

The Rights Respecting Schools Award

The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school's planning, policies, practice and ethos. A rights-respecting school not only teaches about children's rights but also models rights and respect in all its relationships: between teachers / adults and pupils, between adults and between pupils.

Children's Rights

Children's rights are central to all aspects of UNICEF's work, including education, and we use the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** as a framework for our activities. *The CRC is a comprehensive human rights treaty that enshrines specific children's rights in international law.* These rights define universal principles and standards for the status and treatment of children worldwide.

UNICEF aims to promote children's rights in schools in two ways: by supporting schools to ensure that rights are embedded in their ethos and policy-making; and by offering resources and activities to ensure that children and young people can learn about children's rights in the classroom and beyond.

The CRC consists of 54 articles. A 'child' is defined as every human being below the age of 18. The key provisions are:

The right to a childhood (including protection from harm)

The right to be educated (including all girls and boys completing primary school)

The right to be healthy (including having clean water, nutritious food and medical care)

The right to be treated fairly (which includes changing laws and practices that discriminate against children)

The right to be heard (which includes considering children's views)

Why teach about the Convention?

Teaching children and young people about the CRC means that they can find out about the legal and human rights and responsibilities that underpin society. By learning about the Convention, children and young people in the UK can discover that:

They have rights

They should be informed about their rights

Participation of Children and Young People

Children and young people play an active role in their school becoming rights-respecting. The RRSA provides a framework for pupil participation based on the Convention. **Adults are encouraged to work with children and young people in an inclusive way to ensure their views are heard and valued in decision making which affects them.** There is recognition of the emerging capacities of children to play an increasingly informed and active role in the life of the school.

Steps to the Award

Now that our school has registered, we need to work through three stages:

The first stage is a Recognition of Commitment (ROC) which will be presented to schools that:

have a representative steering group composed of adults and pupils to guide, promote and

The RRSA Award Standards

For a school to be accredited as rights-respecting it must show evidence that it has reached all four of the following standards:

Standard A: Rights-respecting values underpin leadership and management

The best interests of the child are a top priority in all actions. Leaders are committed to placing the values and principles of the CRC at the heart of all policies and practice.

Standard B: The whole school community learns about the CRC

The Convention is made known to children and adults. Young people and adults use this shared understanding to work for global justice and sustainable living.

Standard C: The school has a rights-respecting ethos

Young people and adults collaborate to develop and maintain a rights-respecting school community, based on the CRC, in all areas and in all aspects of school life.

Standard D: Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners

Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously. Young people develop the confidence, through their experience of an inclusive rights-respecting school community, to play an active role in their own learning and to speak and act for the rights of all to be respected locally and globally.

Impact Evidence

The main areas of impact are:

Improved self-esteem and well-being

Improved relationships and behaviour (reductions in bullying and exclusions and improved attendance)

Improved engagement in learning

Positive attitudes towards diversity in society and the reduction of prejudice

Children and young people's enhanced moral understanding

Children and young people's support for global justice

Children and young people become more involved in decision-making in schools

Parents have also reported support for the values and principles of the CRC. This is based on the beneficial impact they see on their children when they adopt rights-respecting language and behaviour.