

What a difference a day makes: Rossett School

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Brief description

This example demonstrates how school leaders have achieved great success in establishing a caring and cohesive community where difference is not 'tolerated' but celebrated. The school's successful work to tackle homophobia and other forms of discrimination has secured a safe and caring environment which promotes students' achievements, confidence and self-esteem. It also highlights the wide range of activities which promote PSHE education and citizenship effectively.

Overview – the school's message

'We believe that citizenship can be a powerful vehicle for social change. We want citizenship to help to engage students and encourage a disciplined and thoughtful approach to life so that it is very much central to our philosophy of ensuring that every student can engage, achieve and succeed. It enables us to see our young people not simply as learners but learners with rights and responsibilities who are capable of making a positive contribution to the school and wider community. Citizenship helps us to give meaning and coherence from community cohesion and inclusion to student voice and personalised learning.



Pat Hunter with students and Sir Ian McKellan

We hope that citizenship is embedded in the everyday practice of Rossett; in our curriculum, in our social and institutional life and in our dealings with the wider community.'

Pat Hunter, Headteacher

The good practice in detail

The rationale for citizenship

Citizenship underpins the ethos and vision of the school which is committed to:

- building the sense of self-value in the individual
- enabling all students to express their ideas
- developing students' understanding of their inner and external worlds
- preparing all students for independence and security in their adult lives.

Through citizenship, the school promotes the principles of inclusion:

- setting suitable learning challenges for all students
- responding to students' diverse learning needs
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups.

Delivery of citizenship education



Citizenship is delivered in personal development lessons through a variety of methods combining high-profile citizenship days, discrete lessons and cross-curricular delivery. Themes include topics on being British, Global Citizenship and Active Citizenship in each Key Stage.

Key Stage 3 topics include: diversity in UK society, prejudice, stereotypes and bullying, democracy, parliament, the European Union, human rights, and conflict and conflict resolution. Active citizenship includes project work on charities locally, nationally and internationally and the environment which is considered in a local and global context.

The Key Stage 4 programme includes: international diversity, UK law, and justice and the consequences of crime. Students are involved in the development of active citizenship skills for debate and campaigning. They progress to leading campaigns on contemporary issues chosen by the students. Other active citizenship opportunities include project work with local, national and international charities.

The programmes are enhanced by off timetable days where students consider themes such as personal safety; UK law; diversity, including 'Who Do We Think We Are?' day; employability and economic awareness; and sexual awareness including sex and the law.



A huge range of citizenship community projects supports active citizenship. These include, for example: mealtime helpers at a local hospital, poetry reading, helping older people with mobile telephones, work experience in the nursery, sixth form Rag week, blood donation and

many other events to benefit local, national and international charities. The sixth form 'Listeners Team', who support younger students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, have been awarded a 'Diana' award in three of the last four years. This national award recognises the outstanding contribution that sixth formers make to the community.

Sixth form provision

The extensive post-16 programme builds upon the successful work in the main school and further develops positive role models and leadership skills. The programme includes: parliament and democracy, financial responsibility, Head Boy and Girl elections, lessons from Auschwitz, human rights, tax and society, student council, paired readers, Rossett Ambassadors and the anti-bullying court.

Embracing diversity

The school's work to promote acceptance and respect for identity and diversity is exemplary. In particular, strategies to address homophobic bullying among boys, which previously was commonplace, have proved to be highly effective and have had a positive impact on behaviour. Many students and staff report that they feel confident to be themselves whatever their identity and there is a common ethos and shared language promoting equality for all.



As part of the work to raise awareness of, and tackle homophobia, Sir Ian McKellan spoke in a whole-school assembly on behalf of the charity [Stonewall](#).

In preparation, sessions were organised to raise awareness and understanding of different forms of prejudice and discrimination so that students could discuss their views openly and honestly. As one sixth form student observed, 'a lot of prejudice comes from not knowing' and another explained, 'it wasn't that we didn't care. I don't think people understood how it could actually hurt somebody'. During the assembly Sir Ian shared his personal memories with the students, including the impact of homophobia on himself, his friends and people he had known in his life. The impact of learning about the issue through another person's often painful experience was significant. When students reflected upon the change in attitudes from this particular day forward, one student explained, 'it was like night and day' while another referred to the, 'sonic wave of respect'.



One student indicated to the school that they would like to change their gender identity. The school worked with the family, local health services and enlisted the help of a charity called [GIRES](#). Awareness sessions were arranged for staff and students to explain the issues around changing gender identity. A package of support was put in place to allow the change of identity and the student was soon accepted by their new name and persona. This is strongly indicative of the ethos which exists at the school.

The school's background

Rossett School is a larger than average sized school. Most students are of White British heritage. The number of students eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average. The school has won awards, including the Stephen Lawrence Award, Arts Council Arts Mark Gold and is a Stonewall Champion.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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