

ACT Quality Standard evaluation report

Compass School – Alternative Learning Provision



Compass School is an alternative provision that has embraced citizenship education with sincerity, ambition and a deep understanding of the needs of its students. The school has approached citizenship not as an add-on, but as a valuable core subject that helps pupils develop the knowledge, confidence and skills they need to thrive as active members of their community. Since formally launching citizenship in February 2023, Compass School has made impressive and purposeful strides in strengthening its provision, demonstrating clear commitment, reflective leadership and a genuine belief in the transformative power of citizenship education.

Leadership of citizenship at Compass School is a significant strength and aligns closely with the ACT Quality Standard Bronze criteria, with several emerging features of Silver. Citizenship has clear prominence within the school: it is visible on the website, allocated protected curriculum time, and championed by senior leaders who have supported its growth from the outset. The subject lead has driven development with clarity and passion, ensuring that citizenship has a secure rationale within the school's alternative provision context.

Staff have received INSET and training sessions to help them understand how to teach citizenship meaningfully and confidently. This professional development has been instrumental in ensuring that citizenship is not treated as a discrete bolt-on, but instead becomes “the bread and butter” of what the school does, embedded within everyday practice and aligned with the school's ethos of nurturing responsible, reflective and community-minded young people.

The school's leadership journey reflects many of the ACT Bronze criteria: a clear vision for citizenship, strong SLT support, a developing action plan, and thoughtful quality assurance processes. The commitment to building staff expertise and ensuring citizenship has parity with other subjects demonstrates real ambition and positions Compass School well for future progression towards Silver.

Curriculum activities at Compass School are vibrant, engaging and rooted in real-world experiences, an area where the school excels. Staff are experts in bringing subjects to life, and this is particularly evident in their citizenship teaching. Students took part in UK Parliament Week, an experience that culminated in a congratulatory letter from their local MP, a moment of genuine pride for the school and a powerful example of how national democratic processes can be made accessible and meaningful for students in alternative provision.

The curriculum is carefully planned and continually strengthened. Staff think deeply about how to sequence learning in a relevant way, empowering and connected to their lives. These approaches align strongly with the ACT Bronze criteria and show clear movement towards Silver, particularly in the school's commitment to topical issues, debate, and experiential learning.

Compass School has built its KS3 and KS4 citizenship curriculum from the ground up, ensuring that all key citizenship concepts are covered across both key stages. This is a notable achievement given the school's recent launch of the subject. Curriculum documentation shows clear breadth and depth, and resources are quality-assured by the citizenship lead to ensure suitability for the school's context and student needs.

The curriculum reflects the ACT Quality Standard expectations for Bronze and students benefit from a structured and purposeful programme that builds knowledge over time and prepares them to engage confidently with citizenship concepts.

Active citizenship is a standout strength of Compass School and a deeply meaningful part of its offer. Students take part in numerous community-based projects that allow them to apply citizenship skills while also experiencing the impact they can have on the world around them. This is particularly powerful for students in alternative provision pathways, many of whom have previously been labelled or underestimated. Seeing themselves out in the community, making a difference, being recognised, and contributing positively, has been hugely rewarding for staff, students and the wider community.

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A strong example is the school's "Adopt a Station" project, which led to students being featured in the local community magazine. This recognition not only celebrates their hard work but also reinforces key citizenship concepts such as community engagement, responsibility and active participation. The introduction of student voice opportunities is a notable strength of the school, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring young people are heard and recognising that many may not have previously had meaningful opportunities to influence decisions about their education. Despite the challenges of maintaining consistent representation within a setting with changing cohorts, continuing to develop and embed these structures, including leadership opportunities for longer-term learners and greater student-led involvement in projects and initiatives, will further strengthen young people's ownership of the school and ensure their voices continue to shape future developments.

These projects align closely with the ACT Bronze criteria for active citizenship and show clear movement towards Silver, particularly in the authenticity of the work, the community partnerships involved, and the positive impact on student identity and confidence.

Compass School has demonstrated a thoughtful, ambitious and highly meaningful approach to citizenship education. The school meets the ACT Quality Standard Bronze Award confidently, with several emerging Silver elements across leadership, curriculum activities and active citizenship. The progress made since February 2023 is remarkable, and the school's commitment to embedding citizenship as a core part of its ethos is both commendable and inspiring.

The Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) is delighted to award Compass School the **Bronze Award for Citizenship Education**. This award recognises the school's strong foundations, reflective leadership and the purposeful, community-centred experiences it provides for students. ACT extends warm congratulations to Compass School and particular thanks to the citizenship lead and senior leadership team for their dedication, innovation and belief in the power of citizenship to transform young people's lives.

Areas for further development

As Compass School continues to strengthen its provision, helpful next steps include:

- Further developing curriculum documentation to ensure clear mapping of citizenship across KS3 and KS4, recognising that many students access the curriculum over varying lengths of time and including mapping and progression milestones for both short-term and longer-term learners supporting progression towards Silver.
- Continuing to build staff expertise through regular CPD, ensuring consistency and confidence across all teachers delivering citizenship in line with the national curriculum.
- Enhancing opportunities for students to engage with local decision-makers, building on the success of Parliament Week and community projects, including the introduction of student-chosen initiatives.
- Developing assessment processes to align more closely with other subjects, supporting triangulation and quality assurance in line with ACT Silver criteria.
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Signed: *Kelly Allchin*

Kelly Allchin, Lead Assessor

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