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Our Rights Respecting School Journey
Christ Church Church of England Primary School

What is the Rights Respecting Schools initiative?

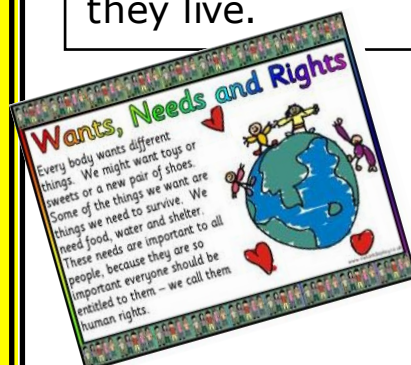
UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools initiative helps a school community to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to help develop a clear set of values that are actively upheld by pupils.



What are children's rights?

All human beings – adults and children alike – are entitled to basic human rights. Children have a particular set of rights due to their vulnerability and need for protection. The UNCRC sets out the rights that must be realised for children to develop to their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. These rights are not something that children need to earn or that adults and governments can take away as a punishment. They contain the basic protection and support that all children are entitled to. All children have the same rights, no matter what their background or where they live.

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What does the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child say?

There are 42 articles in the Convention, but they can be summed up as follows:

The right to a childhood

Every child has the right to a safe childhood, protected from violence, abuse and exploitation. Every child has the right to grow up in a family environment, free from adult responsibilities and with the right to play.

The right to an education

Every child has the right to an education that develops their personality, talents and abilities to the full.

The right to be healthy

Every child has the right to health care, clean water, nutritious food and a safe environment so they can be as healthy as possible.

The right to be treated fairly

All children have the same rights whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say and whatever their family background.

Articles 29 is particularly important for schools:

Article 29: Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.



How did we start our journey?

First of all our Governors had to agree to put the Rights Respecting Schools initiative onto our School Development Plan. Then our teachers and SMSA's were taught about Rights Respecting Schools and talked about what we would have to do to become one. We put a Steering Group together, consisting of School Council, two Year 6 children who were in charge of running the project and three staff: a teacher, a TA and a SMSA. We let parents know by sending information home and putting up displays when we had parents' evenings.

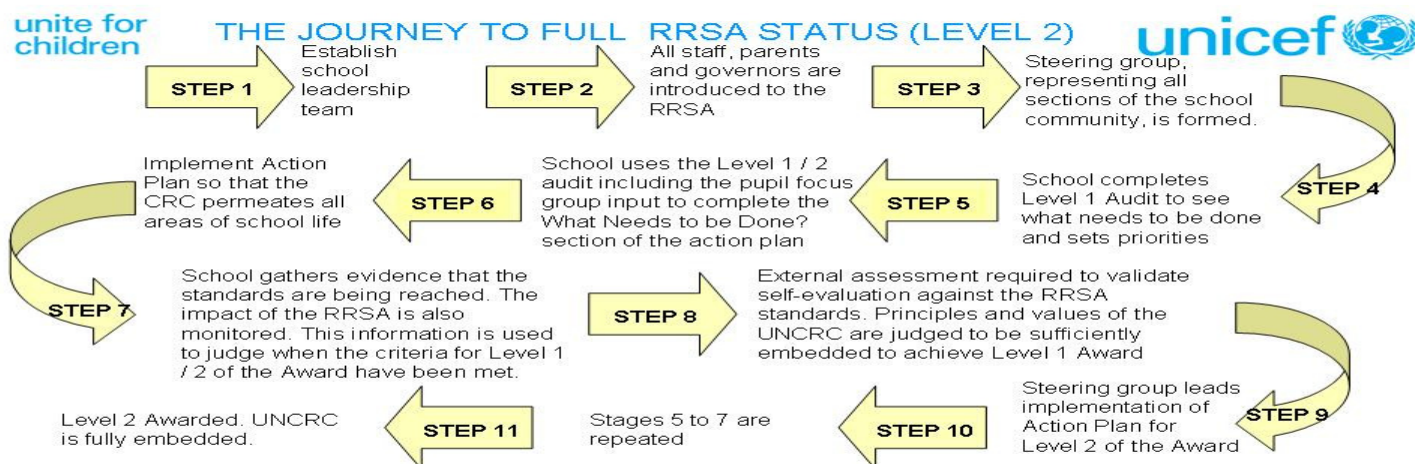
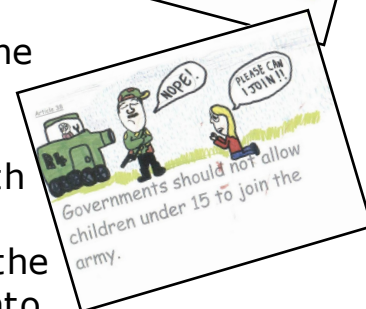
We sent a questionnaire to each class asking questions about how much children felt listened to, respected and helped to learn at school. The results helped us to put together an Action Plan, which showed us what we had to do to get a Level 1 award.

What we had to do

We had services which taught about rights and the UNCRRC.

In classes, teachers taught children about rights and a lot of classes linked rights and responsibilities with their class rules. We already have lots of 'Pupil Voice' at our school, so our Eco- and School Councils carried on their good work, coming up with even more ideas to make our school a better place.

Our biggest problem was getting everyone to use the language of rights and responsibilities across the whole school. To help with this, we got a group of children together to turn the 42 rights on the UNCRRC into more child-friendly language and to draw pictures, so that it was easier for KS1 to understand. One teacher found a 'matching cards' activity and this helped the teachers to do more work in class. Some classes decided to put up displays.



The time for a primary school to progress to Level 1 will vary. The average is about 18 months and to L2, a further 12-18 months. Secondary schools tend to take longer.

Seeing the colourful posters every day makes you think about how you should be treated. We learn that this is how you should treat people too. These are your responsibilities.

It's good to show respect to people because it shows you appreciate them. When people are respectful to me, it shows they appreciate me too and I like that.



Where are we now?

In School Council, children report that things are improving because we are talking about rights and responsibilities in school. Children understand more about showing respect and have been able to talk about problems in a different way. They have come up with ideas to solve problems that they wouldn't have before. For example, in School Council recently, a child reported that respect wasn't always being shown in the playground. We now have a lunchtime award for showing respect to the SMSA's.

What about the future?

Next September we hope each class will have a class charter clearly showing the rights children have in class and balancing this with the responsibilities they also have. One of our teachers is going to a meeting in Bristol soon and will show the Unicef Education Officer our folder. We hope he will say we will be ready to apply for Level 1 of the Rights Respecting School Award in September. We are all working hard to become the first Rights Respecting School in North Somerset!



Learning about our rights has made me realise that there are other children who don't have them. We take it for granted that we get an education, but other child don't go to school. It has helped me to think about the world and appreciate what I have.

I never realised I had so many rights and responsibilities. I learnt about them when I was making the posters for the hall and I really enjoyed doing this job.

Can we help you?

You can contact Sue Walker at the Town Hall for more information about this award, or you can look on www.unicef.org.uk for lots of information. UNICEF UK is holding a Rights Respecting School Award Training Day on 6th July in Bristol. You can contact Will Jackson on willj@unicef.org.uk for further information.

Finally, the children in our Steering Group would be happy to come into your school to talk to your children about the Rights Respecting School has made Christ Church Church of England Primary School a better place to learn.