



RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS AWARD

**HOW DO RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS
ACHIEVE CHANGE FOR CHILDREN?**

April 2017

WHAT IMPACT CAN A RIGHTS RESPECTING APPROACH HAVE?¹

Rights Respecting (RR) Schools take a whole school approach to embedding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the centre of the school ethos and teaching and learning approaches. The diagram on this sheet shows how this approach is expected to lead to real change in children's lives.

Through including the UNCRC in the curriculum, children, teachers and the wider school community have a better knowledge of children's rights and how these apply to their lives. This knowledge enables children to recognise and enjoy mutual respect for rights. **As a result, children should always feel safe at school and in their wider community.**

Evidence shows that teaching children about their rights encourages them to respect the rights of others, and that this is reflected in their behaviour, including **reduced bullying or discrimination.**^{1,2,3}

Positive relationships across the school are supported by attitudes and actions that respect the rights of others, and teaching approaches that emphasise individual dignity, participation, best interests of the child and non-discrimination.³ Positive relationships and overall school ethos contribute to **higher levels of pupil wellbeing.**¹ Emotional wellbeing has been identified as a growing concern in the UK^{4,5} and is a key responsibility of teachers.⁶

Children who know about their rights or the UNCRC and those who report that they are heard and can participate in decisions, report higher wellbeing.^{7,8,9} Where relationships are perceived as positive, **children are more likely to enjoy school and to feel valued and respected.**^{10,11} Resilience – the capacity to cope with everyday challenges – has been associated with primary schools that have shared decision-making, participation, a supportive social environment and good community relationships.¹² Improved relationships also impact on teacher wellbeing. One study found that over time, schools that fully implemented a child rights approach had lower levels of teacher burnout.¹³

High levels of wellbeing and engagement lead to improved attainment.¹⁴ A child rights approach in schools is linked to improved learner engagement and lower absenteeism, particularly in more disadvantaged schools.¹ Whole school approaches to influencing pupils' behaviour and social and emotional learning have a positive impact on attainment.¹⁵ Child Rights Education has been shown to reduce the attainment gap between the most

¹ References can be found at the end of this document

and least deprived children^{1,16} and has been suggested as a factor in schools that have higher than expected attainment levels.¹⁷

Opportunities for young people to participate in decisions that affect them and the school community can improve the school environment and have a positive impact of pupils' wellbeing.^{18,19} It also provides opportunities to develop valuable skills such as listening and negotiation, and confidence to participate in wider community and political issues.^{20,21} Schools which listen to the concerns of children and involve them in decision making are more likely to address bullying and violence than other schools.²²

Children's rights **provide a values framework that emphasises social justice and inclusion** which may have lasting effects on young people's attitudes and behaviour towards others. There is some evidence, for example, that teaching children about their rights may be a protective factor against extremist views.²³ A child rights approach helps children to be better informed about important issues and to understand how to participate in constructive debate and democratic processes, supporting them to **become 'active' and politically engaged citizens.**¹⁴

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

Schools are awarded Rights Respecting status on the basis of assessors' observations and the school's own evidence of how a school has embraced a rights respecting approach. In addition, we believe it is important to show how the lives of children are impacted as result of this work. While this does not form part of the assessment, it does help us to show the value of this work to others.

To help us show the impact, we ask participating schools to support us in capturing information about the impact of RRSAs. This information is analysed by Unicef UK's evaluation team to allow us to report on the overall impact of our work. There is a range of data we draw on to show impact:

- Questionnaires with pupils
- Questionnaires with teachers and other adults in the school
- Head teacher observations about impact in the school
- Data routinely collected by the school, e.g. exclusions and attendance
- Publicly available school data on attainment
- Specific observations gathered during the assessment process

Additional information about what we require from schools to support the evaluation is available from Unicef UK [web url].

OUTPUTS

INTERIM OUTCOMES

IMPACT

School commitment to child rights

Information about the UNCRC is included in the curricula/teaching plans for all children

Schools commit to child rights and supporting child wellbeing, and communicate this internally and externally

School policies, guidance and structures apply a child rights based approach and link this to other initiatives

Schools monitor and respond to non-rights respecting practice and behaviours in the school

Teaching approaches respect rights of educators & learners

Opportunities & mechanisms available for pupils to participate in decision-making

Campaigns & activities aimed at promoting the rights of others, locally and globally

All children know about the UNCRC and can describe how it impacts on them and children everywhere

All relationships are founded on rights; interactions are based on dignity, mutual respect and inclusion

Children are empowered to disclose behaviours that breach their rights

Children feel involved in and take ownership of their learning

Teachers enjoy teaching and feel more valued

More children involved in opportunities to influence decisions in the school

Children are committed to supporting the rights of others and believe they have a role to play in this.

Knowledge about children's rights increases among the school community, including teachers, parents & governors

There is a reduction in bullying and discriminatory behaviour among children

In school, children enjoy all the rights enshrined in the UNCRC

Children perceive their relationships with peers and staff more positively

All children know that their views are taken seriously

Children enjoy being at school and learning

Children develop a long-term commitment to values such as social justice and inclusion

Children feel safe at school

Children feel included and valued as individuals

There is improvement in pupils' wellbeing and emotional resilience

There is improvement in pupils' engagement

There is improvement in pupils' attainment and the attainment gap is narrowed

Increase in pupils' local & global community participation and 'active citizenship'

RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS: THEORY OF CHANGE AND EVIDENCE REVIEW – BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCES

1. Howe, R. & Covell, K. (2011). Countering disadvantage, promoting health: The value of Children's Human Rights Education. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 45(1) 59-85.
2. Dunhill, A. (2016). Does teaching children about human rights, encourage them to practice, protect and promote the rights of others?. *Education 3-13*, 1-11.
3. Covell, K, et al. (2010). Implementing children's human rights education in schools. *Improving Schools*. 13(2):117-132.
4. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. (2016). Fairness for Children: A league table of inequality in child well-being in rich countries. (Unicef: Florence). https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/RC13_eng.pdf
5. NSPCC, 9th December, 2016. Rise in children hospitalised for self-harm as thousands contact Childline. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/fighting-for-childhood/news-opinion/rise-children-hospitalised-self-harm-thousands-contact-childline/>
6. Thorburn, M. (2015). Theoretical constructs of well-being and their implications for education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(4):650-665.
7. Unicef Spain. (2012). Children's well-being from their own point of view: What affects the children's well-being in the first year of compulsory secondary education in Spain?. (Unicef Spain: Madrid). https://old.unicef.es/sites/www.unicef.es/files/Childrens_subjective_well-being_Unicef_feb13.pdf
8. Lloyd, K., & Emerson, L. (2016). (Re)examining the Relationship Between Children's Subjective Wellbeing and Their Perceptions of Participation Rights. *Child Indicators Research*, 1-18.
9. Anderson, D. & Graham, A. (2015). Improving student wellbeing: having a say at school. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. 27 (3):348-366.
10. Patton, G. C., et al. (2016). Our future: a Lancet commission on adolescent health and wellbeing. *The Lancet*.
11. Markham, W.A., et al. (2012). Does school ethos explain the relationship between value-added education and teenage substance use? A cohort study. *Social Science and Medicine*. 75(1):69-76.

12. Stewart, D., et al. (2004). Promoting and building resilience in primary school communities: evidence from a comprehensive 'health promoting school' approach. *Intl Jnl of Mental Health Promotion*. 6(3):26-33.
13. Covell, K., et al. (2009). Reducing Teacher Burnout by Increasing Student Engagement. *School Psychology International*. 30(3):282-290.
14. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. (2010). The importance of attitudes and behaviour for poorer children's educational attainment. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation: London).
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/poorer-children-education-summary.pdf>
15. Education Endowment Fund. (2016). Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Social and Emotional Learning.
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/generate/?u=https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/toolkit/?id=146&t=Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Toolkit&e=146&s>
16. Howe, R. B., & Covell, K. (2013). Education In The Best Interests Of The Child: A children's rights perspective on closing the achievement gap. (University of Toronto Press: Toronto).
17. Mannion, G., et al. (2015). How Young People's Participation in School Supports Achievement and Attainment. (CYPCS: Edinburgh).
<http://www.cypcs.org.uk/ufiles/achievement-and-attainment.pdf>
18. Estyn. (2016). Pupil participation: a best practice guide.
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Pupil%20participation.pdf>
19. Davies, L., et al. (2006). Inspiring Schools, Impact and outcomes: Taking up the challenge of pupil participation. (Carnegie UK Trust: London).
<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/02/pub14550117181.pdf>
20. Davies, L. (2009). Educating against Extremism: Towards a critical politicisation of young people. *International Review of Education*. 55(2/3) :183-203. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40270074.pdf>
21. Maitles, H. & Deuchar, R. (2006). 'We don't learn democracy, we live it!': Consulting the pupil voice in Scottish schools. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. 1(3): 249-266.
22. UNESCO. (2017). School Violence and Bullying: Global status report. (UNESCO: Paris).
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf>
23. Bonnell, J. et al. (2010). Teaching Approaches that help to build resilience to extremism among young people: Research Report DFE-RR119. (DFE: London).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-approaches-that-help-to-build-resilience-to-extremism-among-young-people>