

Unit 7 Local democracy

About the unit

In this unit, pupils explore issues of concern within their local community and look at the role of local government in everyday life. They research policies, and find out which local government departments are responsible for dealing with particular issues. They investigate how local decisions are made and consulted upon. They present and discuss their findings in a public meeting. The unit also allows pupils to experience and participate in local democracy.

The unit provides opportunities for group work, presentations, surveys, discussions, research and the analysis of information. Pupils will also be asked to imagine the views of others in different situations, and will learn to express opinions that are not necessarily their own.

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:

- 1c central and local government, the public services they offer and how they are financed, and the opportunities to contribute
- 1f the work of community-based, national and international voluntary groups
- 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

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 8 'Leisure and sport in the local community', unit 14 'Developing skills of democratic participation' and unit 6 'Government, elections and voting'.

Expectations

At the end of this unit

most pupils: are aware of the range of services provided by local government and know how local government is financed. They understand that there are local spending priorities that affect the services provided. They show understanding of the legal responsibilities of local government. They appreciate that different values and attitudes, including their own, result in different approaches to, and opinions on, an issue, problem or event, and different levels of participation in local life. They can conduct an enquiry, use the findings to draw simple conclusions, and make suggestions as to how improvements can be made in their local area. They reflect on how to influence people's opinions, and on why suggestions are sometimes rejected.

some pupils have not made so much progress and: demonstrate some knowledge of the services provided by local government. They understand that local government has certain responsibilities. They make suggestions as to how improvements can be made in their local area.

some pupils have progressed further and: demonstrate detailed knowledge of the range of services provided by local government, and of how local government is financed. They recognise the importance of deciding what local spending priorities there should be. They understand the legal and ethical responsibilities of local government. They understand that some local people are far more active in the community than others, and are able to offer convincing suggestions as to why this is so. They research, analyse and interpret data, and use this to prepare and deliver presentations to a range of different people on local issues, problems and events. They reflect on why suggestions are sometimes rejected, and offer alternatives.

Resources

Resources include:

- information leaflets from local authorities, *eg information on the Local Agenda 21 strategy for the area, local community safety and health improvement plans*
- the National Healthy Schools programme
- national and local newspapers
- clips from television soap operas dealing with local issues/conflict
- visits from local government representatives/employees to give presentations and answer pupils' questions

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

- Local Government Association
- UK Youth Parliament
- National Statistics (*for neighbourhood statistics*)
- Up Your Street (*information on different neighbourhoods*)
- Institute for Citizenship
- Community Service Volunteers' online database of voluntary organisations
- 'Kick Racism out of Football' campaign
- 'Show Racism the Red Card' campaign

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 be able to understand, use and spell correctly words relating to:

- local democracy, *eg local government, council tax, consultation, local spending priorities, public–private partnerships, committee, local election*

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils learn to:

- ask questions in interviews to clarify meaning (year 7 S&L1, year 8 S&L5, year 9 S&L3)

Reading – through the activities pupils learn to:

- use appropriate reading strategies to conduct research (year 7 R2, year 8 R2, year 9 R2)
- identify the key points in texts (year 7 R7, year 8 R5)

Links with other subjects

PSHE: 3b, 3k in the non-statutory guidelines

Geography: 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 2b, 2f, 2g, 3a, 3d, 5a, 5b in the programme of study; unit 23 'Local actions, global effects', unit 3 'People everywhere' in the scheme of work

ICT: 1a, 1b, 1c, 3a, 3b, 4a in the programme of study; unit 2 'Information and presentation', unit 9 'Publishing on the web' in the scheme of work

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

What do I think about my local community?

- about the local community
- On paper or self-adhesive notes, each pupil notes down three issues that make them proud of where they live, and three that they dislike and want to change. Write these on the board, collating key areas of pride and key areas of concern, and grouping them under suitable headings, *eg sport and leisure facilities, refuse and recycling facilities, housing and environment, transport*. The pupils discuss the issues raised, and agree on one to take forward for further work.
- clarify their own views and identify those of others, about the local community

What is my community concerned about?

- about an issue of local concern, whose interests are involved and who within the local council is responsible for dealing with the issue
- about different ways of conducting an enquiry
- where to find information about their local council/authority
- to use appropriate reading strategies to conduct research (NSE)
- to identify the key points in texts (NSE)
- to ask questions in interview to clarify meanings (NSE)
- to organise and present information (NSE)
- to communicate with a range of local people, taking on board opinions from as many sectors of the community as possible
- to analyse and reflect on the evidence they collect during their enquiry, and draw conclusions from it
- Pupils plan how they will investigate their chosen issue. They identify which members of their community have an interest in the issue, *eg themselves, their parents, community-based and voluntary groups, businesses*. How do members of the community take action and try and influence decision-making and policy? What types of campaigning are used? What is the role of community-based and voluntary organisations? Do any of these people's interests conflict or compete?
- Pupils then find out who in their local council/authority is responsible for dealing with the issue, and how policies regarding the issue are developed and consulted on. How is this area of work funded, *eg by council tax, national government, public-private partnership*? Pupils should research local spending priorities and relevant local/national policies or initiatives.
- Pupils devise and agree a way of surveying the views and recommendations of local people. Their survey could include a question on whether there is strong enough opinion on the chosen issue to affect voting at the next local election.
- Using libraries and the internet, pupils carry out research into whether other communities, at home or abroad, have tackled similar issues. What can we learn from them?
- The results of the survey could be presented as a report, which should examine the findings and make recommendations about what should be changed. It could also be used at a public meeting (mock or real) with other members of the community.
- are aware of the different interests of members of the community and that these interests may conflict or compete
- understand some of the ways in which local policies are developed and consulted on
- know how they can have their say and be involved with, and/or consulted on, the development of policy
- know how to undertake an enquiry into an issue, devising appropriate questions, and are aware of different ways of collecting information and evidence
- know how to approach and communicate with the local council and other members of the community
- draw conclusions from a variety of sources and present these to others
- understand that local and national government policies and initiatives are related
- See the *Teacher's guide* (appendix 8) for more information on how to plan enquiries in citizenship.
- Local councils all produce yearbooks and literature on how they are financed and the services they offer. Contact the council's press office or public relations department.
- There may be a new/proposed development in the locality that can be used as a case study. Developers or representatives from the local planning department could be approached, and could bring in drawings, brochures, etc.
- Link with NSE: year 7 R2, year 7 R7, year 8 R2, year 8 R5, year 9 R2; year 7 Wr11, year 8 Wr10, year 9 Wr9.
- Link with NSE: year 7 S&L1, year 8 S&L5, year 9 S&L3.
- Link with geography: unit 23 'Local actions, global effects', unit 3 'People everywhere'.
- Refer to the Community Service Volunteers' online database of voluntary organisations (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes).
- Extension activity: further work could be undertaken to investigate how the local council/authority has changed the way it makes decisions following the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000. Pupils could also research how young people are involved with and/or consulted on the council's decision-making process.

Learning objectives

Pupils should learn:

Possible teaching activities**Learning outcomes**

Pupils:

Points to note

What is my community concerned about? (continued)

- The question of who should take part in the survey needs careful consideration. It might be best to restrict it to other members of the school community and people directly involved with the school.
- Local election results may be accessed on the local authority's website. Use the Local Government Association website (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes) to find your relevant site.
- The chosen issue may fit with local priorities for Local Agenda 21/ community safety/health improvement plans.
- Link with unit 14 'Developing skills of democratic participation': pupils could go on to organise a campaign around the issue.

How can we influence change?

- that different sectors of the local community may have different opinions on an issue, and that conflict can arise between people with competing interests
- that a number of local government departments are involved in planning/approving new developments/policies
- to communicate with a range of people
- to listen to and empathise with other people's views
- how to present reports and recommendations to a range of audiences
- Ask pupils to consider the different groups (including relevant community-based and voluntary organisations) they will need to consult/influence in order to get any suggested changes implemented. They may be able to make use of existing consultation procedures. Which methods would work best with which groups, *eg a public meeting, a petition, a public display, a public performance website, use of the media (TV, newspapers, radio)*? How will the change happen, *eg through actions of individuals such as the purchase and sale of fair trade goods in local shops*?
- Pupils could then review and implement their chosen strategy, *eg organise a public meeting to discuss the issue they have investigated*. They could decide how the meeting will be run, who will take on which roles, *eg chair, presenter, reporters*, and who from the local council and community will be invited. They should then agree the objectives, agenda, venue, format and timings for the meeting.
- After discussion of the findings, the meeting should close with agreements, resolutions and/or next steps.
- Following the meeting, pupils could debrief and review how the meeting went, what they gained from the experience and what they might do differently next time. They should discuss and decide – democratically – whether further action is necessary, and what form this might take.
- recognise differences of opinion about a proposed new development
- review and analyse their findings and present them to a range of audiences, suggesting solutions or next steps
- understand that councils have different departments that work together to enable development projects to go ahead
- Link with unit 14 'Developing skills of democratic participation', activities on making meetings effective.
- Refer to the Community Service Volunteers' online database of voluntary organisations (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes).
- The public meeting could be either real or mock, depending on circumstances. If real, a rehearsal meeting could be beneficial.