



National Curriculum Review

A response by Civic Voice to the Department for Education's call for evidence
April 2011

1. Civic Voice welcomes the opportunity to inform the review of the National Curriculum. We are the national charity for the civic movement, working with a network of hundreds of volunteer-led, community based civic societies and other community groups who promote civic pride in their area. As a partner of Democratic Life we support its campaign for citizenship and as a champion of quality public environments we support the need to recognise design in the National Curriculum.

Summary

2. Civic Voice is keen to see the National Curriculum's approach to citizenship strengthened. We welcome that it is currently a compulsory National Curriculum subject with a statutory Programme of Study at Key Stages 3 and 4. In future we wish to see it retained as a compulsory element of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and to be made a National Curriculum subject with a statutory Programme of Study at Key Stage 2. We are also keen to see design retained as a compulsory National Curriculum subject.

The case for citizenship

3. The civic movement attaches high importance to the teaching of citizenship in schools and for the concept to be embedded in young people during their formative years. This is essential in a world where people expect and are expected to play a growing role in shaping and influencing their own surroundings and playing a more active role in their community. A key role of the National Curriculum is to help prepare young people for playing an effective role in public life. A society with more responsible and active citizens makes a more positive contribution to economic well being and to society. We believe citizenship has a unique contribution to make to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required by combining academic knowledge with practical social action.

4. By way of example Birmingham Civic Society runs a citizenship programme to help ensure *"that every citizen should play a constructive part in the present life and future development of their city"*. The programme comprises a series of projects for 11-14 year olds which fits into the Citizenship part of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. Teams of children are asked to consider what life will be like in their area in 20 years time, to identify issues that would improve the quality of life, and to develop action plans to address them. The plans are presented to leading figures in business, the professions and politics and the programme is supported by a comprehensive Teachers Handbook. Over 1,500 children in Birmingham participate each year.

5. Birmingham Civic Society is looking to extend the programme to Key Stage 2 by providing a Young Citizens Programme. This will comprise a work-book project for 9-10 year olds taking them through the history of Birmingham from medieval times as a source of civic pride for their city and to lay the foundations for good citizenship.

6. Birmingham provides just one example of the various ways in which civic societies are promoting citizenship and supporting young people. We urge that it is recognised as a compulsory National Curriculum subject.