

## Education and citizenship

**Promoting citizenship is a task for all educational institutions, from primary schools to universities. The Education Council recommends that the Minister gives this basic principle a statutory footing.**

*25 September 2003*

Fundamental changes in the make-up of the population and the growth of individualisation reinforce the call for greater social cohesion and citizen engagement. The education sector is responding to this call. People working in and with schools, local government representatives and scholars have grasped the challenge of fostering citizenship in education.

In the view of the Education Council, citizenship is about decent behaviour in and around the school. Schools are increasingly devoting specific attention to rules of conduct, such as 'respecting one another' and 'listening to one another'. Respect for these basic rules can no longer be taken for granted, and should therefore form an explicit part of school policy. Without respect for these rules, it would become impossible to provide good education.

But it is also obvious that citizenship goes beyond proper interpersonal communication within the school. It also includes the ability of pupils and students to make an active contribution to society, for example, through local community projects or voluntary work.

### **Give citizenship a statutory footing**

The Education Council believes that citizenship should be firmly anchored by inserting appropriate clauses in all education laws. This will support educational institutions in developing their policies on decent behaviour at schools and universities, and on social and/or political participation. A citizenship clause would give educational institutions the freedom they need to do provide tailored solutions.

The Education Council sees a guiding role for local authorities in primary and secondary education. They should enter into consultation with school governing bodies and social, cultural and sports organisations to develop concrete plans for citizenship education. A new consultation structure is not needed, as local authorities and schools already consult with each other on other matters, such as school accommodation.