

Unit 2 Crime

About the unit

This unit explores crime and how it affects young people, victims of crime and their communities. It looks at the differences between crimes and civil offences, and their treatment in law. It also examines the nature of youth offending, and the special measures taken when dealing with young people.

The unit builds on the understanding pupils developed in key stage 2 that certain activities are against the criminal law. It examines in more detail how the criminal justice system deals with youth offending. Pupils will gain a much deeper understanding of how crime affects victims, and will look at some of the reasons why very young children are not considered responsible for criminal actions. They will consider how basic civil and human rights protect the citizen from arbitrary arrest, and explore the measures taken to try to ensure that people accused of a crime receive a fair trial.

Where the unit fits in

This unit addresses the following aspects of the key stage 3 citizenship programme of study:

Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens

Pupils should be taught about:

- 1a the legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society, basic aspects of the criminal justice system, and how both relate to young people
- 1g the importance of resolving conflict fairly

Developing skills of enquiry and communication

Pupils should be taught to:

- 2a think about topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events by analysing information and its sources, including ICT-based sources
- 2b justify orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events
- 2c contribute to group and exploratory class discussions, and take part in debates

Developing skills of participation and responsible action

Pupils should be taught to:

- 3a use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own
- 3b negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community-based activities
- 3c reflect on the process of participating

This unit links with unit 15 'Crime and safety awareness – a whole-school multi-agency approach' and unit 3 'Human rights'.

Expectations

At the end of this unit

most pupils: identify activities that are criminal and describe how the law treats people accused of a crime. They identify some reasons why the peak age for offending is 18. They understand the concept of 'criminal responsibility' and show some understanding of why young children are not considered to be responsible for criminal actions. They outline the basic structure of the youth justice system. They discuss issues of fairness to the victim and offender and recognise the importance of a right to a fair trial for everyone.

some pupils have not made so much progress and: know what it means to commit a crime. They show some understanding of how criminals are treated within the criminal justice system. They recognise that young people are dealt with differently from adults. They are aware that young children are immune from criminal prosecution.

some pupils have progressed further and: distinguish confidently between criminal and non-criminal activities. They describe in detail the main elements of the youth justice system. They discuss the measures taken to ensure a trial is fair. They give detailed reasons why offending is relatively high among young people. They understand the reasons why young children are kept outside the criminal justice system. They know the importance of the right to a fair trial and recognise the role of the Human Rights Act 1998 in supporting this.

Resources

Resources include:

- *Criminal statistics, England and Wales* available from The Stationery Office
- Schools Liaison Officers, based at some police stations, who can support this work
- Local Authority Community Safety Plans, which provide potential for participation projects/initiatives

Many groups and organisations produce online resources that are relevant to citizenship. QCA has not printed these website addresses as it recognises that they can and do change, often at short notice. So that we can monitor and maintain a reliable and useful resource, the website addresses of the following organisations can be accessed through the key stage 3 citizenship scheme of work site at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes

- Citizenship Foundation (*information on how to organise mock trials*)
- Howard League for Penal Reform
- Prison Reform Trust
- Trust for the Study of Adolescence
- Home Office – Human Rights Unit (*information about the Human Rights Act 1998*)
- Youth Justice Board
- Home Office (*information on crime reduction and the criminal justice system*)

NB: care should be taken when encouraging pupils to access websites

Literacy and language

References to the Key Stage 3 National Strategy *Framework for teaching English, Years 7, 8 and 9* (NSE) are given in brackets and are indicated in appropriate sections of this unit.

Through the activities in this unit pupils will understand, use and spell correctly words relating to:

- crime, eg *criminal offence, offender, criminal responsibility, youth justice system*

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils learn to:

- listen carefully to, question and evaluate evidence (year 7 S&L6, year 8 S&L7, year 9 S&L5)

Reading – through the activities pupils learn to:

- use appropriate reading strategies to conduct research (year 7 R2, year 8 R2, year 9 R2)

Links with other subjects

PSHE: 1c, 2d, 2g, 3a, 3h, 3j, 3k in the non-statutory guidelines

Mathematics: Ma4.1a, 3b, 4a, 5a, 5c, 5d in the programme of study

English: En1, 1a–g, 3a–e in the programme of study

ICT: 3b in the programme of study

Geography: unit 15 ‘Crime and the local community’ in the scheme of work

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

What are criminal offences? What causes people to commit crimes?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about criminal and non-criminal offences, and some of the characteristics of youth crime • that crimes often have serious consequences for their victims and perpetrators, even so-called 'victimless crimes' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the class a list of offences sometimes committed by young people, eg <i>shoplifting, breaking into cars, picking a fight, speeding, driving under the influence, solvent abuse, doing a paper round at the age of 11, shouting racist abuse, being sold alcohol in a pub at the age of 16</i>. Ask them a) which of these are crimes, and b) which of them, if any, are 'victimless'. • Ask pupils to identify the victim(s) of each of these offences, and consider how the offence would affect them, eg <i>health, emotional, other</i>. Is it possible to distinguish between 'serious' and 'less serious' offences? If so, how? Tell pupils that while some offences have no apparent victims, eg <i>taking Ecstasy</i>, the offenders themselves might suffer as a result, eg <i>by gaining a criminal record or going to a youth detention centre, or health-related problems</i>. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distinguish between criminal and non-criminal activities • demonstrate knowledge of the effects of crime on victims, perpetrators and society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all of these examples are crimes, although they might be seen as foolish, inconsiderate or dangerous. This section allows pupils to consider whether any of them should be classified as crimes and whether any of the crimes listed should be 'decriminalised'. If so, why? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that many factors lead young people to commit crimes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the class to look at the list of offences from the first activity again, considering which of the following factors might lead someone to commit each one, eg <i>emotional immaturity, peer pressure, lack of empathy, a desire for excitement, a drug or alcohol habit</i>. Could the offender have been affected by poverty, peer pressure or other factors? For example, shoplifting might result from peer pressure and/or a desire for excitement. Ask pupils to think of factors, positive and negative, that might stop young people committing crimes, and how effective each factor might be. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss and identify possible factors leading to youth offending and know that most people will grow out of such behaviour • identify factors that might prevent people from committing crimes | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that offending can be age-related | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a graph to show pupils that criminal activity peaks at the age of 18 for males and at the age of 15 for females, dropping rapidly after that. Discuss possible reasons for the trends, relating the figures to the pupils' own experience. Ask pupils to consider why crime committed by young women is on the increase, while crime committed by young men is fairly stable. What can, or should, be done about it? • Pupils consider statistics relating to the types of crimes young people commit, eg <i>66 per cent of crimes committed by 18-year-old males are property crimes, while 10 per cent are violent crimes and 10 per cent are drug-related crimes</i>. Discuss the relative seriousness of these offences for the victim(s), the perpetrator and society as a whole. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss and identify factors leading to youth offending • understand the concept of the 'peak age of offending' • extract data from graphs and discuss crime statistics in relation to causal factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime statistics are published annually by the Home Office in <i>Criminal statistics, England and Wales</i> available in reference libraries and from The Stationery Office, and in <i>Social trends and key data on adolescence</i>, published by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes). • Link with mathematics: Ma4.3b, 4a, 5a, 5c, 5d. • Link with thinking skills: information processing. |

Learning objectives

Pupils should learn:

Possible teaching activities**Learning outcomes**

Pupils:

Points to note

What is criminal responsibility? What is the youth justice system?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the age of criminal responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the concept of the age of criminal responsibility, pointing out that, until recently, children aged 10 to 14 had to be proved capable of understanding the consequences of their actions before they could be convicted. Ask pupils: do you feel it was right to abolish this convention? Compare the age of criminal responsibility in England with that in other countries, discussing possible reasons for the differences. Ask pupils to discuss the concept of relative levels of responsibility for a crime, and the legal notion of aiding and abetting. Should someone who stands by and watches while a crime is committed be held responsible? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the concept of the 'age of criminal responsibility', and discuss this critically • understand the concept of 'aiding and abetting' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils should be aware that courts will accept certain factors as mitigation for a crime, <i>eg extreme provocation</i>. They should also be aware of what happens when a child under 10 is deemed to be 'out of control', <i>eg the age of criminal responsibility in country X is... and Y is...</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the youth justice system offers protection to young people, taking into account their age, immaturity and vulnerability • to listen carefully to, question and evaluate evidence (NSE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils consider and discuss what happens to a young person who is arrested. What are their rights? What evidence can be given against them? What safeguards are there to prevent miscarriages of justice? Explain the differences between a youth court and an adult court. • Conduct a mock trial, showing the efforts made to present evidence even-handedly. This could be based on a current case reported in the national or local media. Pupils can also follow the case in the media. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the basic structure of the youth justice system • understand the need to treat young offenders differently from adult offenders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local police may have Schools Liaison Officers who could visit the school to talk about how young people are treated within the criminal justice system, and about local crime and its effects on young people. • The role of Youth Offending Teams is important here. • Information on how to organise mock trials can be found on the Citizenship Foundation website (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes). • The local magistrates association may provide support with this activity. The work could be followed up with a visit to the local magistrates court. • Link with NSE: year 7 S&L6, year 8 S&L7, year 9 S&L5. |

Learning objectives

Pupils should learn:

Possible teaching activities**Learning outcomes**

Pupils:

Points to note

What is criminal responsibility? What is the youth justice system? (continued)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the treatment of young people within the criminal justice system • to use appropriate reading strategies to conduct research (NSE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using material from newspapers and organisations such as the Howard League and the Prison Reform Trust, discuss issues surrounding the treatment of young people convicted of crimes. Make the point that this debate tends to be polarised between hardliners and reformers. Refer to the Human Rights Act and Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which outlaws ‘inhuman or degrading’ punishments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know basic aspects of the youth justice system from the point of view of the offender • critically evaluate and discuss conflicting views about the purpose of the criminal justice system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils could use the internet to research the views of various groups campaigning on youth justice, eg <i>the Howard League for Penal Reform</i> and <i>the Prison Reform Trust websites</i> (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes). • Link with ICT: 3b. • Link with English: En1, 1, 3. • Information about the Human Rights Act is available at the Home Office – Human Rights Unit website (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes). • Link with thinking skills: evaluation. • Link with NSE: year 7 R2, year 8 R2, year 9 R2. • Extension activity: this section could be extended by asking pupils to investigate and compare the treatment of prisoners in other countries. |
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Stereotypes and young people

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about stereotypes of young people and the influence of media coverage over public perception | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask pupils to write down how they think most adults see young people, maybe offering suggestions, eg <i>lazy/hardworking, apathetic/enthusiastic, law-abiding/delinquent</i>. Is there agreement within the class? If possible, conduct a survey of adults on the same question. Discuss the results. How far do the pupils agree with the adults’ views? Do the responses of the adults vary with their age? Discuss the treatment of crime in the media. Is it balanced? How does it affect the public’s general perception of crime? What, if anything, can be done to correct negative media images? Discuss why fear of crime can be a problem for some sectors of the adult population. • Discuss ways to influence popular opinion and counter stereotypes, eg <i>write letters to the media, such as editors of national/local papers, or TV programmes</i>. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand why there are ‘stereotypes’ of young people • identify and discuss factors that can lead to negative stereotyping of young people • understand that fear of crime is more prevalent than crime itself, and that this can have serious consequences for many people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey work offers opportunities for research, statistical analysis and group presentations. • Link with mathematics: Ma4.1a, 4, 5. • Examine your Local Community Safety Plan for issues relating to youth groups, and to find out about potential local community projects. • Link with thinking skills: creative thinking. • This section could be linked with unit 9 ‘The significance of the media in society’. |
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