1997, Warren and Mapp 2011).

The origin of community organising goes back to the work of Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation in Chicago in the 1930s (see, among others, Alinsky 1946, 1971, Gecan 2004). Community organising focuses on building relationships between the organisations of civil society – including schools and universities – in an area. Having fostered relationships between key individuals in these organisations, the alliance will then spend time listening to people's expressions of the issues that impact on the local community and identifying shared issues that can provide a focus for action. By struggling together for the common good, the alliance aims to teach the art of politics, develop leadership and strengthen the public realm. The role of a community organiser is to build and develop these local alliances by working as a coach, advisor and trainer of local leaders, who are then supported to do politics and take action. Recent campaigns led by Citizens UK (the home of Alinsky-style community organising in the UK) have concerned, among other things, the 'living wage', a community land trust to ensure genuinely affordable housing, and access to local employment (see Wills 2009, 2012, 2013).

As the practice and success of community organising has developed, the work has become increasingly integrated with schools. Over 200 community alliances in the US are engaged in organising that is linked to schools and the education system (see Shirley 1997, Warren and Mapp 2011). This has been used as a way of developing the leadership of students, parents and staff while also addressing the issues that have affected schools and their ability to improve education outcomes. The shared issues have included those which affect the community at large as well as those which are more specific to schools themselves, such as working to improve school sites and facilities.

Where the work with schools has been most firmly established, the action taken by community alliances has also moved to focus explicitly on improving the education and school system itself. This has involved campaigns to shape the direction of education policy and practice and to hold public officials accountable for improving performance. Specific examples include work to improve funding for schools; set up extracurricular provision; start new schools; address issues of testing and accountability; improve teacher training; develop programmes to train parents as teachers; and improve teacher autonomy (ibid).

Writing about this work in the US, Mark Warren argues that it is vital to see it in the context of the failure of urban schools, which he analyses as being connected to systemic questions of social injustice and a lack of power in low-income communities. Warren identifies this work as having had historical links with the civil rights movement – the

struggle for education and the struggle for liberation are fundamentally connected (Warren and Mapp 2011). Linked to our historical analysis of the English secondary school system, we too connect this work with the struggle for all citizens to gain access to education as a fundamental and universal right.

Learning from American experiences, Citizens UK has worked similarly to support schools in developing their vision and practice as civic organisations in their communities. They have outlined three key principles (Jameson and Chapleau 2011):

1. the use of the school as an institution from which to organise
2. the development of relationships that build on the self-interest of the many individuals involved in a school's community
3. the provision of ongoing leadership training to create capacity.

This has been underpinned by support to connect this work to the school's wider views and understanding of educational theory and practice, enabling schools to properly integrate community organising and to make meaningful local relationships.

This work aims to be holistic, linking home with school and overcoming barriers to effective learning and good teaching practice at the same time. Community organising takes the community into schools, but organisers also take schools out into the community (Warren and Mapp 2011). We see this as vital in developing Citizen Schools.¹⁵

1.4 What is a Citizen School?

A Citizen School is a school that explicitly creates a democratic culture through its role as a civic institution. It does this by enabling students and other members of the school community to develop their citizenship and their ability to participate in public life. As Andrew Adonis (2012) has written, the connection to democracy and social responsibility should be integral to our schools. However, our argument is that while citizenship should be part of the curriculum – something to be taught and learned – it should also be at the heart of the school as an institution.¹⁶



Getting involved

Students at Nower Hill discussing the issues they want to address in their community

A Citizen School is a school not merely *for* citizens – it is *of* citizens. When the school is an institution of citizens, it can behave as a civic institution itself. The Citizen School is constituted of all the citizens in its community: its children and young people, its teachers, its parents, its business people, community organisations connected to it, and its politicians. In this form, it can play a role in deliberative democracy, and power and control must be shared so that key decisions are made by all these groups. The Citizen School can have a genuine, purposive impact on its community and beyond – as such, it comprises citizens and *is* civic.

¹⁵ As part of its 'big society' strategy the government awarded the contract to train 500 community organisers to Locality, an organisation formed in 2011 from the merger of Bassac (the British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres) and the Development Trust Association. Research will be required into how this organisation's approach to community organising connects with schools.

¹⁶ Previous thinking on democratic education supports this thinking – see for example Bloom 1952, Trafford 2008.

The argument for Citizen Schools is that, as institutions, schools must seek to achieve internal justice in the form of the full participation and involvement of all the citizens (including fair and just access to the school itself) which make up the body – the *polis* – of the school. In order to develop a collective participative democracy, this body must include students, parents, teachers and members of the community. The power of these groups will not always be equal, and need not be. What must be achieved is a way of recognising the role each constituency plays as a reciprocal element of the school's body politic, and it will be for each school to effectively negotiate this balance. There are powers that a head teacher and governing body must hold and enact as agents of the state, just as there will be powers that a civic community must claim themselves – this will inevitably be a balance that is constantly negotiated.

Having constructed an internal culture and vision of 'just citizenship' – although, in practice, this is more likely to develop if the school is already engaging with its community – each school then has the ability to step out and take action to pursue its vision of justice, to influence both its own community and the school system itself. This we see as a virtuous circle in which school and community, state and citizen, create a dynamic and creative relationship and work to hold each other to account. This will be vital if schools are to play a full role in both changing the conditions of the local area – factors which influence the educational outcomes of their children – and creating a culture of action through which a new generation of citizens can be supported. While these perspectives can be separated conceptually, they shouldn't be separated in reality, as they often are.

This vision for citizen schools means we all get to play a role, and one which we can start playing now. As our case studies demonstrate, we all get to learn and grow while contributing to the wider community.

1.5 Making it happen

To create Citizen Schools demands both the role of the state and strong civic participation in our communities. Looking back at Bernard Crick's efforts to embed citizenship education and at the lessons learnt taking community organising into our schools, it is clear that successive education policies have been poorly positioned to truly shift the culture and practice of schools. Making lasting change requires a shift towards a 'local republican' perspective, whereby community stakeholders are enabled to develop their own ideas and practices for embedding citizenship in schools. **See section 5.3, recommendations 1 and 3.**

As our case studies indicate, individuals, communities and schools are prepared and able to organise in order to curtail negative influences on education and wider community outcomes. In understanding the organising potential of schools and their local communities, this agenda will feed in to the wider move towards localism in public policy thinking. We therefore hold to the view that RH Tawney put forward: 'There is no probability that what suits Lancashire or the West Riding will appeal equally to London or Gloucestershire or Cornwall, and if education is to be an inspiration, not a machine, it must reflect the varying social traditions, moral atmosphere, economic conditions of different localities' (Tawney 1922: 28). The RSA's approach to developing an area-based curriculum is a practical way to deliver this vision (see RSA 2011). **See section 5.3, recommendation 2.**

We envisage that each Citizen School would start by addressing its own internal dynamics, so that the process of embedding citizenship becomes a vital element of school governance. This would ensure schools hardwire the work into their culture, enabling better outcomes for their students and their local community. **See section 5.3, recommendation 1.**

2. OUR RESEARCH PROGRAMME

2.1 Background

The catalyst for our Citizens Schools research was our team's involvement with Citizens UK, the focal point in this country for Alinsky-style community organising, and their work to embed the practice of community organising in schools and to connect this with 'active citizenship' as part of the national curriculum. This work involved many people, especially the leadership of Neil Jameson, director of Citizens UK, and Ben Hammond, the organisation's first schools coordinator. On our research team, Jamie Audsley and Jim O'Connell have worked as community organisers with schools across London and Jane Wills has played a role as a community leader and active participant within her local Citizens UK alliance in east London. She also teaches the only master's degree programme in community organising in the UK.

From our experience, community organising in schools can enable growth among students, staff and parents, and support change inside and outside the school. We wanted to see how and why it was working and its wider implications. We also wanted to understand other approaches that share similar aims. We therefore developed a modest research project to explore the concept of Citizen Schools in more detail.

To select case studies, we sought the recommendations of those working in the fields of citizenship education, community organising, school improvement and cooperative education, in order to identify four schools that that would each demonstrate a particular approach to being a 'Citizen School'. The schools we were able to work with were: Nower Hill High School in Harrow, Middlesex; St Clere's School in Thurrock, Essex; the RSA Academy in Tipton, West Midlands; and Prendergast Ladywell Fields School in Lewisham, London. By undertaking in-depth research in these schools we aimed to capture best practice, so that other schools might benefit from the learning and we would be able to develop recommendations aimed at supporting the concept of Citizen Schools.

2.2 Research methodology

The research was designed to answer four primary research questions that examined the internal and external workings of the schools in relation to citizenship. The first two questions focus on the internal practices of the school and the latter two on external activities and relations.

1. How are active citizens developed in the school?
2. How does the school involve its local community in making decisions about the school itself?
3. How do these active citizens then take action in their community?
4. How does the school contribute to decisions in the community?

We undertook our research between March and July 2012 and followed a mixed methodology approach, after Mark Warren (Warren and Mapp 2011) who has undertaken extensive research on community organising and schools in the US. Research methods included over 80 semi-structured interviews (approximately 20 in each school); focus groups with students; questionnaires with students; observations of teaching, citizenship training activities, school activities and community events; analysis of these activities against the development of key active citizenship skills. Documentation from the curriculum and further relevant evidence was also analysed, and efforts have been made to respond to the schools' local context in representing their work.

Participants in the research included members of the senior leadership team, classroom teachers, governors, parents, students and community leaders, and a roughly equal number of interviews were undertaken for each of these participant groups – that is, around three or four per group per school. Participants were identified on the basis of their involvement in this area at their school and they were engaged through the school. Research in each school was undertaken by at least two of the five team members, and content analysis of the findings was then undertaken to ensure a fair and balanced analysis.

An overview of each case study school follows in chapter 3, before we move on to draw out the findings and lessons of the research in relation to the four key research questions above.

3. PUTTING IT TO THE TEST: CASE STUDIES OF CITIZEN SCHOOLS IN ACTION

3.1 The school with a strong focus on the citizenship curriculum: Nower Hill High School, Harrow, Middlesex

Results, 2012

GCSE: 80% of students achieved five or more A*–C grades including English and maths; 92% achieved five or more A*–C grades; 91% of all grades in A*–C range

Nower Hill is a school of 1,870 students, including a sixth form, which converted to an academy in September 2011. A high proportion of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is also high. Approximately one-quarter of the students are of white British heritage; another quarter are of Indian background, and there are smaller numbers of African, Caribbean and Pakistani students. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The school has very good academic results and an ‘Outstanding’ assessment from Ofsted. It is popular and recruits very strongly from its geographical catchment in Harrow, north London.

The school came to our attention as it has long been a strong advocate for citizenship education in schools. In 2003, the school conducted a review of citizenship teaching, and found that it was perceived to be a subset of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) without explicit curriculum time or ‘department’ status. A minority of students were involved in the school council and an aspiration to spread this activity across the whole school had not been achieved.

‘While we were doing enough from the perspective of what was required by Ofsted, we knew we weren’t providing the best for our students at this stage. Citizenship can’t just be a subject where you just fill it up with teachers who have got a bit of spare [time], a bit of slack. You need people who are inspirational people who are inspired themselves and who are devoted to the subject.’

Jon Mason, citizenship coordinator

Together with the headteacher, Howard Freed, Jon Mason set out to create a cutting-edge citizenship department and curriculum to develop students who are ‘more than just narrow individuals’. Nower Hill made a number of key changes: they appointed a citizenship advanced skills teacher; established a discrete citizenship department; recruited four specialist citizenship teachers; allocated curriculum time to whole-school citizenship days; developed a bespoke citizenship course; identified citizenship classrooms, and taught citizenship to all year groups.



Investigating the issue

Students at Nower Hill consider approaches to improving street safety with their local police team

‘What we wanted to do is to take what is discussed in the classroom out into broader life within the school and also within the community ... To be successful we have to break down the barriers between the classroom and the wider world.’

Jon Mason, citizenship coordinator

As a result, Nower Hill's focus on citizenship as a specialist subject has developed a culture that that enables students to gain the skills, understanding and ability to participate as citizens in their community. The subject has been vital to driving best practice, improving student learning and inculcating positive behaviour in the school and its community.

'Before I did citizenship, politics was meaningless ... I didn't understand what politicians were saying. Now I've started to understand and as we've talked about it, I want to get more involved, to contribute.'

Student, Nower Hill

Another student was particularly complementary about their work on their active citizenship project and told us that it had given them more confidence.

'More confidence to actually do stuff, to become – you know – more adult. It's taught us how to meet with adults, how to meet with people who are more powerful. We've learnt to take action, to be independent. It has given me the confidence to get involved in society. We need more of these projects where we actually do things ... actually take action, take risks; where we are asked to step up and become active. The project has been exciting. We've actually been able to experience something, move beyond the four walls. It has given us the capacity to do this. The school has also supported us to campaign, or hasn't stopped us campaigning. We got involved in the campaign against the school becoming an academy, we campaigned to improve street safety. We've learnt how to take action.'

Student, Nower Hill

Headteacher Howard Freed has also seen positive changes.

'Our implementation of citizenship has made a massive difference. Students understand that this aspect of the school community is vital and they recognise the excellent professionals that support them. Citizenship has enabled young people to experience and gain the skills they need ... and I've seen big changes in our students as we implemented and developed it.'

Howard Freed, headteacher

While the focus has been on the citizenship department and their activities, Nower Hill has also made some changes in the way in which their school community is represented. They have redesigned the school council to include an elected executive committee; they hold pupil consultation days, and conduct questionnaire surveys to canvas the views of students and staff; and they have appointed a senior teacher to promote and protect the students' voice in the school. Refocusing their attention on citizenship education has prompted the school to improve its internal democracy as well as providing opportunities for students to engage in the wider community and learn to practise citizenship.



Building connections

Students at Nower Hill meeting with other local schools as part of their cross-borough active citizenship work

3.2 The school with a cooperative ethos: St Clere's School, Thurrock, Essex

Results, 2012

GCSE: 64% of students achieved five or more A*–C grades including English and maths; 90% achieved five or more A*–C grades; 100% achieved at least one A*–G grade

St Clere's is a school for just over 1,000 boys and girls aged 11–16. It is a cooperative academy and science college with strong academic results. It originally became a grant maintained school in 1993, motivated by the ability to gain greater autonomy. The values of the school and its leadership team have always been about developing a high-achieving school which also has a strong focus on contributing to its community, although there was no explicit focus on the values of good citizenship beyond that required by the national curriculum. This changed in 2009, when the school took the opportunity to become a cooperative trust school; in 2011, when it became a cooperative academy, and again in April 2012, when St Clere's was joined by East Tilbury Infant and Junior schools and Thameside Primary School to form the first multi-academy cooperative trust in the country. These institutional changes, along with the focus on sustaining improvements to teaching and learning, provided the vehicle for St Clere's and other member schools within the trust to develop their vision for education with a strong focus on citizenship.

At a time of significant change in the education system, members see the cooperative model as an imaginative answer to their desire for both institutional freedom and to contribute to the good of all young people in their local area. The model they have developed provides a civic governance alternative to both traditional bureaucratic democracy in the form of local authorities and more recent market-oriented alternatives.

In this regard, the school has established some core values – mutuality, reciprocity and civic participation – and seeks to embed these in the life, activity and wider relationships of the school community. Students have gained relevant skills through a formally taught citizenship course, the design of cooperative lessons, and relevant extra-curricular activities, such as working with the local cooperative youth forum. The democratic and participative cooperative structure of the school has been further enhanced by a strong culture of 'inclusive' decision-making, which has permeated through to the students. The governance of the trust, internal decision-making within each school and the involvement of local community organisations and parents were all designed to facilitate cooperation. Formally, the school has one parent governor as well as a student council and a parent council, which each feed into school decision-making. The trust's leadership conceived of these bodies as providing the 'student voice' and 'parent voice' to guide the development of the school. The secretary described the implications of this governance model to us.



Collective decisions

Students at St Clere's participate in regular sessions to ensure their views are fed into the school's decision-making

‘Now the trust board will be made up of members from all the schools in an equitable sense, which is very different from some of the other academies or academy chains. Any fundamental changes to the work that we’re doing would require three-quarters of all members to have to vote for any future change.’

Kate Draper, secretary to the cooperative trust

The students at St Clere’s demonstrated impressive awareness of themselves as active citizens.

‘Well now I know that my thought counts, because before I always thought it was all the grown-ups that made the decisions, but now we can put our input in and we can change the things that we want.’

Student, St Clere’s

‘[To change something we can] put it forward to the school council, and they can sort it out with the governors, or they can put it forward to the youth council if it’s big.’

Student, St Clere’s

Teachers described to us the values they sought to instil in their students.

‘Students will be able to go positively into the community and have those values. So I think that the school tries to teach students a sense of self-resilience and to realise that once they go out into the job market they need those values of communication and cooperation. [We] need to build a perspective in students that enables them to think “I’ve already worked with the community, I can be a valuable asset.” And what we try to do is focus on skills within lessons, as opposed to a knowledge-based approach to learning.’

Phillipa Buckingham, English teacher



Values into action

St Clere’s students contributing to keep their local area tidy

By leading the local network of schools, St Clere’s had a vision of its role in this wider community and the potential it could play in boosting the fortunes of the area around the schools. In working with these other schools, staff at St Clere’s felt they were contributing to progress.

‘We want the area to be made into an area that is full of achievement, a prestigious area. I definitely think it could do with a lot of boosting in its self-confidence. If you think about Essex, the negative stereotypes that come with that, we do need to collectively get together and diminish those.’

Staff member, St Clere’s

As with our other case studies, St Clere's has developed a set of values that they then seek to practise through the curriculum, as well as in the internal and external relationships that shape the life of the school. By modelling these values, the school seeks to produce good citizens and to play a positive role in the local community. While Nower Hill was driving these changes through their development of the curriculum, St Clere's was doing it largely through its governance structures and the culture of working in the wider community.

3.3 The school determined to change its role in the community: the RSA Academy in Tipton, West Midlands

Results, 2012

GCSE: 55% of students achieved five or more A*–C grades including English and maths; 99.5% achieved five or more A*–C grades; 20% achieved five A*/A; 40% achieved five A*–B. The points score of 695 puts the school in the first percentile of all UK schools for the third consecutive year. All of the first cohort of students taking the international baccalaureate were successful, and all post-16 students who applied to university were offered a place.

This independent, new-build academy has just over 1,000 students, including a sixth form, and is run on community comprehensive principles. It is sponsored by the RSA¹⁷ and is built on the site of a previous failing school, Willingsworth High, where attendance was below that of the national average and school buildings were poor. Thus, it is located in a community where educational attainment has historically been rather low and so the school has a mission to change local aspirations. Entry to the school is based purely on geography and, since opening in 2008, academic results have steadily improved.



Welcome to the RSA Academy Tipton

The new-build academy has brought a renewed confidence to young people and their role in the community

This RSA Academy was the first school to implement the new RSA curriculum innovation scheme called 'Opening Minds', which focuses on five core competencies: citizenship, learning, managing information, relating to people and managing situations. This innovative approach was developed because the RSA believed that young people needed to be better prepared for contemporary challenges and it is now being used in more than 200 schools across the UK.

A commitment to citizenship is at the core of the leadership and direction of the school and the RSA has tried to position the school as a major agent in the economic and social regeneration of Tipton. The school argues that it is important to give young people a belief in themselves and their community, along with opportunities for educational achievement and the acquisition of real-world skills. By changing the students, the school is clear that they are changing the community around the school.

¹⁷ The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce – see www.thersa.org

‘Ultimately, what we want to try to do is make sure that what we’ve got are active and engaged citizens ... who actually understand how to get the best out of other people in order to lever some of that change as well.’

Michael Gernon, principal

The Opening Minds curriculum means that lessons need to link to developing good citizens. This is achieved through a range of activities, including ongoing leadership training; enrichment programmes; cooperative tutor groups, with older students modelling behaviour change; meals eaten together as class groups; a focus on how the students develop relationships with each other, and a community service credit scheme.

As part of this work, the academy has set up a Comino Centre (with funding and support from the Comino Foundation) to develop leadership opportunities and training for students. The aim of the Centre is to develop student leadership in order to transform the local community. In practical terms, this has given the academy greater capacity to build a culture of student leadership throughout the school. There are numerous opportunities for students to take on a leadership role, for example as lead learners, STEM leaders, ICT champions, student parliament members, house captains and restorative practice leaders.

While aiming to improve educational standards, this activity also involves the potential for much wider change.

‘I want to create the skills that students can put back into the local community and start that within my house.’

John Anderson, head of house

The students echoed this sentiment.

‘The academy is getting involved with the community; it’s not just the community getting involved with the school. We sorted out and repaired the local wasteland – going out and doing something. This makes us more developed, more well-rounded, and more prepared for when we go out into the world to look for jobs. We’ll be connected with different people and have the resources to work things out.’

Student, RSA Academy

‘Our school community links very closely with our community and we are encouraged to get involved. We go out and help the community, for instance mentoring, taking football lessons, PE lessons, tidying up the community, tidying gardens, taking action to improve community problems.’

Sixth-form student, RSA Academy



Getting out there

Students at the RSA Academy working to improve their community

This is not only about how the school encourages students to be able and willing to engage with the local community, it is also about how it seeks to engage the community in the school's affairs.

'We have a varied body of people in the parent council, feedback is quite positive. We want to be at the heart of the community, to bring school and community together. A lot of people in our community didn't have a good relationship with school, so it's difficult for them to come back in now, but now we've got a lot of people who come in regularly. Parent council has now started to develop a wider community group. There's a community choir. We're trying to do a lot of things and keep building outwards.'

Racheal Baker, Family Links coordinator

The academy hasn't explicitly developed a language of 'doing politics' around citizenship in and beyond the school. Nevertheless, its focus on the development of leadership, the organisation of student, parent and local groups, and the strong connections between the formal and informal curriculum have together developed an enhanced capacity for the school to effect change. Much of this takes place through the enrichment programme, which allows students to apply their learning to real-life contexts during two half-day sessions a week. Students are able to choose from a wide range of activities that would normally be considered extracurricular, such as horticulture, community improvement projects and cookery. The enrichment programme is an integral part of the academy day but it is also connects to informal learning, through the school's role as a local community hub.

This has helped the students to engage with local concerns. One member of the parent council told us that they had liaised with local officials in order to get a new pedestrian crossing, reporting that this had involved door-to-door meetings to make change happen.

'[This required] student, parent and community pressure to actually change things, and I think if the community feel involved in changing things, we can. The houses along here, they'd complained about road safety for such a long time, and they've actually thought something has happened, and it's changed. It does drag people, whether they wanted to be or not, kicking and screaming into the grand scheme of things.'

Parent council member

Building on this kind of activity, the principal and director of partnerships at the school invested in a community development coordinator role to try to cement local relationships between schools and with the wider community. Thus the RSA Academy has an overarching mission to transform the lives of its students, but to do this through their relationships with the wider community. Citizenship is at the heart of learning as well as the culture and ethos of the school itself.

3.4 The school engaged in community organising: Prendergast Ladywell Fields College, Lewisham, London

Results, 2012

GCSE: 38% of students achieved five or more A*–C grades including English and maths. The school’s GCSE results improved considerably in 2011, although the percentage of students attaining five A*–C GCSE grades including English and mathematics remained below average in 2011 and 2012. The latest Ofsted visit commented that the school was on track to achieve a ‘Good’ rating.

Prendergast is a community comprehensive school for 898 children aged 11–16. It has a high proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and particularly significant numbers of children of black British Caribbean and black British African heritage. Proportions are also above average for those known to be eligible for free school meals and for those speaking English as an additional language. The school has new buildings and was opened in 2009 on the site of Crofton School, which had one of the worst reputations in its borough – it was known as a failing school with poor community relations and a high turnover of students and staff.

‘[Crofton students] were seen as these negative, violent, knife-carrying, yobs. They weren’t enjoying that reputation at all, and for the vast majority of them, it was massively unfair.’

Mel Whitfield, headteacher

Having moved into new buildings and taken on a new name, the school sought to rebuild its image and local relationships. In 2009, the school joined Citizens UK in order to build and develop a culture of local leadership and community action. Community organising has been used as a way of supporting school and student improvement through being a positive force in the community, creating good community links, and aiding the leadership development of both students and staff. Teacher Simon Jones was appointed as head of active citizenship and started to develop a Young Citizens team based on the Citizens UK community organising model. At project initiation there were just four Young Citizens but over two years the numbers grew to a core team of 30 students with the support and participation of 200 students, staff and parents.



Spreading the word

Students at Prendergast meeting with Baroness Royal, Labour leader in the House of Lords, to communicate their approach to community organising

The Young Citizens group undertakes leadership training in team work, communication, negotiation, building relationships, planning, problem-solving, negotiation and a wide range of other non-cognitive skills. This leadership training is delivered by Citizens UK and school staff members working together, but then is put into practice in active campaigns both within and outside the school. Staff and students at Prendergast have participated in political action, and the school has worked with its local community to address urgent issues of street safety, dirty and neglected community spaces and the living wage

campaign.¹⁸ This has inspired a broad range of students to take up active roles as citizens within their social groups and local community, and to aspire to future roles in local and national politics.

‘It has expanded the horizons, the networks of our students, and given them and us an understanding of what is possible, that the world can change, that you can be successful.’

Simon Jones, teacher and Young Citizens leader

‘Before Young Citizens started, [our school] was a very small community. I felt it was just the students within the school, but since Young Citizens has come along it has 10-folded, it has expanded to beyond what I ever thought it would, and that involves churches, mosques and all the faiths, other primary schools and also our neighbours.’

Teaching assistant, Prendergast

‘Community organising has given me massive confidence [that] I can lead change for the future ... I want to be a politician ... and this is as a result of my citizenship work ... it’s just led the way for me. Active participation in citizenship activities has affected my GCSEs really positively ... it’s given me the motivation.’

Camilla, year 11 student

‘I would encourage [a culture of citizenship] because I want young people [not to] ... just sit around moaning [but to] get up and do something about it ... It’s also about rights and responsibilities. We don’t want our country being run by, and our future generations being educated by, people who have a very narrow, selfish view of the world.’

Simon Jones, teacher and Young Citizens leader

A number of community respondents endorsed this work, highlighting the genuine contribution that was being made by the school and the Young Citizens group.

‘Prendergast students are the glue that bind us together. On the CitySafe campaign they’ve led the way and made a massive contribution, often greater than we as adults could.’

Barry Mizen, director of the Jimmy Mizen Foundation¹⁹

‘The ideas come from the kids. They’re the ones who approached the police. They’re the ones who approached the shopkeepers in the safe haven project ... There might be a teacher in the background but [the kids] are leading ... I really like that.’

Dave Hartwin, lead police officer for community relations

¹⁸ Students and staff have campaigned for the living wage as an issue prioritised by their local community alliance, not as an issue which is narrowly political or partisan.

¹⁹ The Mizen family founded the Jimmy Mizen Foundation in memory of their son, who was murdered in 2008. Jimmy died inside a shop, which led to the idea of CitySafe Havens as shops or civic buildings that offer themselves as places of sanctuary if there is a difficulty on the street. There are now over 300 safe havens across London.

‘Prendergast and their students are organising themselves towards genuine participation with the community, and this is really incarnated in a certain sense, in the flesh, real, and committed, and painful.’

Local priest who has worked with students on community issues

Wider outcomes include a shrinking geographical catchment area as a direct result of its improved exam results and reputation in the community. In this case, citizenship has been a means to develop a new range of activities for the students, staff and the wider community. It has had a significant impact on leadership development and the profile and relational capital of the school, and it coincides with improving academic performance.

3.5 Summary

As these summaries indicate, our case study schools were each pioneers of a different aspect of the Citizen School. The RSA Academy and to a lesser extent St Clere’s were focused on changing the values and aspirations of their own students as a way to make an impact on the wider community around the school, and then to foster more cooperative, collaborative and reciprocal relationships with key actors in the local community. Good citizenship was central to the whole school ethos. This commitment came from the leadership of both the school and its wider umbrella network (the RSA or the cooperative schools movement) and in many ways these schools were acting as beacons of best practice for these networks and their other schools.

In our other two examples, citizenship was delivered through a more discrete provision or set of activities – via Young Citizens at Prendergast or the citizenship curriculum at Nower Hill. This activity was less central to these schools’ overall culture and ethos, and in neither case was it part of a chain with additional organisational influence. Nonetheless, it still had the potential to impact upon the environment and outcomes of the school. This process of translation from the student experience to the larger community depended in part on the support provided by the schools’ leadership – in both cases, the headteacher endorsed and recognised the value of citizenship. In some ways, the top-down approach at the RSA Academy and St Clere’s made for an easier process of culture change and sedimentation; on the other hand, the bottom-up, experimental approach taken at Prendergast and Nower Hill had the potential to create greater innovation and very strong outcomes for the students and community members involved.

It is important to highlight the extent to which our research demonstrates the positive relationship between citizenship and educational performance. All our case study schools reported that developing their citizen culture and activities had changed the way in which their students approached their learning, and the extent to which they were then supported by the wider community.

‘We inherited passive learners, students who were spoon-fed, done to, and therefore didn’t really take responsibility for their own actions, and didn’t take responsibility for their own learning. That manifested itself in many ways in the early days: poor classroom behaviour, poor behaviour around the academy, the way they looked, the way they presented themselves, the way they spoke to others. It was vital we changed that, enabled responsibility, enabled leadership.’

Director of maths, science and technology, RSA Academy

Thus, for the RSA as for our other case study schools, developing students as citizens facilitated a shift whereby those students took greater responsibility for their own learning and improved their relationships with other students, teachers, parents and the wider community.

4. UNDERSTANDING CITIZEN SCHOOLS: ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDIES

In this chapter we focus first on the way in which these citizen schools were changing their internal culture – in relation to developing active citizens and bringing the community into the school – and then on the wider context, in which the school engages with the local community and so shapes developments beyond its walls. This analysis leads us to the next chapter which identifies founding principles for the development of Citizen Schools, their key features, and recommendations for how this institutional model can be taken forward.

4.1 Internal culture

- **How are active citizens developed in the school?**
- **How does the school involve its local community in making decisions about the school itself?**

The four schools examined for this study presented contrasting but often complementary approaches to the development of young people as active citizens. The schools we looked at all saw themselves as having a mandate to develop students as active citizens, and they all saw a role for themselves in providing opportunities for young people to act to further their interests both inside and outside the school. To this end, they all made this work explicit within their school development plans. **See section 5.3 recommendation 1.**

Each school's students were able to practise a range of the skills of active citizenship – teamwork, collective decision-making, political problem-solving. At the same time, they were able to develop the character of a citizen – bearing civic responsibility, pride, and – perhaps most important and inspirational – a sense of agency: a feeling that they can shape the world around them through taking civic action with others.

In each school, the answer to the first of our research questions – How are active citizens developed? – will naturally impact upon the other areas our research focused on: How does the school involve its local community in making decisions about the school itself? How do these active citizens then take action in their community? How does the school contribute to decisions in the community? In each school, we found different things going on, but all were practising citizenship to improve the school's performance and to develop local engagement.

Nower Hill High School's effort to develop active citizens focused on two key areas. First, the school implemented a high-quality citizenship curriculum for all students, enabling them to learn the skills of active citizenship through whole-school citizenship days and more meaningful active citizenship projects. Second, the school council was improved to expand and make more meaningful the democratic involvement of students across the school. These changes were aimed at breaking down barriers between the classroom and the wider school culture and local community. However, the opportunities for students to participate in significant active citizenship in their local community outside of discrete citizenship projects was relatively low, indicating that very impressive work done within the curriculum had not stimulated more active citizenship work with the community across the school. **See section 5.3, recommendation 2.**

St Clere's School's whole-school approach to citizenship, based on the cooperative model, enabled students to practise skills of active citizenship through the inclusion of cooperative skills in lessons, a formally taught citizenship course, and participation in the democratic workings of the cooperative itself. Opportunities to develop active citizenship were also available through connections with the local cooperative youth forum.

However, while the school has innovated in terms of its governance model, it still has some way to go to more fully develop into an institution that enables its members to learn through active citizenship in their community. Better connecting the classroom, school culture and the wider community is a key focus for the school in its next stage of development. **See section 5.3, recommendation 2.**

RSA Academy Tipton also takes a whole-school approach to citizenship. It takes a strategic approach to supporting improvements in its local community, explicitly focusing on the development of young people as citizens who will lead this change. As a result, students are developed as active citizens in all areas of school life – through an explicit focus on citizenship competencies in the curriculum, a wide range of active citizenship projects in both the formal and informal curriculum, and leadership development connected to citizenship skills. The school also provides opportunities to take action outside the school by weaving together the school’s parent and student forums and by developing the school’s role as a community hub for addressing local issues. The school has set out to develop a holistic approach to active citizenship development and it is having significant impact on its young people and community.

Prendergast Ladywell Fields College’s approach to developing active citizenship is mainly based within the discrete Young Citizens team, which has subsequently grown organically into many other areas of school life. This offers students the opportunity to develop their active citizenship through leadership development and real-life political action, through learning experiences that are both challenging and positive in terms of developing participants’ skills. As the team has expanded and proactively recruited within the school, a large number of students across the college have benefited from this political development. Examples of real-life politics included negotiating with senior politicians to support local safety campaigns and positively pressuring local businesses to pay the living wage. Community organising activities also provided a great opportunity for students to do things themselves and achieve significant results. This often made for a more meaningful learning experience than when citizenship activities were teacher-led or set up as part of a one-off project, which is less likely to produce substantial or sustainable change. **See section 5.3, recommendation 3.**

For the four schools we looked at, internal participation and external action were important in fostering their students’ development as active citizens. Crucially, this development came through students learning how to take action in a democratic way, and not solely through classroom-based learning. Through the examples we witnessed, students had become practised at acquiring and using skills of organising, listening, pressuring, negotiating, compromising, leading, speaking and participating in decision-making processes. The different schools each had their own ethos but they shared success in terms of inculcating values of responsibility. Perhaps most importantly, the schools were often successful at giving students a sense that they could shape the world around them. Equipping students with such skills, values and self-awareness is not only good for our democracy and society, it also provides students with valuable preparation for the workplace.

We all have a lot to learn from the ways in which these four schools develop active citizens and, in many cases, their practices could be pushed further. Some of the schools had not yet fully recognised that by conceiving of themselves as civic entities, with internal questions to be resolved and a mandate to take action externally, they could involve their students more fully in practising active citizenship. While being an active citizen was

valued, and internal and external actions were seen as useful in developing citizenship, these activities could still be seen as an ‘extra’, or as just one element of the curriculum. Nonetheless, it was also clear that school leaders had begun to conceive of citizenship as a way of framing the culture and purpose of the school as a whole.

Turning to opportunities for participation in making decisions about the school itself, all four of our case-study schools offered the local community opportunity to participate in both pillars of institutional life: making decisions and creating the school culture. Again, however, the schools varied in how they went about doing this.

As a cooperative school, **St Clare’s** had the most explicitly democratic ethos. One member of staff told us that ‘the ethos of the school has always been in place and it’s always been ... a kind of self-responsibility, equity, democracy’. The school has put this into practice through both the governance structures it has created and the values of cooperation that underpin participation. The school’s decision to create a multi-academy cooperative trust has produced a special kind of relationship with other schools in the community, which now function as a single democratic unit with equal votes for all members.²⁰ More importantly, membership of the cooperative is open to all those who live in Thurrock and the school has worked to involve a broad range of community groups, particularly those involved in the wider Co-operative movement.

RSA Academy had also set up new bodies to gather and promote the interests of its various constituents – primarily a parent council, a parent forum and a student parliament, run by parent and student leaders respectively. Most stakeholders felt that they made a genuine and respected contribution to decision-making. One parent leader spoke of how these institutions led to positive outcomes for young people:

‘As well as parent council there’s the parent forum opportunities as well. They meet four times a year, the parent forum, and some of that’s open to the wider [group of] parents ... [The school] worked with [my son] and with me, and I’m not going to be an individual case, there’s lots of others, but that is how the school here works together. I don’t mean from the students, bottom-up – the students are never bottom in this place – but from that level upwards. Everybody works together.’

Parent, RSA Academy

The school’s governance structure is clear that decision-making resides with senior management and the governing body. Nevertheless, the school has begun work to develop a wider community group to support involvement in the schools decisions.²¹

At **Prendergast** interviewees emphasised that through their work with community organising they were endeavouring to create a culture where parent and community leadership was encouraged and developed. This was evidenced by local community leaders coming to recognise Prendergast as working towards real participation with the community,²² which in turn resulted in greater community involvement in school life. However, this had not formally spread to greater decision-making about the school itself, outside of the traditional community governor role – as such, this is an area for improvement.

20 See section 3.2, quote from trust secretary

21 See section 3.3, quote from Family Links coordinator

22 See section 3.4, quote from local priest

Likewise, **Nower Hill** had worked to develop a strong culture of community participation in school life through the curriculum and regular community events that linked to it. The roles of citizenship coordinator and an assistant headteacher with community responsibility successfully supported this effort. However, while there was an extremely active parent membership within its governing body, the involvement of the broader community in decision-making about the school was limited:

‘I’d like to see a governing body of a school be more representative of the community ... Is our governing body representative of the social and economic balance in our community? I don’t believe it is.’

Nower Hill interviewee

4.2 External culture

- **How do these active citizens then take action in their community?**
- **How does the school contribute to decisions in the community?**

Our case-study schools each offered their students significant opportunities to engage in action outside school, whether with local government, business, law enforcement or wider (often global) causes or groups.

RSA Academy created opportunities for students to influence relevant decision-makers and services in relation to local issues that were raised in the school’s ‘student parliament’. For example, students regularly engaged with the police concerning a local area where crime was a significant issue for local young people; after discussions and visits to the area with police, increased community patrols and improved lightening were put in place.

Beyond these local issues, the school also looked to provide opportunities for students to involve themselves in global issues:

‘They actually went over to South Africa. But then the school there, you could arguably say that is an extension of our community, because there’s still work going on and communication taking place. So later on this year it’s Canada, and then next March the children from Canada are coming to us. It’s not just local communities. It’s pushing the boundaries a bit.’

Parent, RSA Academy

The school clearly sees itself as an institution situated in both a local and global community:

‘Definitely we want our students, our children, to leave school with a really good awareness of what being a British citizen is, and I think it hits all that community cohesion, understanding of other cultures ... A lot of our students go out into the community, which I’m sure you’ve already picked up. They go out to schools, they go out to organisations, the work placements, the giving-back to the community.’

Arvind Batra, community development coordinator

This ethos of developing the capacity for citizen action at different levels through external projects ran throughout the school. In terms of contributing to decisions in the community, however, the school had not developed a wider conception of itself as a civic institution that would look to influence local decisions. Parents and students were acting in the community but the headteacher distanced the school from contributing to local politics

more broadly. During interviews, parents and students said they wanted to have wider influence, suggesting that this aspect of the school's local role needs to be revisited by the governing body, leadership team and internal community.

Prendergast offered a more local and explicitly political approach, through its membership of Citizens UK and its work with the local Lewisham community alliance, made up of 15 organisations.

'It was when I found out about Citizens UK and the way that they wanted to work with young people that I saw a golden opportunity to get the children involved, to get them working first of all with the immediate community of their school, and then to go wider. And so being an active citizen carries with it all of that. It's about us working together positively and harnessing positivity and ambition and goodness inside our young people to work within their community.'

Mel Whitfield, headteacher

Prendergast's activity is mainly concentrated in one extra-curricular group, but it offers an impressive example of young people developing their ability in a wide range of political skills. Prendergast's example is useful also because it shows that schools can assert their interests externally through student action in ways that are both clearly legitimate and positive developmentally. The school has been recognised many times in the local and national press for the impact their external action has had on their community. The methods of community organising and their membership of Citizens UK as a highly experienced grassroots political organisation have enabled their energy and commitment to be effectively channelled towards significant political outcomes, both through decision-making as part of their local community alliance (that is, a civil society democracy) and action following on from those decisions.

Nower Hill perhaps saw itself as the least 'political' of our four schools, although it had an ambition to prepare its students to be active and responsible citizens. While it did offer some opportunities for external pupil action through active citizenship projects, it mainly encouraged students to contribute to worthwhile causes.

'We work very closely with St Luke's Hospice, Great Ormond Street – we try and encourage fundraisers to come in to give assemblies, because we're very busy teaching, doing teaching and learning in the classroom.'

Assistant head for community, Nower Hill

There was a clear aim within the school to get students to consider their responsibilities to the outside world. However, the process of skills development occurred mainly through the school's curriculum and internal culture – emphasising, for instance, politeness, responsibility and 'giving back' – rather than through action or decision-making outside the school. Students identified this as a potential area for improvement. **See section 5.3, recommendation 3.**

'Our active citizenship project – the Alan Sennett project – has given more reality, more confidence to actually do stuff ... We need more of these projects where we actually do things ... actually take action, take risks, where we are asked to step up and become active.'

Student, Nower Hill

At **St Clare's**, most political external action to date has been to develop their local cooperative education trust with three other schools and support the national effort of developing the cooperative education movement. With the aim of developing strong and meaningful relationships being a central part of the trust's work, the coming years will provide opportunities for developing broader political and social action within its local community. As yet, however, the external links capable of engaging the students are poorly developed. **See section 5.3, recommendation 3.** While the school has not yet organised itself to influence local decisions in the community, it has hosted a number of meetings to discuss controversial issues, such as decisions on local housing developments.

4.3 Summary analysis

The following summarises our findings for the four case-study schools as a rating against each of the four primary research questions.

	Q1: How are active citizens developed in the school?	Q2: How does the school involve its local community in making decisions about itself?	Q3: How do these active citizens then take action in their community?	Q4: How does the school contribute to decisions in the community?
Nower Hill	Very good	Neutral	Good	Poor
St Clare's	Good	Very good	Poor	Neutral
RSA Academy	Very good	Neutral	Very good	Neutral
Prendergast	Good	Neutral	Very good	Very good

5. CREATING CITIZEN SCHOOLS: PRINCIPLES, FEATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Or as David Cameron might say, how do we create schools with ‘oomph’? In a speech about the importance of the big society, the prime minister declared that:

‘We need to create communities with oomph ... neighbourhoods who are in charge of their own destiny, who feel if they club together and get involved they can shape the world around them.’

Cameron 2012

Our research highlighted the extent to which schools can be an important institutional setting for creating this change within communities.

5.1 Principles for developing Citizen Schools

Based on the analysis of our primary research we have identified four principles that underpin the development of Citizen Schools.

- 1. Ensure citizenship is an integral element of a school’s purpose:** As a democratic nation, a fundamental purpose of our schools must be to prepare our young people to take part in society as fully contributing citizens. However, we believe this purpose has been lost in many cases. All our case-study schools prioritised citizenship as an integral element of the school and delivered it through either a whole-school approach or discrete methods (which included a combination of governance, curriculum, leadership development and extracurricular activities). It is important that citizenship is not tacked on as an afterthought, a bolt-on to the rest of curriculum. Rather, it must be central to a school’s mission of developing young people.
- 2. Create a democratic and participative culture of citizenship:** As civic organisations, schools have the ability to involve and develop their members through their internal democratic life. From St Clere’s, where governance is structured on highly democratic lines, to the RSA Academy, where significant work has expanded the involvement of parents, each school prioritises elements of its internal democracy in different ways. When healthy and strong, this relationship is reciprocal: when members of the school feel involved and actually able to participate as citizens within the organisation, schools are able to more meaningfully involve and develop the capacity of their members, enabling them to contribute to the school as well as to the wider needs of the local community.
- 3. Learn through action:** It is clear that learning experientially by practising citizenship and by enabling students, staff and parents to get involved in shaping their communities by taking action is the most effective way of developing citizenship skills. It is also vital in breaking down barriers between a school and the wider world and ensuring a school contributes to solving local community problems – such as street safety or environmental concerns – which often directly affect the lives and learning of the students themselves.
- 4. Connect citizenship education to strategy and actions to raise overall educational standards:** High-quality citizenship education has a positive role to play as part of a school’s improvement strategy to raise overall educational standards, and indicative evidence suggests it has the capacity to improve academic attainment.

5.2 Key features of effective Citizen Schools

Enabling active citizenship

Internal

- An active citizenship development programme for all years
- Specialist citizenship skills teachers
- Citizenship embedded in the ethos of the school
- *A training programme for new staff to enable them to develop understanding and practice in this area**
- A senior leader with strategic responsibility for developing citizenship across the school who can champion the 'civic' elements of a school's work.

External

- Connection to and integration with key community organisations
- Connection to and integration with local businesses
- Engagement in community action to address social and economic issues
- A relationship with a professionally trained community organiser who can support both community action and internal training and development.

School governance and local democracy

Internal

- Students involvement in school decision-making, with clearly defined areas of responsibility
- *Student governors**
- Democratically elected student councils
- Parent and community forums

External

- Governors drawn from community organisations, local businesses and parents
- A relationship with a community organiser who has responsibility for connecting the school to wider civil society (which is a general feature of community organisers practising Alinsky methods).

*Features in italics were not observed during our primary research but are suggested to build on and enhance current practice.

5.3 Recommendations for further development

1. **Headteachers and their governing bodies should be supported to become engaged with the idea of Citizens Schools and to self-organise their own Citizen School development plan** based on the principles and key features of best practice identified. Relevant educational agencies – including Ofsted, the National College for Teaching and Leadership and the National Governors' Association – should consider how to support leaders of Citizen Schools, including the sharing of relevant best practice and resources between Citizens Schools.

In light of recent policy trends – greater autonomy in the school system and localism in public services – it is our hope that the practices documented in this report can be used by schools to self-organise their approach to the school as a civic institution. Civil society networks such as Cooperative Schools and Citizens UK will continue to provide support in this area. Relevant educational agencies also have the ability to do so.

2. **Regional and area-based curriculums should be updated** to include relevant active citizenship opportunities and map civil society actors to support schools take practical action with their communities.

While all of our case-study schools worked to connect themselves to relevant community organisations in their surrounding areas, this was an area that required significant effort and focus. Organisations with a city-wide or regional remit could support the initial mapping process to help schools and other civic actors make the first connection. For recent examples, see the Manchester and Peterborough curriculums developed with the RSA and the London curriculum developed by the Greater London Authority's education programme.²³

3. **Current and future government citizenship initiatives should be devolved to a more local level and Citizen Schools encouraged to deliver them** to ensure that this work is institutionalised, sustained and shared. Current programmes of this type include the National Citizen Service and the Cabinet Office Democratic Engagement Programme.²⁴

Not a single interviewee during our research made reference to government initiatives as a key way of developing active citizens or working with their local community. We therefore make this recommendation based on our evidence that schools are well placed to deliver citizenship activities. While there are some good National Citizen Service programmes, there is currently a lack of them. Schools should therefore group together to bid for National Citizen Service funding, which could support the long-term ability of schools to develop their civic roles and narrow the gap between schools, civil society and efforts to renew democracy. The development of active citizens in the school could then be better connected to opportunities for young people to action in their communities.

We recognise that such moves are beginning to be made with the design of National Citizen Service. This year's provision includes the development of National Citizen Service 'champion schools' as part of Future Foundation's²⁵ delivery of the programme in Berkshire. Three schools have joined together to form this cluster – the Holt School, the Forest School and Wellington College – and each has a school lead who takes responsibility for designing the programme for the benefit of students and the local community. The Cabinet Office is overseeing this initiative as a potential model for nationwide application, and we look forward to discussions which follow from evaluation of this work.²⁶

23 See, respectively, <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/learning.-cognition-and-creativity/education/practical-projects/area-based-curriculum/reports> and <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/young-people/education-and-training/gla-education-programme/london-curriculum>

24 See, respectively, <https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/national-citizen-service> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/democratic-engagement-programme/democratic-engagement-programme>

25 Future Foundations is an independent training organisation focused on the personal, academic and leadership development of young people. They are the provider of National Citizen Service for young people who live in Bath and north-east Somerset, Berkshire and Reading, Nottingham and Suffolk.

26 In recommending that Citizen Schools deliver these initiatives, we are not calling for the creation of a new network or new type of school. Rather, we envisage that these initiatives should be delivered by schools which demonstrate both the capacity to do so and good practice, as per the key features we have outlined.

5.4 Putting Citizen Schools into action

The Citizen Schools we have investigated demonstrate efforts to create an environment that enables parents and students to have a greater influence and role in shaping both their school and their local area. We hope that the principles and practices documented here can be realised to create strong, sustainable schools that improve outcomes for students and their wider communities alike, and which in doing so nurture our national democratic culture.

Crucially, work to develop Citizen Schools has already started and need not wait for legislative changes or more government funding to continue. Citizens UK currently has alliances in London, Birmingham, Nottingham, Milton Keynes, Leeds, Cardiff and Glasgow that together involve more than 65 schools. The Cooperative Schools movement currently has over 200 members, and over 200 schools are delivering the RSA's Open Minds curriculum.

In terms of further research, we would like to see longitudinal studies commissioned to explore the relationships between Citizen School practices and attainment levels and local community engagement. This research would be important in deepening our understanding of and providing validation for the civic focus of our nation's schools.

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