FirstNews
ACTive Citizenship Awards
Pupil Toolkit
What is Citizenship?

You may be doing Citizenship already at school, or you may have never done it before. But it always helps to know what a subject is and what it involves! Citizenship helps you understand how the world around you – at school, in your community or across the globe – works, and the part you have to play in making the choices and decisions that help it to work well.

What is an ACTive citizen?

The UK is a democracy, which means that most adults living here – the citizens – have the right to vote in elections to choose people to represent us in parliament. These representatives are known as members of parliament or MPs. They do lots of things, including making rules and laws for the country.

You can’t vote until you are 18, but you can have a say and help make a change before this, because in a democracy, every citizen, young and old, has a voice. Being an ACTive citizen is about you taking part in democracy, by having your say and making a positive difference.

What are the FirstNews ACTive Citizenship Awards?

The ACTive Citizenship Award is about recognising how you can make real, positive changes. It’s about finding an issue that makes you go, “What? This isn’t right!” or: “We can make that better!” and taking action to change it. It’s about you, working with others to make a difference.

There are three ways to achieve an award:

1. Take a LEARNING action: you’ve been learning about an issue in a lesson like geography, science or as part of a topic, and you want to do something about it.

2. Take a SCHOOL action: you would like to get involved in making decisions about how your school is organised, or because you think something needs to improve, or change.

3. Take a COMMUNITY action: there’s something happening in your local area, a community you belong to or the wider world that you want to draw attention to, or get involved in.
If you achieve three awards, you and your school will be recognised as an ACTive Citizenship Ambassador. The diagram below shows you how this works.

Let’s do this!

This toolkit pack gives you all the information you need to plan and carry out your ACTive citizenship projects. You can use it however you choose - in a group with other people, as a whole class with your teacher to guide you, or even on your own. Whatever you decide, it will help you keep your project in order and on track. In the toolkit are seven steps to help you:

- **GET PLANNING!** Steps 1-5 are the planning steps
- **TAKE ACTION!** Step 6 is the action you’ll take
- **MEASURE IMPACT!** Step 7 is where you think about the action you took and write a news report for First News

Your final news report is important, as it will help you achieve your First News ACTive Citizenship Award, and be published in First News, either in the newspaper or on the website. Reporting your project might even inspire others to take action too.
Take a look at the seven steps:

STEP 1 Choose the issue

STEP 2 Who and what can help?

STEP 3 What kind of action will you take?

STEP 4 How will you know if you’re successful?

STEP 5 Plan and get ready

STEP 6 Put your plan into action

STEP 7 Time to reflect, evaluate and report your story
Choose the issue

This is the really important part! Choose an issue that you are interested in and care about: where you want to try to make a difference through the action you take.

Remember your action could be...

A LEARNING ACTION

A SCHOOL ACTION

A COMMUNITY ACTION

Help with making a choice

► You might have learnt about an issue in another lesson, such as geography, science or citizenship, that you now want to do something about in a learning action project.

► If you need more ideas for a school or a community action, have a look at page 8.

► Or, if you want to look somewhere else, try reading First News. Each week it has articles about local and global issues that might inspire you to take action.

Voting

Remember the bit at the beginning about democracy, and everyone having a voice? If you’re working with others in an action team, it’s important that everyone has a chance to discuss and agree on the action you’re going to take. You could do this by having a vote once you hear all the different opinions and ideas.

When you have decided on your action, write it somewhere in big letters, or start a display:

► We are going to change...
► We want to...
► We are going to...
► We are going to take action to...
You also need to decide two more things:

A. What you want your action to achieve?

**Do you want it to make an impact?**

Make other people sit up and take notice of your action: it could make them think or behave differently in future.

E.g. A group of friends was learning about the rainforests in a geography topic, and decided to raise awareness of rainforests being destroyed. They wrote articles for their school newsletter, designed posters for a display, invited parents and carers to a ‘Save our rainforests’ presentation and held a cake sale to raise money for a rainforest charity.

**Do you want to make a change?**

Do you think that something isn’t right, or unfair? Try to change it.

E.g. A Year 6 class discovered that their town’s library might close, and wanted to stop it happening. They joined a local campaign, and wrote letters to the local council about the importance of the library to them and other people in the town. They invited local councillors into school to persuade them to change their decision.

**Do you want a situation to improve?**

Does something need to be done differently, or better?

E.g. A school council decided to try and reduce the amount of single-use plastics used in school. They investigated the amount of single-use plastic that was thrown away, and ways to reuse or recycle it. They researched alternatives to plastic and the cost of ordering these. They also helped create a school plastics policy to reduce the amount of plastics waste.
B. Which Citizenship issues does your project address?

In Citizenship, we learn about some important ideas that affect us and how we live together. Have a look at the list below, and tick the one (or more) that fits your project best. Is it about:

- how we make decisions, have a say, and make a positive difference or change
- persuading people to change their minds or look at a different way of doing things
- how people are treated and what is fair and unfair in different situations
- rules and laws that help us learn and live together
- what people are entitled to and our responsibilities to one another and to the environment
### Ideas for a school action
*Add your own ideas to the spaces at the end*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School meal choices</th>
<th>Safety in and around school</th>
<th>School clubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>Human rights in school</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground games</td>
<td>Fairness and equality in school</td>
<td>Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ideas for a community action
*Add your own ideas to the spaces at the end*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoting sustainable development (things that will last instead of being thrown away)</th>
<th>Local charity support</th>
<th>Local leisure facilities (parks, green spaces, sports centres etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road safety</td>
<td>Supporting a local, national or international campaign</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planning your action: who and what can help?

Before you start your action, you will need to find a few things out. Have a think about where you can get more information, help and support. This might be from websites, the library, organisations, other people...

Use the chart below to help you - you could copy it on to a large piece of paper to make this easier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is affected by the issue? (e.g. pupils, children, people in our area etc.)</td>
<td>Who can help with our action? (e.g. teachers, charities, parents etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will make the final decisions about our action? (e.g. pupils, teachers, headteacher, local councillor, MP etc.)</td>
<td>Where can we get more information and advice? (e.g. named websites, newspapers, advice leaflets, named people etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**FirstNews**

**EDUCATION**

**Association for Citizenship Teaching**
Research

Research is really helpful to your project. It can help you:

- find out why the action is needed – are there any important facts and figures?
- what the people affected by the action think about it
- different suggestions for carrying out the action
- essential things to think about e.g. cost, timing
- if there is anyone or anything you will need to help you

Below are some examples of different types of research. Your teacher can help you decide which types will suit your project best, and tell you more about them. If you are doing research with people you don’t know, make sure you get permission first, and have a teacher or other trusted adult with you while you are doing it.

**Interviews**: asking people questions face-to-face to find out what they think

**Questionnaires and surveys**: giving out written questions to find out what people think

**Observation**: watching and making notes about something happening

**Focus group**: talking with a small group of people who would be affected by the issue you are investigating

**Written documents**: print and electronic information to read about your issue

IMPORTANT INFO!

- Talk to people affected by your action, (and not just your friends and family). If your action affects children in school, talk to them. If it affects everyone in your community, try to talk to people of different ages, genders, backgrounds etc.

- If you’re taking a community action, find out who makes decisions in the community and try to talk to them (e.g managers, councillors, MP).

- Display your findings in different and interesting ways: charts, graphs, quotes are all good at getting information across.
Getting started: what does ‘taking action’ look like?

What does ‘taking action’ really mean? There are so many things you could do – you might have thought of lots of ideas already.

Here are some suggestions for you to consider. But you don’t have to do all (or even any) of these – add your own ideas in the blank boxes at the end. Think about what kind of difference you are trying to make and what type of action will help you make that difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Could we do this for our project?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present the issue to others</td>
<td>- Give a presentation in assembly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organise an exhibition/display/event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Make a video or slideshow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Write an article for the school website/newsletter/newspaper/local paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult people</td>
<td>- Find out others’ views (see ‘Research’ on page 10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to write or review a school policy</td>
<td>- Look at your school's policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Discuss policies with teachers, governors and other pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Make decisions about things to revise, add or change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign</td>
<td>- Set up a school campaign group for your issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Start a petition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Speak/write to decision-makers such as your local councillor or MP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise money for a cause or issue</td>
<td>- Hold an event: cake or other sales, sponsored activities, do jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Create a mini enterprise activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use your school or class council</td>
<td>- Ask for an item on the class or school council agenda to discuss your ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share your concerns with your school community</td>
<td>- Make a display for your school entrance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plan and hold an assembly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ask for an item on the class or school council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ask for time to speak with teachers or school governors to discuss your issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do a display or presentation at parents’ evening or other school event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Success! (And how will you know?)

You’ve got your issue, you’ve decided on your action, you’ve made your plans and you’re all ready to go. But how will you know if you’ve been successful and made a difference at the end? Sometimes big changes can take a long time, so what do you want your project to achieve?

Below are some examples of what people might say your project has achieved. Tick the ones that could be said for your action, and add any others of your own in the blank speech bubbles.

- Our MP said they would give our letters to a Minister.
- It is safer to travel to school.
- Our issue got lots of publicity and now local people know about it.
- That school policy is fairer now.
Get ready… Putting your plan together

Now you’ve thought through every step of your project, it’s time to write an action plan. This is helpful, as it’s a reminder of what you’ve decided, who and what you need, and the jobs everyone has to do and by when. You can check your plan while you’re taking your action to make sure everything is on track.

ACTive Citizenship Award action plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of action (learning, school, community)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship idea (see Step 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for taking action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why you’re taking action (e.g. impact, change, improvement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you’ll need to take action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will help and support you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Actions needed: who does what by when?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>By when?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 6 - Put your plan into action

Take ACTion!

Now it's time to put all that planning into action! Taking action to bring about change can be hard work, and a lot of fun too. Good luck!

Keep an ACTion diary or journal

To record all the elements of your action, keep a diary or journal. Make sure you take photos as you go (ask permission first) and even make a recording of your event. This will help you share what you did, and why, with other people and help you when you prepare your article for your school newspaper and First News.

You could record:

- what you did (individually and with others)
- things that went well
- something you are proud of or something you did for the first time
- things that were challenging or difficult
- things that could be improved next time
- any new issues or questions that arise
- things that surprised you
Measure impact!

So you’ve taken action, and hopefully you’ve made a difference. But you’re not finished yet! A successful project always includes some reflection time to evaluate and report on what’s been done.

There are two parts to this:

1. Reflection

Evaluating a project means thinking about it when you’ve finished, and considering:

- whether you’ve achieved what you set out to do
- what went well and what could have gone better
- what you could do differently next time
- what you’ve learned
- what other people might want to know about your project

This reflection process will help make your next project be even better.

Use the table on the next page to reflect on and evaluate your project - there are a few sentence starters to help you if you need them.

TOP TIP
This will be very useful if you’re doing more than one Award, or trying to achieve ACTive Ambassador status)
**Step 7 - Project evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we were trying to achieve (project aims)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall, did the project achieve our aims?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do we know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>What went well</th>
<th>What could have been better</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Through this project I/we have learned:**

- How to...
- About...
- Ways to...
- What...
- Better ways to...
- We can...
Step 7 - Publicising your project

2. Reporting

Communicating what you wanted to change, why and what you’ve achieved, to as wide an audience as possible, is an important step in your ACTive Citizenship project.

How you choose to publicise what you are doing is up to you. Different projects will need different communication methods. For example, you could write a news report, take photographs and write captions, create a PowerPoint presentation or perhaps a video or a podcast.

Make sure your news report is featured in your school’s newspaper, newsletter or website. If your ACTive citizenship project has involved making changes in your local community, your local newspaper or TV station could be interested in reporting it.

All reporting formats will be acceptable in your application for your First News ACTive Citizenship Award, and a report of your group’s project will feature in First News, in the newspaper or on the website.

By publicising your project, you will inspire other people to get involved with projects to make positive changes.

You could use the writing frame (on the next page) to help you organise your news report.

---

NO MORE IDLING!
By Adam and Alfie, Year 3

We wanted to improve the quality of air around our school and to reduce exhaust fumes from cars. This is important because we all breathe in unsafe air and it is particularly dangerous for people who have asthma. We have lots of cars and taxis near our school because we live in a busy city close to lots of train stations. We wanted to persuade people to stop idling, turn off their engines and stop polluting the air. Idling is when you keep your engine on when you drop someone off or if you are waiting in a taxi queue. What you should do is to turn your engine off, then, when it’s time to get on the move again, you turn the engine back on!

“Pollution turns fresh air into unhealthy air. Taxi drivers need to help us by listening. Their example might stop other car drivers from polluting the world’s environment,” said Elvis, Year 3. We made posters with pictures and slogans to tell the car drivers what to do. We asked Camden Council to make them into road signs. The council put our signs up on lamp posts around King’s Cross on the roads near the train stations. Our message to all UK taxi drivers is ‘no more idling for you guys’. Turn your keys the other way and make our air healthier.

---

NO TO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC!
By Rock and Frankie, Year 3

People are using too much single-use plastic in the world. It is bad for the environment as it can end up in landfill sites or oceans. At King’s Cross Academy, we decided we would cut down the single-use plastic we use.

This is what we’ve done so far:
1) Single-use individual yogurt pots aren’t served for lunch. We now have big pots of yoghurt and have a portion in bowls that can be washed up.
2) We now have a milk machine that we fill our cups from at lunchtime.
3) Single-use plastic water bottles aren’t allowed on school trips any more.
4) Teachers have reduced laminating by 50%.
5) The cleaners use biodegradable bin bags.

Our next step is to stop using glitter at school. Glitter is a microplastic, so it ends up in the sea. We want to use non-plastic glitter that is made from a sustainable timber. Our challenge to all schools in the world – whether you are primary, secondary or nursery – is to stop using plastic glitter. Fish in the seas are eating plastic and fishermen are even finding it in fish’s stomachs. Do you want your glitter to end up there?
Step 7 - Publicising your project

**News report writing frame**

You could use this writing frame to help you structure and organise your news report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph 1: <strong>AIM</strong> of our project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 2: <strong>The ACTION</strong> we took</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 3: <strong>The CHANGES</strong> and <strong>IMPACT</strong> our action had.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 4: <strong>Our NEXT STEPS</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONGRATULATIONS!

You’ve completed your project and you are an active UK citizen who makes positive changes to your community and wider society.

You now need to apply to First News and the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) for your award. Ask your teacher to visit the First News website to download the application forms.