

The Rights Respecting Schools Award

UNICEF UK is pioneering an initiative in UK schools called the Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA). The award scheme started in 2004 and is running in more than 1000 primary and secondary schools in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. One of the greatest challenges that schools face is to define a clear set of values – not just rules - that has been developed with the full involvement of the school community and is actively upheld by pupils. UNICEF UK's RRSA initiative helps schools to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the values framework that enables this to be achieved.

A values framework for schools

The RRSA provides a coherent values framework which enhances school leadership. It shapes the ethos of the school and unifies what can often be seen as a range of disparate educational initiatives and government priorities in all UK jurisdictions; the global dimension, SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning), sustainable development, and community cohesion. Pupils develop a stronger sense of the need to act for global justice. The universality of the UNCRC provides a clear link between building up their rights respecting school and the need for children's rights to be realised everywhere.

What are the benefits?

Evidence gathered from schools participating in the RRSA (suggests that when the values of the UNCRC underpin the ethos and curriculum of a school, they have a significant, positive impact on important aspects of child well-being and school improvement. They also have a positive effect on the relationships, teaching approaches, attitudes and behaviour of everyone involved.

Teachers, children and parents have reported:

- Improved pupil self-esteem Pupils' enhanced moral development
- Improved behaviour and relationships(reductions in bullying, exclusions and improved attendance)
- More positive attitudes towards diversity in society and the reduction of prejudice
- Pupils' development as global citizens
- Overall school improvement (including learning environment and academic standards)
- Enhanced job satisfaction for teachers

Impact at Maghull High School

The RRSA will embody the work done by the student council and will develop alongside the tutorial programme, SEAL lessons and curriculum collapse days. It will involve the development of the existing school rules and systems and hopefully develop as a mutually beneficial approach to learning for both staff and students.

