

# INTRODUCING CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMMES

## Report of The LACE Weekend, October 4-6 2002

Paul Ross of De La Salle School St Helens gave a very detailed presentation of the Citizenship programme he is devising to be implemented in the context of Personal and Social Education (PSE), which is known in his school as Education for Personal Responsibility (EPR). He also explained the measures he is taking to introduce it into the school by raising awareness of the scheme amongst pupils and staff and producing a full policy document for Citizenship to dovetail with the school's mission statement. The aim is to ease Citizenship into the school with the minimum impact on an initiative weary staff, a minimum of disruption and minimal cost implications. Paul's presentation was backed up with a lavish display of materials, work schemes, details from the departmental audits. He had obviously put a great deal of time and energy into designing the programme. The result was very thought-provoking and made for lots of questions and a vigorous discussion, especially in the final session of the LACE Weekend, the main points of which are given at the end of this report.

### Steps in the Introduction of the Citizenship Programme in De La Salle.

- 1) Obtain (download) the DFES guidelines on Citizenship at KS3, the Guidelines for all curriculum areas and the Guide for managers.
- 2) Attend the training sessions available.
- 3) Organise a 'Parliamentary Session' (see details below) to create a buzz of interest in staff and pupils, closely followed by an INSET Training Day (details below). (It helps if you can get your MP or at least a senior Local Councillor to speak at the Staff Meeting.
- 4) Start setting up a School Council. (This is a key recommendation in the QCA guidelines.)
- 5) Introduce revised Schemes of Work in PSE/EPR, following QCA & LEA guidelines.
- 6) Formulate, in conjunction with senior management, a policy complete with current provision, strategic events and future vision. Citizenship needs a high profile and assured funding programme.
- 7) Identify and highlight the areas of the guidelines already covered in the curriculum. Citizenship is such an eclectic subject that this selection is relatively easy.

### Parliamentary Session

This would be a day where we hold five Year Assemblies each, lasting for one lesson. The Hall would be made up to resemble the House of Commons. Hopefully using the talents of Art and Technology. I would introduce the session. Eight members of staff would be asked to take part and to read out a script. This would be to outline the main roles that exist in the House of Commons. Each of the eight teachers would take a role, ranging from Speaker (possibly the Head) to the Back Benchers. There would be a short, dramatic enactment using children from the relevant year group, hopefully with the help of the Drama Department. This would show how a law goes from proposal through the papers, debate and eventually for Royal Assent. The session would end with a short video/PowerPoint presentation.

**INSET Training Day** Introduction to Citizenship - aims, benefits, implications. The approach so far - work already done. implementing it at De La Salle - workload implications. Carousel of four activities broken up by appropriate breaks.

**Activity 1:** Statutory Guidelines (the bottom line).

**Activity 2:** An introduction to some resources and Schemes from EPR and DFES, including a 'play' with some interactive CD ROMs on the Houses of Parliament etc.

**Activity 3:** Departmental Activity. The departments will go through their individual departmental guidelines from DFES. They will fill in a simple form; identifying the areas (preferably with AT references) where they consider that they already cover the guidelines. This is in effect a Citizenship Audit and will allow me to compile a whole school policy. As a statutory subject, it will need a Departmental Plan.

**Activity 4:** The ever-popular non-directed departmental time. It could be to finish off the previous activity. (All Sessions are approximately 1 hour long.)

### **Citizenship Policy Statement for De La Salle School, St Helens**

We aim to educate children by providing coherence in the way in which all pupils are helped to develop a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens in a modern democracy. It plays an important role alongside other aspects of the curriculum and school life, in helping pupils to deal with the difficult moral and social questions that arise in their lives and in society. At De La Salle, our citizenship education is aimed at helping pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to live confident, healthy, independent lives, as individuals, parents, workers and members of society.

#### **LACE Discussion: Conclusions**

Citizenship touches on important educational issues. It raises questions about the nature of a Lasallian school, a Catholic school and a Christian school. Citizenship has a strategic place in the curriculum of a Catholic school, and consequently it presents SMT with critical questions. It cannot be done on the cheap. It has to be done properly with an adequate budget. Schools need to be prepared to commit resources. Schools Councils, although limited in what they can achieve, are more important than people previously thought. Our school systems in Britain need to involve students more.

If properly thought through, the Citizenship programme can be a major part of the whole educational project that the school has set itself in its mission statement. From this point of view it is a pity that the way citizenship is being presented in official documentation is so mechanistic. There are certain similarities with the place and the aims of RE teaching in a Catholic school. Specific aspects of the contents connect it with RE. The two subjects have the same assessment problems. How can you tell if you have succeeded? Is producing a good citizen the same as producing a good Christian? Are schools expected to produce "practising citizens"?

The availability of teaching material is not a problem. There is a plethora of packages being produced by Government and by various other agencies ready to jump on the bandwagon. These have to be approached critically. The schemes devised for De La Salle School St Helens are very good. However no single package can fulfil all that is expected of citizenship programmes.

Time is a major problem. This means actual school time available, and also the time commitments of individual teachers who are already over-stretched. Citizenship is a separate subject, but it cannot stand alone. Getting people to take on responsibility for it is not going to be easy. Inevitably the PSE providers (who vary from school to school) will be expected to take it on. Hopefully, the introduction of Citizenship will give more status to PSE.