



Building stronger communities through  
critical and compassionate schooling

Dilia Zwart

Published in August 2021 by Protection Approaches,  
Edinburgh House, 170 Kennington Ln, London SE11 5DP.

Registered charity 1171433.

Further information can be found at [protectionapproaches.org](https://protectionapproaches.org)  
and this report will also be available <https://protectionapproaches.org/reports>

© Copyright Protection Approaches. Permission to quote freely from this report can be obtained from Protection Approaches. The views presented in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of all project partners. This work is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License CC BY-NC-ND.

Cover photo: Dilia Zwart facilitates a conversation in a school in Cambridge about reporting hate crime and rejecting prejudice, 2020, England.

## Acknowledgements

This paper is the culmination of more than two years of work and research with schools, communities, and policymakers by Protection Approaches. I would like to thank the entire Protection Approaches team for their dedication to our education work as well as their patience, comments, and edits as earlier drafts were circulated. Andy Fearn has led the intellectual development of Protection Approaches' education and community programmes for over five years; I'm grateful for his expertise and insights during numerous conversations on the content of this paper, and much more. Thank you to Dr Kate Ferguson for providing excellent suggestions particularly in relation to policy analysis and systems change. I'd also like to express my deepest thanks to Andy and Kate for their continuous support which has helped this paper come to life.

The expertise and insights of many experts from across the education sector and beyond have strengthened this paper's quality. An enormous thank you to all the reviewers of this paper, including and in no particular order: Hannah Wilson, Director of Diverse Educators; Nadia Asri, who provided a statement in her personal capacity and is also a Network Development Officer at European Network Against Racism; Ruth Golding, DisabilityEdUK Development Group; Ellis Brooks, Peace Education Coordinator at Quaker Peace and Social Witness; Clara Ramírez Barat, Director of the Warren Educational Policies Program at the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities; Rob Pearsall, Headteacher at Plymstock School; Hans Svennevig, Lecturer in Citizenship Education and Subject Leader in Citizenship PGCE at University College London Institute of Education; Andrea Bullivant, Liverpool World Centre and TEESNet; and Penny Lamb, Head of Partnerships at VoteForSchools.

This paper also draws on prior qualitative research conducted by Protection Approaches with schools, communities, educational experts, and civil society organisations. Thank you to all those who participated in the UNESCO 'Futures of Education' consultations,<sup>1</sup> our 2020 educator survey called 'What educators say: How can we support educators during and after Covid-19?',<sup>2</sup> and our 2019 online consultation of 150 experts entitled 'Europe's prevention crisis: How can civil society respond?'.<sup>3</sup>

Any errors, while unintentional, are my own.

Contents

Acknowledgements	02
Executive Summary	04
Methodology	08
Introduction	10
Prioritising the competences of critical and compassionate citizenship throughout curricula	14
Developing whole-school approaches to civic engagement and inclusion	22
Looking forward	27
Recommendations	30



## Executive summary

Protecting people from the threat of identity-based violence relies on a participatory and horizontal ecosystem of state leadership, strong communities, and active citizens. Because schools-based education plays a key role in socialising young people as active citizens, the ecosystem includes education systems, schools, and classrooms.<sup>4</sup> This paper makes the case for schooling to prioritise the competences (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) that young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens as an essential, cost-effective means of building social and individual resilience. In an era of increasingly complex threats, from online harms to rising polarisation to the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change, we must ensure all generations have the tools and strategies they need to understand, discuss, and tackle challenges of all kinds.

Research by the British Council found that education plays an important part in the recovery of fractured, stressed and traumatised societies.<sup>5</sup> This research, which reviewed the experience of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), showed how education can “help develop characteristics associated with resilience – such as a sense of belonging, self-esteem, agency and empathy”. Drawing on this research, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office of the United Kingdom announced in July 2021 new funding to provide better schooling in countries suffering long-term crises, included £15.8 million for research that will focus on the educational needs of children in northern Nigeria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> At home, the UK has committed to a whole-of-society approach to resilience to ensure the country is able to build back stronger as it recovers from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and is fit to meet rising threats to democracy, climate instability, and future health crises. Yet, neither the evidence gathered from UK-funded education initiatives abroad, nor wider global lessons of education building as a means of social resilience, are applied to, or apparently leveraged to inform, the British education system.

In England, for example, citizenship education has long been seen as a secondary priority to core academic subjects in a system that rewards exam success over the resilience of the young people that take the exam. The deprioritisation of citizenship alongside the short-term approach to education policy and the chronic lack of funding has left school leaders and teachers ill-prepared for the rising challenges of the contemporary world. Long-term underinvestment in and a non-statutory approach to the development of critical and compassionate competences meant that when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK, it accelerated existing crises as well as generating new ones. Most teachers felt their schools lacked whole-school approaches to the complex challenges their students were now facing; the uncertainty, fear and multidimensional crisis of the pandemic exacerbated underlying problems from racism to fake news to poor mental health.<sup>7</sup> In the last 18 months the English education system has become more unequal, less resilient, and been found to be unable to cope with contemporary trends online and offline, amid and in the wake of a global pandemic, without political prioritisation, financial investment, and community-led approaches to change.

This paper is published before the commencement of the 2021-22 academic year at a time when political planning for the future of education in England remains unclear. Protection Approaches supported the appointment of an Education Recovery Commissioner and his calls for a “landmark investment” in education and a robust catch-up plan to rebuild a “stronger and fairer system”.<sup>8</sup> We supported Sir Kevan Collins in his decision to resign from his position in June 2021 when the government’s package for English schools fell so far short of his recommendations. Collins warned “[t]he pandemic has affected all pupils but hit disadvantaged children hardest. A decade’s progress to narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers is estimated to have been reversed”.<sup>9</sup> This paper responds to this warning and proposes realistic, cost-effective means for schools, academy chains, and the Department for Education to urgently address the gap in skills, resources, and capabilities endemic in the English education system in order to ‘build back better’ in a way that ensures next generations have the necessary toolkit to participate in the complex modern world as confident, empathetic and informed citizens.

Schools-based education can act as a ‘prevention multiplier’ by fostering young peoples’ capacities and agency to be engaged and empathetic citizens who can reject divisive narratives and challenge all forms of hate and injustice.<sup>10</sup> The Department for Education’s promotion of ‘One Britain One Nation Day’ is deeply misplaced; rather than songs and flags, schools need financial resources and political support to embed critical and compassionate competences such as media literacy, constructive dialogue, and understanding contested histories across all subjects and spanning all school practices from behaviour policies to extracurricular activities. Prioritising the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens is not warm and fuzzy a ‘nice to have’ but essential to ensuring young people can themselves recover from the Covid-19 crisis, and contribute to the long-term resilience of our communities and societies.

The English government has a unique opportunity to harness the growing demand for a kinder, stronger education system. From our work in and with schools and communities and our research, we know that communities, educators, young people, and experts across sectors want schools to be able to prioritise the civic purpose of education alongside the academic purpose of education.<sup>8</sup> England, like all states, has a roadmap towards holistic approaches to critical and compassionate education via its commitment to United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7 which calls for all learners to acquire knowledge and skills such as global citizenship, gender equality, and non-violence by 2030.<sup>12</sup> The UN SDGs are goals that England is committed to reaching at home and abroad; this paper makes a case for the Department for Education to match the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office’s investment in education as a tool of resilience, conflict prevention, and crises recovery.

This paper will show how prioritising the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens throughout curricula and through whole-school

approaches can help England to meet rising global challenges and build stronger communities. The devolved education system means that each of the countries of the United Kingdom have separate education systems. The UK Government's Department for Education is responsible for school policy in England, whereas Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish school policy has been devolved. For example, Wales recently reformed its curriculum to prioritise four key purposes including fostering "ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world" whereas in England the primary vehicle in the curriculum for developing the above competences is the subject citizenship.<sup>13</sup> While this paper is written from the perspective of English education policy, its findings and recommendations are pertinent to all states that aspire to achieve SDG 4.7 and empower young people and educators to tackle global challenges as they 'build back better' in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this paper, we use the term 'critical and compassionate schooling' to refer to two key pillars:

1. the competences (knowledge, attitudes, values and skills) that young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens, including but not limited to critical thinking, media (online and offline) literacy, constructive dialogue, empathy, civic responsibility, conflict resolution, and knowledge of contested or marginalised histories; and
2. the systems change needed to ensure that schooling enables all young people to develop the above competences as well as the agency and resilience to navigate crises of all kinds. This includes strengthening what and how the curriculum is delivered as well as creating whole-school approaches to civic engagement and inclusion.

We see the competences that young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens as central to the civic purpose of education: the unique role of schools to equip young people with the capabilities, tools, and commitments to be active and responsible members of their current and future communities. The term 'critical and compassionate schooling' speaks to both the English as well as the international contexts and builds on the work the educations championed by SDG 4.7 including citizenship education, peace education, and education for sustainable development.

## Key Recommendations

### For the UK Department for Education:

- Co-create and design a coherent cross-curricular approach to prioritising the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens through 1) a consultation across the education sector and civil society and 2) a history commission
- Establish funds for 1) continuous teacher training to enable educators to embed critical and compassionate competences and teaching practices across the curriculum and 2) school partnerships with external experts in areas such as inclusion, wellbeing, and dialogue

### For the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office:

- Establish opportunities for cross-learning between governmental departments addressing education, e.g. between Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and Department of Education colleagues
- Make provision for educational approaches to peace & identity-based violence prevention within the new strategies on conflict, atrocity prevention, development and resilience

### For the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted):

- Develop the current inspection framework's judgement of personal development to prioritise the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens

### For schools and civil society organisations:

- Co-create and sustain whole-school approaches to strong and inclusive school communities spanning school practices from behavioural policies to extracurricular activities



## Methodology

This paper seeks to generate understanding of ‘what works’ in schools-based education to foster resilience to national as well as global crises including democratic backsliding, conspiracy, and all forms of identity-based violence. In addition to conveying evidence of best practices from around the world, it aspires to build a more coherent and joined-up approach in England to prioritising critical and compassionate competences across the curricula and through whole-school approaches as the most efficient and cost-effective means to build individual and social resilience to crises of all kinds. Therefore, we hope this paper will be of interest to those within the education sector as well across other sectors working towards these aims.

The paper is based primarily on desk research including a literature review of sources bridging academic, policy and practice literature including on citizenship education, peacebuilding, social movements, and atrocity prevention. It also includes policy analysis of publicly available material.

Numerous conversations and consultations with educators, both online and offline, inform the content and the aims of this paper including the UNESCO ‘Futures of Education’ consultations<sup>14</sup> and our 2020 educator survey called ‘What educators say: How can we support educators during and after Covid-19?’<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the paper draws on qualitative research conducted as part of Protection Approaches’ work in and with schools. Through our national education programme, we work with school leaders, teachers, and students across England through workshops and trainings designed to prevent prejudice and build stronger, kinder school communities. We evaluate the impact of our workshops via surveys and focus groups that measure changes in attitudes and behaviours related to identity-based violence prevention.



A banner of promises to create more inclusive and respectful communities created by students at Plymstock School during a Protection Approaches workshop, 2019

## Introduction

The last decade has been a divisive and dislocating one. On the heels of the 2008 financial crisis, the 2010s were marked by worsening structural inequalities and political polarisation, exacerbated by the rapid increase in online consumption of false information, including conspiracy and disinformation.<sup>16</sup> The Covid-19 pandemic has acted as a ‘threat multiplier’, accelerating existing drivers of division and undermining already weakened social cohesion in countries around the world.<sup>17</sup> An established lesson of identity-based violence prevention is that moments of acute stress amplify existing structural risk factors of ‘othering’, exclusion, hate crime, violent extremism, and the violation of all manner of human rights.<sup>18</sup> The aggravating effects of the pandemic can be seen everywhere - in South Sudan, where it has delayed the implementation of the peace process and jeopardised the safety and security of vulnerable groups;<sup>19</sup> in Lebanon where it has fuelled community tensions, undermined social stability, and worsened state-society relations;<sup>20</sup> and in the UK where hate crimes have increased against British Chinese and South East Asian communities as a consequence of racialised rhetoric around the pandemic.<sup>21</sup> Around the world, the impacts of worsening trends, including climate change, financial crises, political instability, and all forms of identity-based discrimination, are being felt with minoritized and marginalised communities paying the greatest price.

During this period of crisis, citizens around the world are calling upon their governments to invest in education systems that build resilience, inclusion, and equity. The election of Donald Trump in 2016 provoked a ‘wake-up call’ in many countries, prompting education experts to call for the urgent prioritisation of civic education to reinstate “education’s most basic purpose: preparing young people to be reflective citizens who would value liberty and democracy and resist the appeals of demagogues”.<sup>22</sup> The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 included calls to address systemic racism and structural inequalities through education.<sup>23</sup> The families of children with special educational needs who were disproportionately affected during the pandemic are calling for the government to invest in the resources and mental health support that young people need in schools as a means of recovery and resilience.<sup>24</sup> In England, a consultation led by the Foundation for Education Development (FED) found widespread support for transforming the short-term approach to education policy into a long-term vision for education at the heart of tackling local and global challenges.<sup>25</sup>

This paper addresses the urgent need to prioritise identity-based violence prevention and social resilience through education. Schools are social institutions as much as sites of formal education and as such schools-based education can act as a ‘prevention multiplier’ by building young peoples’ capacities and agency to be engaged and empathetic citizens who can reject divisive narratives and conspiracy, challenge all forms of hate and injustice, and feel able and encouraged to participate in society.<sup>26</sup>

**Identity-based violence** is any act of violence motivated by the perpetrator's conceptualisation of their victim's identity, for example their race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion or political affiliation. It encompasses hate crime, violent extremism, and genocide and affects individuals as well as entire groups or communities all around the world. While its victims and the ways in which it manifests often look different the causes of identity-based violence are usually the same. By understanding the common causes of these seemingly disconnected forms of violence, we can develop and promote effective, evidenced strategies of prediction, prevention, and protection.

To read more about Protection Approaches' definition of identity-based violence, visit our website here: <https://protectionapproaches.org/identity-based-violence>

At Protection Approaches, we know that there is widespread demand for schooling that prioritises building the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens in the UK and across Europe. Our research with UK communities consistently finds demand for formal education spaces to better prioritise teaching young people about differences and identity through positive debate and dialogue.<sup>27</sup> A 2019 consultation of 150 practitioners and experts found support for education that nurtures empathy and builds critical thinking skills and was identified as the most evidenced, sustainable, and important means of combatting rising identity-based violence in Europe.<sup>28</sup> In 2020, as part of the UNESCO 'Futures of Education' consultation, we held focus groups with 17 education experts and over 60 students who called for education to better prepare learners to adapt to complex and changing situations; withstand the influences of disinformation; and find positive solutions to conflict together.<sup>29</sup> Support for prioritising the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens is global; polling in 2018 found that a majority of citizens around the world would like governments to invest more in "teaching peace, tolerance and conflict resolution in schools".<sup>30</sup>

Around the world there is increasing demand for schools to prioritise critical and compassionate schooling in order for education systems and wider societies to become more resilient to current and future crises of all kinds, such as systemic racism, digital divides, and climate change.<sup>31</sup> All countries have a roadmap for building stronger, kinder education systems via their commitment to United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7 which calls for "all learners [to] acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development," including through education that fosters human rights, gender equality, peace, and global citizenship. The UN SDGs, including SDG 4 and its target 4.7, are goals that England are committed to reaching at home and abroad.

**UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4:** “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

**Target 4.7:** “By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

SDG 4.7 provides an opportunity to bring together related ‘issue-based educations’ including global citizenship, human rights, sustainable development, and peace education – each of which aspire to foster ‘positive peace’ or the resilience of a society based on its attitudes, institutions, and structures.<sup>32</sup>

The Our Shared World coalition is working to realise SDG 4.7 in England. Read more about it here: <https://oursharedworld.net/>

The civic purpose of education has long been regarded by academics, practitioners, and policymakers as essential for building stronger and more inclusive societies, developing resilience, and preventing identity-based violence: For centuries, researchers around the world have examined exactly how education can contribute to building stronger societies.<sup>33</sup> Citizenship education expert Joel Westheimer, a child of German Jewish refugees, poses the unanswerable but crucial question, “what might have been different in 1941...had children been taught... to imagine a better society for all?”<sup>34</sup> Following the devastation of the First and Second World Wars, interest in education as a peacebuilding tool increased with UNESCO founded in 1945 to ensure that education, science and culture “contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations...in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.”<sup>35</sup> In 2018, the UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace report made clear that quality education which fosters civic values and inclusiveness helps to reduce inequality, the risk of violent conflict, and contributes to sustainable development.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the widespread support for schooling to foster critical and compassionate citizenship, many schools around the world lack the time, space, and support to prioritise civic and social learning. In England, the pressure to meet academic targets, prepare young people for the job market, and teach a “narrowing curriculum” squeezes schools’ time and space to prioritise the critical thinking, empathy, and dialogue skills that young people need to be positive citizens.<sup>37</sup> As a result, many teachers avoid certain topics because they are seen as complex,



challenging, or ‘controversial.’ Recent government guidelines on ‘Relationships, Sex, and Health’ in the curriculum state that “schools should not under any circumstances work with external agencies that take or promote extreme positions or use materials produced by such agencies” including “promoting divisive or victim narratives that are harmful to British society.”<sup>38</sup> Civil society organisations and schools have raised concerns that labelling certain topics too ‘extreme’ to discuss in an educational context risks undermining the space for critical thinking, dialogue, positive debate and open discussion which are essential skills for empathetic and engaged citizenship.<sup>39</sup> Many young people want to address social and political issues, but often feel unable to do so in part because many schools lack the time and space to prioritise the civic purpose of education.<sup>40</sup> And yet, there are numerous innovative examples that show how schools-based education can enable students to tackle pressing global challenges. In Brazil, for example, the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG) has supported teachers to facilitate respectful dialogue which in turn strengthens students’ sense of connectedness and empathy (see case study on page 19). In Finland, which ranks first of 35 countries in a study measuring media literacy, young people learn to question divisive narratives through a “critical thinking curriculum”.<sup>41</sup>

In England, many schools have been teaching citizenship education since the 2001 Crick Report, which called for teaching democracy in schools as a way to counter youth apathy.<sup>42</sup> But the UK government, like many donor states that contribute to civic and peace education programmes abroad, does not have a coherent domestic strategy for the provision in English schools of critical and compassionate competences across the curricula. This means that many young people in English schools never receive formal or informal education related to many of the most pressing and rising global challenges.<sup>43</sup> This paper calls for a reinvigorated and holistic approach to prioritising the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens, by integrating key knowledge areas and skills throughout curricula linked to the subject of citizenship and by developing sustainable whole-school strategies to civic engagement and inclusion which allow schools, teachers and students to discuss, address, and dismantle structural and visible inequalities, biases, and prejudice.

Education can and must be leveraged as a tool for protecting human rights and fostering social cohesion in all states. As democracies around the world face an intense period of recovery and uncertainty, they will need to draw on global best practice and lessons learnt during crises of all kinds in order to counter the forces of division and build stronger societies. Schools need the resources, time, space, and tools to 1) prioritise the competences of critical and compassionate citizenship across the curricula, linking the subject citizenship to a cross-curricular approach and 2) create whole-school approaches that build agency, active citizenship, and social justice. This paper draws on global best practice to explore how such a renewed and holistic approach to prioritising the competences of critical and compassionate citizenship can be implemented in schools in England. Rising demand for such adaptation in England and the international framework of SDG 4.7 should be seen as an opportunity for the UK to better harmonise educational policies and funding ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’.

## Prioritising the competences of critical and compassionate citizenship throughout curricula

Academics, educators, and young people agree that schools need to be able to prioritise the dual purposes of education: civic as well as academic.<sup>44</sup> As the national curriculum lies at the heart of schooling, strengthening its civic purpose is a powerful way to ensure that young people have sufficient opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to critically engage with and respond to the crises facing society today, including democratic backsliding, conspiracy, and all forms of identity-based discrimination.<sup>45</sup> In England, the citizenship subject is an essential vehicle for fostering critical and compassionate skills as its purpose is to “provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them to play a full and active part in society”.<sup>46</sup> However, the subject is only statutory for 11-16 year olds attending state maintained schools which means that not all young people necessarily have the opportunity to develop and practice active citizenship skills during their time in school. In an increasingly polarised and divided world, it is urgent to prioritise citizenship education.<sup>47</sup> A coherent cross-curricular approach to embedding the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens can help schools to thread topics such as human rights, climate change, anti-racism, and media literacy throughout the curriculum, thereby strengthening students’ ability to critically engage with and positively respond to issues that matter to them and to wider society.

Institutionalising a cross-curricular approach to critical and compassionate competences is not only vital for young people’s social and civic development; it can also generate systems change by creating coherent expectations and ringfencing funding for schools. Education policy is often caught up in party politics and the high turnover of the Secretary of State of Education undermines a long-term vision for education policy and funding.<sup>48</sup> This ‘short termism’ has contributed to the current lack of a clear vision for prioritising the civic purpose of education including the dearth of a coherent cross-curricular approach to critical and compassionate skills in England.<sup>49</sup> As an example, since 2015 schools are obligated to promote the ‘fundamental British values’ of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. While these values may appear to be part of the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens, they risk advancing a reductive interpretation of citizenship.<sup>50</sup> As a result, many schools interpret this obligation as promoting a narrow form of British identity, the monarchy, and flags.<sup>51</sup> Neither individual nor social resilience can be achieved by teaching young people about flags; instead, a holistic approach to prioritising critical and compassionate competences across curricula is needed that focuses not only on the content that is taught but also on the strategies and tools young people need to be informed, empathetic, and active citizens.

Research demonstrates how through deliberative democratic decision making in schools, values can be generated by the school community rather than imposed from the top down by the state or school leadership.<sup>52</sup> Academics Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne differentiate between three conceptions of the ‘good’ citizen—individual, participatory, and justice oriented—and contend that the latter two best

complex issues.<sup>53</sup> The following paragraphs will discuss some of the cross-cutting themes salient to fostering participatory and justice oriented citizenship in schools today.

**Interest in Citizenship Education in England is growing.** In 2020, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Citizenship had the highest application rate in a decade, with the largest cohort selected, and the largest cohort ever has gone through the programme. This trend has continued in 2021. There are also increases year on year in the numbers of pupils taking GCSE Citizenship Studies (over 20,000 last summer). Moreover, the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) has seen a significant rise in membership (doubling in the last 18 months).

To learn more, please see the ACT website: <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/>

In recent years, the content and delivery of curricula have come under increasing scrutiny in the UK and countries around the world. Since the Black Lives Matter Movement started in 2013 it has reinvigorated conversations across the education sector about how history is and should be taught in schools – particularly the omission of Black history in curricula.<sup>54</sup> Advocates of decolonising the curriculum, including young people, are calling for courses to include a wider array of perspectives and to challenge biases and assumptions.<sup>55</sup> There are also calls to include more representation of diverse identities, genders, and abilities in curricula.<sup>56</sup> Core subjects such as history and geography – as well as subjects not commonly associated with citizenship such as maths and science – need to dedicate more time and space for learning about and discussing Indigenous knowledge, the contributions of individuals from minoritized groups, and marginalised histories, including slavery and colonialism.<sup>57</sup> Young people themselves are eager for schools to educate them about “uncomfortable” topics including sexism and homophobia.<sup>58</sup> When such learning is linked to contemporary issues such as inequality, ‘othering,’ discrimination, and human rights violations, young people can more deeply understand the common but preventable causes of identity-based violence and what can be done to tackle all forms of injustice. A cross-curricular approach to critical and compassionate competences can enable schools to address all forms of identity-based discrimination including racism, sexism, and ableism in a coherent and meaningful way.

Nadia Asri writes about the importance of **decolonising and diversifying the curriculum**. The statement below was written in her personal capacity. She is a Network Development Officer at the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

Education is a powerful tool and can be used to empower children and young people or can rather systematically disempower children and young people whose communication and learning styles or needs are not suited to formal classroom settings. By diversifying and decolonising teaching curriculums, traditions and practices, we are laying the foundations for an inclusive, anti-racist society.

Institutional discrimination is discrimination patterns rooted in institutions and laws, and refers to the actions, behaviours and decisions of people in positions of power within institutions. We know that actors holding positions of power in institutions tend to reproduce and reaffirm different forms of discrimination through their implicit bias. This means that individuals who make decisions and exert power on a daily basis have the ability to enforce their prejudices and stereotypes (CIJ & ENAR, 2019).

In an educational setting this means that the professionals developing school policies and practices, designing the curriculum and delivering the teaching might re-enforce their prejudices about certain groups or behaviours. From designing a curriculum with only sparse and negative representation of certain racial or ethnic groups, to marking, prohibiting and punishing certain physical attributes or communication styles and behaviours, all of this can have a startling impact on children and young people and can leave them feeling disempowered. We must remember that no educational professionals work in vacuums but are equally exposed and impacted by racist and discriminatory narratives and ideas. It is essential that positive measures are put into place to protect children and young people from the harmful consequences of this, to ensure that educational spaces are safer and promote inquiry, critical thinking and growth.

Some of the key measures recommended by the Centre for Intersectional Justice and the European Network Against Racism in their 2019 report Intersectional discrimination in Europe: relevance, challenges and ways forward to combat institutional discrimination include:

- a. Implicit bias tests and anti-discrimination training for all people involved in designing the curriculum, teaching or engaging with children and young people in schools and in civic education spaces. These trainings can make people aware of the prejudices they harbour and perpetuate and mitigate the effects of implicit biases and structural racism on decisions, actions and interactions.

- b. Introducing more vertical diversity at all hierarchical levels in educational spaces to ensure that all social groups are proportionately represented. We know that homogenous groups tend to represent similar views and harbour similar prejudices, as well as implicitly favour the groups they identify with.
- c. Screening all existing and new policies and practices against discrimination to ensure that they are not further harming racialised and marginalised groups. This includes moving away from punitive measures to rehabilitative and restorative measures to deal with issues in schools.

Reference:

Centre for Intersectional Justice and European Network Against Racism, 'Intersectional discrimination in Europe: relevance, challenges and ways forward,' 2019.



In a digital era, a cross-curricular approach to critical and compassionate competences also needs to include media literacy in order to enable learners to challenge divisive narratives and engage in constructive dialogue with others. The “disinfodemic” that accompanied the global pandemic has demonstrated the consequences of dangerous information, with waves of dis- and misinformation, both organically and malevolently generated, instrumentalised for political, racist, xenophobic, and other reasons.<sup>59</sup> Media literacy should include resources that help young people to recognise harmful content and think critically about information consumption. However, any efforts to address online harms must be complemented with offline responses that strengthen students’ interpersonal skills. Creating space for dialogue, positive debate, and discussion of current events and difficult topics in all subjects is key to supporting young people to contextualise, interpret, and discuss different issues sensitively and productively. Moreover, these educational practices can enable learners to bring their own identities and life experiences into the classroom in order to shape discussions and hone their problem-solving skills. This can contribute to breaking down misconceptions, debunking misinformation, and building common ground.

Competences of critical and compassionate citizenship include but are not limited to:

Knowledge	Attitudes & Values	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>civic processes</li> <li>human rights</li> <li>inequality</li> <li>contested and marginalised histories</li> <li>Indigenous knowledge</li> <li>direct, structural, and cultural violence</li> <li>sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>social justice oriented</li> <li>inclusiveness</li> <li>respect for self, others, and the environment</li> <li>civic responsibility</li> <li>solidarity</li> <li>curiosity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>media literacy (online and offline)</li> <li>dialogue</li> <li>positive debate</li> <li>empathy</li> <li>critical thinking</li> <li>conflict resolution</li> </ul>

A curriculum that prioritises critical and compassionate competences needs to be facilitated by educators that have continuous access to training and learning opportunities on topics related to citizenship, ‘difficult’ issues, dialogue, and inclusion.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, how content is taught through teaching practices is equally important to what the specific content entails. Creative, interactive, culturally responsive, and learner-centred teaching practices can best enable young people to build critical knowledge, think for themselves, practice active listening, and make informed, responsible decisions.<sup>61</sup> For example, Philosophy for Children (P4C) is an educational movement that uses inquiry-based teaching practices and classroom dialogue to engage young people in discussing and critically analysing concepts such as justice and rights.<sup>62</sup> More than conveyors of knowledge, teachers are also role models; the ways in which teachers practice empathy, inclusiveness, and respect for differences inside and outside the classroom is instructive for students.

In a rapidly changing world, teachers need access to ongoing, continuous professional development opportunities that are responsive to current needs as well as local contexts. Of course, empowering young people to be critical and compassionate citizens is not the job of teachers alone but should be part of a joined-up approach that includes support from external experts in addressing social cohesion, trauma, social justice, and dialogue. Researchers and civil society organisations can work closely with schools to translate evidence of best practice into workable solutions, as the case study below demonstrates.

**The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide (AIPG): improving teacher confidence to teach human rights and democratic citizenship**

Even though Brazil has an educational framework that encourages the teaching of human rights and democratic citizenship topics in the classroom, there is a lack of effective methodologies and training for teachers. AIPG's project 'Citizenship and Democracy in Schools' aims to address this gap by offering resources to teachers and schools of the public-school system to positively deal with these topics in the classroom. Using an innovative methodology that puts students at the centre, the project promotes the creation of spaces for respectful dialogue in the classroom to openly discuss topics such as identity, diversity, and human rights, while developing values of respect. Beyond the acquisition of knowledge and critical thinking about concepts of democracy, human rights, and citizenship, the project outcomes include forging more empathetic and tolerant students. In the student's final evaluation, most of them stated that the project helped them to feel more connected with their colleagues and learn the importance of putting themselves in someone's else shoes.

Read more here: <http://www.auschwitzinstitute.org/citizenship-democracy-school>

Despite the evidence supporting the need for and benefits of the civic purpose of education, it is not uncommon for it to be deprioritised by government.<sup>63</sup> In England, the citizenship subject – a key vehicle for instilling critical and compassionate competences – risks being squeezed out of the curriculum as it is often not considered a core subject such as maths or science. This is supported by findings of the 2018 House of Lords report which concluded that citizenship education is essential to “educate citizens for a vibrant and cohesive society”, but that in England such education must urgently be prioritised as a statutory subject across age groups as well as receive adequate funding for teacher training.<sup>64</sup> The recent changes to the Ofsted inspection framework in 2019 provide an opportunity to prioritise citizenship alongside a cross-curricular approach to critical and compassionate competences as now schools are expected to demonstrate how they nurture students' personal development including “developing responsible, respectful and active citizens who are able to play their part and become actively involved in public life as adults”.<sup>65</sup>

Through political prioritisation, funding for teachers, and standards for the competences that young people need to be engaged and empathetic citizens across all subjects, the government can help generate systems change to ensure that all young people are able to develop as informed and inspired citizens.

Strengthening the content and delivery of the curriculum is a relatively low-lift means of ensuring that all learners will be provided with the knowledge and skills needed to be a critical and compassionate citizen in a rapidly changing world. Creating space for learning about Indigenous knowledge and marginalised histories, embedding critical media literacy across all subjects, and making space for dialogue in the classroom are all ways to improve urgently needed skills such as critical thinking and empathy. An important starting point for governments and school leaders is to work with and carefully consult young people as well as educators and civil society organisations dedicated to social justice, human rights, and social cohesion on what is missing from the current curriculum and what needs to be included going forward in order to achieve what is set out SDG 4.7. Such a consultation should not be tokenistic and extractive but rather inclusive and meaningful. It should also be accompanied by a history commission which can investigate how to meaningfully ensure that Indigenous knowledge, marginalised histories, and minoritized identities are part of the curricula. Teacher trainers and external experts can be funded to work with schools to embed creative, interactive, and culturally responsive teaching practices. These initiatives should form the foundation for creating a joined-up approach to fostering critical and compassionate citizenship; one that links the subject of citizenship education with critical and compassionate competences across the curriculum. Its successful implementation will depend on adequate funding and support for schools.

The national curriculum for English schools is a powerful vehicle for nurturing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that underpin engaged and empathetic citizenship; however, prioritising this alone is insufficient to foster resilience to all kinds of crises. Indeed, many recent calls for systems change centre not only on what content is taught in the curriculum but also how schools are organised. Recent protests by school children in London show that dialogue and open discussion are not simply ‘nice to have’ but essential to fostering active citizenship skills as well as creating inclusive school cultures.<sup>66</sup> The competences that young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens can be taught through how schools organise their student councils and debate clubs – and can have a long-term impact on students’ civic engagement including voting.<sup>67</sup> As the next section will show, inclusive school cultures, open classroom environments, and opportunities for engagement in school decision-making all play a critical role in enabling student’s sense of citizenship, agency, and resilience.<sup>68</sup>



Picture taken by The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide staff during the 'Citizenship and Democracy in Schools project

## Developing whole-school approaches to civic engagement and inclusion

Schools are more than institutions for formal education – they are communities in and of themselves. Therefore, in addition to strengthening the curriculum, schools have many additional means through which to actively engage young people’s competences as critical and compassionate citizens. Indeed, whole-school approaches to civic engagement and inclusion are the most sustainable and cost-effective means of building environments where students, teachers, parents and other members of the school community feel safe, valued, that they belong, and able to fully practice active citizenship skills. Engaging all members of the school community through a holistic, shared approach is the foundation for fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging as well as building learners’ critical and compassionate skills. Such a ‘whole-school approach’ is a way of thinking and doing that centres civic and inclusive practices spanning all aspects of school life – from behavioural policies to teaching strategies.

Schools in England are increasingly exploring how to develop such strategies and ensure their stated commitments to their students and school community are ‘lived’ inside and beyond the classroom. While political leadership and investment from central government is essential in transforming national standards of and approaches to critical and compassionate competences across the curricula, whole-school approaches do not rely on policy change or budget increases; these are conversations and practices that teachers, students, senior leaderships, parents, school boards, governors, academy heads, and other school community members can initiate.

While there is no ‘one size fits all’ whole-school approach, there is a growing body of research on the practices that equip young people with the competences, resilience, and agency they need to be active members of their communities. Nevertheless, a set of shared community building principles (see box below) can help guide the process of establishing a whole-school approach that aims to strengthen a sense of inclusion and empowers learners to apply life-long skills for active citizenship.<sup>69</sup>

### **Principles of building strong and inclusive school communities include:**

- An ethos that values wellbeing and social justice
- Space for self-awareness and reflection
- Respecting children’s right to be heard, especially on issues that affect them directly
- Responsiveness to the local context and changing needs of the community
- Active inclusion of all through co-creation especially with those with protected characteristics
- Participation and engagement at all levels
- Celebrating differences and fostering meaningful interactions
- Collaborative, partnering with parents/carers and the wider community



First and foremost, a whole-school approach entails an inclusive school culture. The resilience and inclusivity of a school can be measured by how members connect and communicate with one another through everyday interactions, from interpersonal relationships to behaviour management policies and involves the symbols and aesthetics of the school. An inclusive school's practices will include actively working with students and family members to identify resources and books that reflect and celebrate diverse identities; recruiting and retaining staff that reflect the student body and local community; and ensuring that the needs of all disabled members of the school community are genuinely accommodated.<sup>70</sup> School leaders and governors play a key role in envisioning and implementing inclusive school practices, but to be effective staff and students need to have a sense that they too have a stake in decision making processes.<sup>71</sup> When a school is truly inclusive, students feel listened to, safe, valued, and that they belong – as well as able to practice their democratic rights and responsibilities, central aspects of active citizenship.

**An inclusive school culture** is exemplified at a co-educational secondary school located in Hampshire, England, where learners are encouraged to be curious, resourceful, creative, and reflective inside and outside the classroom. According to its 2018 Ofsted Report, learners 'thrive within the school's excellent inclusive culture and ethos. Pupils are welcomed, supported and cared for irrespective of background or ability.' Several times a week, learners in Years 7-10 (ages 12-15 years old) take part in Philosophy and Personal Development lessons where the focus is on expressing oneself and understanding others' lives. The school day is purposefully designed to allow more time for engaging in over 50 extracurricular activities from debate to LGBTQIA+ inclusion that enable learners to practice key skills outside of the classroom and expose them to different ideas.

Central to a positive school culture is a 'whole-school behavioural approach' that seeks to foster communication, connections, and positive relationships across the school community. In contrast to punitive behavioural policies that favour punishment, alternative practices that focus on shared responsibility and care can help the person who caused harm to understand the impact of their words and actions and thereby gain critical self-awareness and empathy. For example, the work of RJ Working in Cornwall shows how restorative justice approaches in schools can equip young people with the social and emotional skills that they need to understand and resolve conflict, such as emotional awareness and self-regulation, communication skills, and responsible decision making.<sup>72</sup> Strengthening social and emotional skills can have a positive impact on interpersonal relationships in school as well as reduce the number of bullying incidents and exclusions.<sup>73</sup> By treating conflict as a natural part of life, learners have the opportunity to practice life-long conflict resolution skills, such as active listening and dialogue.

Schools should also prepare young people to actively participate in school life and in their wider communities by ensuring students have meaningful opportunities to use their voice. Hands-on experiences in active citizenship include many activities already well-known to schools, such as debate clubs or volunteering in the local community. Schools can augment the ways in which such activities are carried out to ensure that they are more inclusive, such as by adjusting student leadership bodies to be organised through lotteries rather than popularity contests, as is currently being tested by the organisation Democracy in Practice, based in Bolivia.<sup>74</sup> Many schools in England are UNICEF ‘Rights Respecting Schools’, which is a whole-school approach to ensuring that young people feel safe, valued, and that their voice matters.<sup>75</sup> Any whole-school initiative should emphasise the importance of listening, learning, reflection, and deliberating action so as to ensure that any student initiative is well-informed and purposeful rather than a ‘quick fix’ solution. VoteforSchools provides a powerful example of a way schools can bolster student voices whilst not adding extra pressure to teachers, as demonstrated in the box below.

**VotesforSchools** is a UK-based initiative founded in 2015 to create a space for children and young people to talk about current issues that affect them the most. It exists to give young people the knowledge they need and tools required to change the world around them. The programme also helps teachers to address current affairs and sensitive topics. Every week, young people are presented with a topic linked to current affairs and spend the week thinking about and discussing the issue with their peers, teachers, and families. At the end of the week, the students vote on the topic. This data is then shared with those in authority, who in turn respond to the students. Evidence shows that this process improves critical thinking and student confidence to discuss difficult issues and engage with multiple perspectives.

To read more about VoteforSchools and their evidence-based approach please visit their website: <https://www.votesforschools.com/>

As schools do not exist in vacuums but in wider social contexts, it is vital to positively engage with parents, carers, and the wider community. Learning the key competences of critical and compassionate citizenship – such as empathy and respect for differences – begins at home. Engaging parents and carers in sessions on community cohesion can help build their knowledge and skills – or even challenge some of their misconceptions – and support them to connect students’ learning to home life. Parents and carers can be involved in planning activities that reflect and celebrate diversity; for example, by helping to plan cultural and religious days. Although safeguarding policies have created certain barriers for deepening community interactions, some schools such as the one described in the box below have found ways to engage the wider community by partnering with local faith-based institutions, community centres, and cultural organisations in order to nurture intercultural learning, break down stereotypes, and foster meaningful connections. Any such initiative must avoid inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes and instead seek to foster meaningful interactions.



Photograph taken by VoteForSchools staff during a classroom conversation

Whole-school approaches are also an effective means of confronting and dismantling root causes of inequality and structural violence. The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on deep-seated structural inequalities. The views and experiences of marginalised and socially dislocated communities must be carefully integrated into guidance on designing and implementing such approaches. Moreover, whole-school approaches must be intersectional, holistic and aimed at an inclusive school culture; one-off educational programmes or singular policies are unlikely to succeed as they need the buy-in and trust of the school community. To plan and implement whole-school approaches, schools should work via co-production and co-creation with all communities including from different racial and religious backgrounds, gender identities, and abilities. Schools can also be given the resources to work with external experts in identity-based violence prevention, cohesion building, and all forms of inclusion to ensure that young people are empowered with the knowledge and tools to combat hate and build stronger communities.

These examples demonstrate how whole-school approaches can equip learners with the lifelong skills they need to disrupt the path to prejudice and build community cohesion. Teachers around the world are already pioneering ways to nurture individual and social resilience in and out of their classrooms, such as responding to Covid-related harms through restorative and trauma-informed approaches as well as facilitating dialogue around ‘controversial’ topics in order to foster critical thinking and empathy skills. Sharing and amplifying these success stories is one of the first steps towards ensuring that more schools are aware of and able to implement joined-up approaches to civic engagement and inclusion. Governments can provide support by preparing and disseminating guidance for schools on implementing whole-school approaches, as well as ensuring there is sufficient funding available for schools to partner with community organisations as well as external experts in social cohesion, social justice, dialogue, trauma, and inclusion.

**A whole-school approach to community engagement** can be found at a secondary school in Devon , England. Through its curriculum’s strong focus on citizenship, ethics, philosophy, and life skills the school strives to ensure that learners are provided with accurate and relevant knowledge; opportunities to turn that knowledge into personal understanding; and opportunities to explore, clarify and, if necessary, challenge their own and other’s values, attitudes, beliefs, rights and responsibilities. Beyond the taught curriculum, the school organises opportunities year-round for students to meet and interact with community organisations. For example, during Year 7, learners participate in Community Cohesion week during which they learn about a wide variety of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the UK.

## Looking forward

The Covid-19 crisis has laid bare pre-existing inequalities and accelerated patterns of othering, dehumanisation, and discrimination across the UK and around the world demonstrating that no society is immune to identity-based violence and that the need for education systems to develop young people's social, emotional, and civic skills has become more urgent than ever. Schools-based learning must be leveraged to support young people to learn how to challenge divisive narratives, reject dangerous information, and stand against all forms of hate and injustice. These life-long capabilities are vital to building and sustaining stronger, more intersectional and resilient societies – and these essential skills can be taught in much the same way as numeracy and literacy.

The government's response to the education crisis facing English schools raises a deep concern for the future of social resilience and cohesion, young people's mental health and wellbeing, rising social fracture and identity-based violence, and the safety of young people online. Poor leadership from government undermines the capacity of the nation's schools to roll out a holistic approach to prioritising the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens. Despite overwhelming evidence that education is key to recovering from the pandemic in both the short- and long-term, the government failed to invest in a robust catch-up education plan and take on board the recommendations of the Education Recovery Commissioner. And whereas this paper has made the case for a joined-up approach to the civic purpose of education through practices that are oriented towards inclusion and social justice, the Department for Education recently supported 'One Britain One Nation' (OBON) which has been criticised for promoting a problematic definition of citizenship. Singing a patriotic song is not what schools want or need.<sup>76</sup> Instead, schools must be given the time, space and resources to foster critical and compassionate skills through 1) a joined-up curricular approach and 2) guidance and funding to develop whole-school approaches to inclusion and civic engagement.

The expertise and evidence-based approaches needed to implement such a holistic approach to prioritising critical and compassionate competences already exist in many schools and civil society organisations in England. One school in Hampshire has adjusted its school day to ensure students have more time to engage in hands-on activities such as debate which foster key civic skills. Another school in Devon works closely with community organisations to ensure its students have meaningful interactions. Organisations such as Protection Approaches, ACT, VoteForSchools, and others are partnering with schools to roll out innovative programmes that empower students civically. However, without a coherent and long-term vision for prioritising the civic purpose of education, these examples of success risk being singular case studies rather than the building blocks for a more inclusive and empowering education system for all learners. To ensure that education systems truly build back better, the government can work more closely with school leaders as well as external experts in social cohesion and inclusion to ensure that these best practices can be amplified and scaled in meaningful, locally relevant ways.



Schools are so much more than transmitters of information but sites of complex personal and civic development. By embedding civic skills in all academic subjects as well as empowering schools and teachers to facilitate dialogue in and out of the classroom, schools will better enable young people to critically interpret news and information; learn about different identities and life experiences; discover the root causes of prejudice and inequality; and become more compassionate, civic-minded citizens who seek to build a better world for all. The most efficient and cost-effective way to do so is in co-creating a whole-school approach that involves students as active citizens through developing young people's competences and giving them authentic spaces to use them. Examples of best practice include school councils based on lotteries that give all students a stake in decision-making processes and restorative approaches to resolving conflict that foster a culture of care and responsibility in the school. As schools are located in wider communities, it is vital that schools build strong relationships with families, carers, and community organisations as this can contribute to building community cohesion.

The systems changes needed to achieve SDG 4.7 and empower all young people to be positive changemakers are often portrayed as daunting or nebulous but, as this paper has shown, there are low-cost, high-impact changes that schools can make themselves relatively easily. The government can provide support by strengthening the curriculum and releasing funding. Civil society organisations can also play an enabling role by sharing expertise with schools as they roll out whole-school approaches to critical and compassionate citizenship. This cooperation at all levels is essential to sustaining the ecosystem that protects people from the threat of identity-based violence. When young people have the tools and strategies they need to be engaged and empathetic citizens they will better be able to tackle the complex and rising threats of the contemporary world, from online harms to rising polarisation to the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many young people around the world are already changing global responses to issues from climate change to girl's education. Creating more opportunities for young people to exercise their capacities as engaged and empathetic citizens is not only essential to the personal development of future generations, but to protecting social cohesion and human rights around the world.



Photograph taken by Plymstock School staff in a classroom

## Recommendations

### For schools and civil society organisations

Through our education programme at Protection Approaches, we know that many schools want to do more to develop students' social and civic skills but often lack the time, space, support, and funding to do so. We believe that critical and compassionate schooling is first and foremost a way of thinking and doing and therefore does not have to cost much in terms of time and financial resources as long as its embedded in and actively practiced through the curriculum and daily school practices. Moreover, as examples of best practice already exist in many schools, amplifying these success stories and providing support to further implementation is key. Below are several recommendations for how schools, with the support of civil society organisations and other external experts, can take these practices forward

- Build and sustain an inclusive school culture based on careful consultation of and co-production with students, parents/carers, and staff
- Create guidelines for teachers to embed critical and compassionate competences across subjects
- Provide resources and ongoing, continuous teacher training (including both pre-service training for student teachers before they become teachers as well as Continued Professional Development) on critical and compassionate competences and teaching practices including dialogue and positive debate about current events and 'difficult' topics
- Adjust behavioural policies to align with restorative justice practices as well as proactive and preventative relationship building
- Democratise student leadership bodies to ensure all students have a voice and

### For Her Majesty's Government

To meet growing national as well as global challenges, schools need to be given the space and resources to prioritise joined-up educational responses that support young people to develop the emotional, social, and civic skills that will build resilience during and after the pandemic. The first series of recommendations sets out how the UK government can meaningfully engage with educational stakeholders to review and update the English curriculum as well as support English schools in implementing whole-school approaches to ensure that the education system contributes to SDG 4.7. In order to amplify examples of best practice from around the world, the final recommendations set out how to bridge the gap between UK-funded work 'at home' and over seas.

**For the Department for Education**

- Consult educators, civil society practitioners, and young people to assess the current national curriculum in order to identify opportunities to embed critical and compassionate competences across all subjects
- Set up and fund a history commission to investigate how to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, marginalised histories, and minoritized identities into the curricula
- Based on the consultation and commission findings, design a joined-up, cross-curricular approach to prioritising the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens
- Establish funds for continuous teacher training to enable educators to embed civic and citizenship education knowledge and teaching practices
- Prepare guidance for schools on how to implement a whole-school approach to civic education and inclusion
- Release funding to enable schools to partner with external experts in areas such as social cohesion, wellbeing, trauma, dialogue, social justice, conflict resolution and restorative practice as well as experts working on the meaningful inclusion of groups with protected characteristics including disability, race, sexuality, religion, and gender identity

**For the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office:**

- Establish opportunities for cross-learning between governmental departments addressing education, e.g. between UK funded aid projects and Department of Education colleagues
- Make provision for educational approaches to peace & identity-based violence prevention in the new Conflict & Atrocity Prevention strategy

**For the Office in Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted):**

Ofsted is a non-ministerial department of the UK Government, reporting to Parliament. Ofsted is responsible for inspecting a range of education institutions, including state schools and some independent schools.

- Develop the current inspection framework's judgement of personal development to prioritise the competences young people need to be critical and compassionate citizens

## Endnotes

1. Protection Approaches, 'The Futures of Educations: responding to global challenges through schools-based education,' December 2020
2. Protection Approaches, 'What educators say: How can we support educators during and after Covid-19?', May 2020
3. Protection Approaches, 'Europe's prevention crisis How can civil society respond?', 23 October 2019
4. Education encompasses multiple institutions for learning, including but not limited to schools. In this paper, we largely refer to schools-based education as a key unit of change which can and should connect with other influential institutions such as the family, civil society organisations, non-formal educational spaces, and the media.
5. British Council, 'Teaching for Peace,' April 2019
6. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 'New UK funding to boost education for children in conflict zones,' July 2021
7. Protection Approaches, 'What educators say: How can we support educators during and after Covid-19?', May 2020
8. Jack Peat, 'Education catch-up tsar resigns over Government's 'inadequate' fund for pupils,' The London Economic, 3 June 2021
9. Geoff Barton, 'What does Sir Kevan's departure mean for education?', TES, June 2021
10. Protection Approaches, 'Gathering Storm? Assessing risks of identity-based violence in Britain,' March 6th 2019
11. Protection Approaches, 'The Futures of Educations: responding to global challenges through schools-based education,' December 2020
12. United Nations, 'Goal 4,' 2015
13. Welsh Government, '5 things you may not know about Wales's new curriculum,' 9 March 2021
14. Protection Approaches, 'The Futures of Educations: responding to global challenges through schools-based education,' December 2020
15. Protection Approaches, 'What educators say: How can we support educators during and after Covid-19?', May 2020
16. Andy Beckett, 'The age of perpetual crisis: how the 2010s disrupted everything but resolved nothing,' The Guardian, 17 December 2019
17. Mercy Corps, 'Advancing peace in a changed world: COVID-19 effects on conflict and how to respond,' ReliefWeb, 10 September 2020
18. Protection Approaches, 'Atrocity prevention and Covid-19,' April 20, 2020
19. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 'The Effect of COVID-19 on Peace Agreement Implementation: The cases of Colombia, South Sudan, and the Philippines,' ReliefWeb, 18 September 2020; UN Human Rights Council, 'Emerging Impacts of COVID-19 on the Human Rights Situation and Peace Process in South Sudan,' 23 June 2020
20. International Crisis Group, 'Avoiding Further Polarisation in Lebanon,' 10 November 2020; International Crisis Group, 'COVID-19: Seven trends that will shape peacebuilding in Lebanon,' 9 April 2020
21. Protection Approaches, 'Covid-related hate: East and South East Asian communities' experiences of racism,' 12 October 2020; Kate Ng, 'How British east and southeast Asians are fighting racism during the pandemic,' The Independent, 13 January 2021
22. Richard D. Kahlenberg and Clifford Janey, 'Is Trump's election the jump-start that civic education needed?', Atlantic, 10 November 2016
23. Sophia Purdy-Moore, 'BLM and education: are we any closer to a school system that works for all?', Race Matters, Runnymede, 3 June 2021
24. Robbie Meredith, 'Covid-19: Children with special educational needs 'forgotten' during pandemic,' July 2021
25. FED, 'National Education Consultation Report,' May 2021
26. Education encompasses multiple institutions for learning, including but not limited to schools. In this paper, we largely refer to schools-based education as a key unit of change which can and should connect with other influential institutions such as the family, civil society organisations, non-formal educational spaces, and the media.
27. Protection Approaches, 'Prejudice and Us Series,' Vol.2, 18 June 2018
28. Protection Approaches, 'Europe's prevention crisis How can civil society respond?', 23 October 2019
29. Protection Approaches, 'The Futures of Education: responding to global challenges through schools-based education,' December 2020
30. International Alert and British Council, 'Peace Perceptions Poll,' September 2018
31. UNESCO, 'Covid-19: Rethinking education as the world moves forward,' November 2020; Nazia Parveen and Niamh McIntyre, 'Systemic racism': teachers speak out about discrimination in UK schools,' The Guardian, 24 March 2021
32. The term positive peace is credited to Norwegian peacebuilder Johan Galtung. See: Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,' Journal of Peace Research, Vol.6, Iss.3, 1969, pp. 167-191
33. For example, see: John Dewey, 'Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education,' New York: Macmillan, 1916
34. Joel Westheimer, 'Civic Education and the Rise of Populist Nationalism,' Peabody Journal of Education, Vol.94, Iss.1, 2019, pp. 4-16
35. UNESCO, 'UNESCO Constitution,' 1945
36. World Bank and United Nations, 'Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict,' 2018
37. Cultural Learning Alliance, 'Ofsted says narrow curriculum is risk to quality of education,' 27 November 2018; David Lundie, 'What to make of 'British values' in the aftermath of Brexit?', SchoolsWeek, 27 July 2016
38. Department for Education, 'Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum,' 24 September 2020
39. Ellis Brooks, '9 voices the Department for Education would ban from schools,' Quakers in Britain, 8 October 2020
40. S. Garnett Russell, 'Newcomer Immigrant and Refugee Students Are More Optimistic About the Future than Their U.S.-Born Peers,' Teachers College Columbia, 2020



41. Eliza Mackintosh, 'Finland is winning the war on fake news. What it's learned may be crucial to Western democracy,' CNN, May 2019
42. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 'Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools,' 1998
43. House of Lords, 'The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century,' 18 April 2018
44. Protection Approaches, 'The Futures of Educations: responding to global challenges through schools-based education,' December 2020
45. We recognise that academies do not have to follow the national curriculum; nevertheless, the national curriculum is a powerful tool to set standards and generate ideas about what and how content is delivered in schools as many academies opt to follow parts of the national curriculum.
46. Department for Education, 'National curriculum in England: citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4,' 2013
47. Kerry J Kennedy, 'Civic and Citizenship Education in Volatile Times: Preparing Students for Citizenship in the 21st Century,' Springer, 2019
48. FED, 'National Education Consultation Report,' May 2021
49. Anne Beauvallet, 'Four Nations Going Their Own Ways? Citizenship Education in the United Kingdom,' *Citizenship in the United Kingdom*, Vol.21, Iss.1, 2016
50. Anna Lockley-Scott, 'Towards a critique of fundamental British values: the case of the classroom,' *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, Vol.40, Iss.3, 2019, pp. 354-367
51. T. Hunt, 'British values' are about more than flag waving,' *The Times*, 24 March 2015
52. F. Tibbitts, 'Deliberative democratic decision making, universal values, and cultural pluralism: A proposed contribution to the prevention of violent extremism through education,' *Prospects*, Vol.48, 2020, pp. 79-94.
53. Three types of citizenship education typically exist in many schools—(a) individual or personally responsible, (b) participatory and (c) justice oriented citizenship. See: Westheimer and Kahne's table referenced in James Weinberg and Matthew Flinders, 'Learning for democracy: The politics and practice of citizenship education,' *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol.44, Iss.4, 4 June 2008, pp. 573-592
54. Anna Leach, Antonio Voce and Ashley Kirk, 'British Black History: the row over the school curriculum in England,' *The Guardian*, 13 July 2020
55. To read about a group of sixth formers campaigning to decolonise the curriculum, please see the BBC website: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z7g66v4>
56. To read about calls to include gender representation in curricula see: Judith Burns, 'Call for more females in the curriculum,' *The Guardian*, 12 January 2016; to read more about disability in the curriculum please see the DisabilityEdUK website here: <https://disabilityeduk.org/>
57. To read more about Indigenous knowledge of the natural world please see texts such as: Robin Wall Kimmerer, 'Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teaching of plants,' Milkweed Editions, 2013. Note: Indigenous is capitalised to differentiate Indigenous people such as the Haudenosaunee or Indigenous Australians from people originally from other countries e.g. the French. For more information see Monash University's editorial guide on 'Inclusive Language' here: <https://www.monash.edu/about/editorialstyle/writing/inclusive-language>
58. Protection Approaches, 'The Futures of Educations: responding to global challenges through schools-based education,' December 2020
59. Julie Posetti and Kalina Bontcheva, 'Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation,' Policy Brief 1, UNESCO, April 2020; Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 'Covid-19 Disinformation Briefing,' No.1, 27 March 2020
60. Elvis Munyaradzi Ganyaupfu, 'Teaching Methods and Students' Academic Performance,' *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Inventions*, Vol.2, Iss.9, 2013, pp. 29-35; L. Jerome, A. Liddle, and H. Young, 'Talking about rights without talking about rights: on the absence of knowledge in classroom discussions,' *Human Rights Education Review*, Vol.4, Iss.1, 2021, pp. 8-26
61. The Council of Europe describes this as teaching 'about' democracy and human rights (by developing learners' critical knowledge and understanding); teaching 'for' democracy and human rights (by cultivating learners' values and skills to enable them to participate in and make a difference to society); and teaching 'through' democracy and human rights (by creating a learning environment where teachers model respect for differences and empathy). Please see: Council of Europe, 'Educating for democracy,' 2010
62. To read more about P4C and its impact on student's attitudes and skills including non-violence, empathy, and critical thinking please see research edited by Maughn Rollins Gregory (Montclair State University) here: <https://philpapers.org/browse/philosophy-for-children>
63. Meira Levinson, 'Benefits of Civic Education: Increased Equality and Narrowed Civic Empowerment Gap,' In 'Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools,' ed. Jonathan Gould, Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011.
64. House of Lords, 'The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century,' 18 April 2018; Dr Avril Keating, 'Written evidence (CCE0134),' House of Lords, 4 April 2018
65. David Kerr, 'New OFSTED framework: New Opportunities for Citizenship, FBV and SMSC,' *YoungCitizens*, 9 July 2019
66. Nazia Parveen and Tobi Thomas, 'Pimlico academy pupils stage protest over 'discriminatory' policies,' *Guardian*, 31 March 2021
67. International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), 'Becoming Citizens in a Changing World: IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 International Report,' November 2017
68. Kerry J Kennedy, 'Civic and Citizenship Education in Volatile Times Preparing Students for Citizenship in the 21st Century,' Springer, 2019
69. To read about the benefits of social and emotional learning, see: <https://casel.org/impact/>
70. For the more on why we need inclusive libraries see: Olivia Edmonds, 'The Room Where It Happens - Promoting Diversity through Fiction in the Sixth Form Library,' *Diverse Educators Blog*, 2021; For statistics on the lack of diversity among school staff please see: Edurio, 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Among School Staff: Staff Experience in Schools and Multi-Academy Trusts,' 2021; and on why we need inclusive Disability Education



see: Ruth Golding, 'Why we need #DisabilityEd,' TES, 17 May 2018

71. Jonathan Kasler and Maurice J. Elias, 'Holding the Line: Sustaining an SEL-Driven Whole-School Approach in a Time of Transition,' Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, Vol.22, Iss.3, 2012, pp. 227-246
72. To learn more about RJ Working, please visit their website here: <https://rjworking.co.uk/about/>
73. E. Sellman, H. Cremin, and G. McCluskey, 'Restorative Approaches to Conflict in Schools: Interdisciplinary perspectives on whole-school approaches to managing relationships,' Routledge, 2013
74. Through the 'Student-Powered Democratic Experimentation' initiative in Bolivia, schools select student council leaders via lotteries rather than elections. Read more here: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/reinventing-student-government-in-bolivia-democracy-in-practice/>
75. To read an account of a Rights Respecting School in Manchester please see the UNICEF website: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/jenny-mcgarry-gold-headteacher/>
76. Kathleen Nutt, 'One Britain One Nation: Nicola Sturgeon delivers scathing verdict,' The National, 23 June 2021

## About the author

Dilia Zwart is an education expert with nearly ten years of experience managing education programmes and researching how educational systems can create more inclusive, democratic, and peaceful societies. Between 2019-2021 Dilia worked as the Education and Outreach Manager at Protection Approaches where she led the day-to-day development and management of many of Protection Approaches' education and outreach programmes and activities. Through this work she has engaged thousands of school children as well as hundreds of teachers and community builders in the strategies and tools they need to tackle prejudice and build stronger communities. In the summer of 2021 she was appointed as Protection Approaches' first Research Fellow in the Futures of Education, where she will continue to advise the PA team and contribute to our education programme.

Prior to joining PA, Dilia worked on the Peace Programme at the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) where she authored the report 'Peace Education: Making the Case.' She is the co-founder and Chair of the board of directors of the UčiMo Foundation, an organisation based in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina that works to empower young people as active members of their local and global communities through education, including through its flagship programme called the Mostar Summer Youth Programme (MSYP).

In September 2021 she will begin a PhD in International Education at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Her research will examine how education systems can contribute to peace and justice around the world. Dilia holds a BA in Social Anthropology from Harvard University and an MA in International Studies and Diplomacy from SOAS, University of London.

## About Protection Approaches' Education Programme

Our education team works with schools around Britain to develop and run programmes that equip students and teachers with the strategies they need to reject prejudice and violence. Our teacher training programmes help students and staff develop whole-of-school approaches to building a positive and inclusive culture both in the classroom and at home. We also work with national networks to ensure that schools are seen not only as formal places of learning but also as organic communities with shared values and interests. In November 2021 Protection Approaches and the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG) will co-host a major international conference, 'Democratic Education Needs Imagination.' Initially scheduled for 2020 in Rio de Janeiro the conference will now be held online and bring together education experts from across the world.



Protection  
Approaches

Published in August 2021 by Protection Approaches,  
Edinburgh House, 170 Kennington Ln, London SE11 5DP.

Registered charity 1171433.

Further information can be found at [protectionapproaches.org](https://protectionapproaches.org)  
and this report will also be available at [https://  
protectionapproaches.org/reports](https://protectionapproaches.org/reports)

© Copyright Protection Approaches and authors. Permission to  
quote freely from this report can be obtained from Protection  
Approaches. The views presented in this paper are those of  
the author(s). This work is licenced under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International  
License CC BY-NC-ND.