

Rights, Respect and Responsibility (RRR)

What is RRR?

This Hampshire initiative is based on the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. It goes far beyond traditional rights awareness approaches.

Aim: To work with children and young people develop more knowledgeable, active, socially responsible, democratic citizens.

The innovative programme was stimulated by the practice and research evidence from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia on the teaching of and through the UN Convention. This showed a very positive impact on pupil behaviour, values and attitudes. *Since Jan 2004 about 360 primary schools have chosen to take up RRR training. About 45 secondary schools are now involved to some extent.*

What is so different about the approach?

The programmes key features are that,

- The UN Convention is taught as a body of knowledge and is promoted as a framework for the schools ethos and teaching and learning.
- It treats children and young people as citizens now.
- Developing identity and self esteem as children see themselves as bearers of rights, just like adults.
- A Rights perspective is built into a range of subjects, including Literacy, Maths, Science and History.

- The programme is for all pupils and students from 3 -16. (19)
- The universality and internationalism of the rights in the Convention provides a context for rights promotion and exploring rights violations both near and far.
- More democratic approaches to teaching and learning are promoted, emphasising participation and rights respecting teaching and learning.

For schools the attraction of the UN Convention to schools has been that,

- It acts as a framework for a lot of the schools' Citizenship work. (Healthy Schools, relationship education, drugs education, emotional literacy, school councils) as these are all articles in the Convention
- It allows teachers, schools and children to point to an Authority that is higher than their classroom, the school, their community or their country in support of the schools values.
- It demonstrates that codes of conduct are not unique to each school, but come from a set of world-wide principles, informed by the moral precepts of the world religions, but not religious. It is particularly appropriate in the 21st Century in developing Community Cohesion.

What is likely to be different in a school?

- Class charters on Rights and Responsibilities, signed by both pupils and teachers

- Rights respecting behaviours being modelled
- Higher levels of participation in all aspects of schooling.
- Frequent references to the UNCRC, links to ECM and planning
- A rights based vocabulary is developed through the regular work of teachers.
- Growing involvement in Unicef RRSA

What we know so far - from Covell & Howe's initial research in Hampshire June 2005

Teachers

- they feel empowered and many are reminded about why they came into the job
- they have more time to teach, achieve good progress and higher standards for children, and there is less low level disruption
- the classroom and school atmosphere is healthier – teachers enjoy their jobs more

Children and Young People

Children understand, and feel, that since they have rights, others have rights too and everyone has the responsibility to respect the rights of others – right to achieve the 5 outcomes of the Children Act.

- their approach to resolving conflict with each other and adults is less adversarial
- there is less bullying
- they show a greater concern for themselves, each other and children in other parts of the world
- their language becomes more sophisticated and they are more likely to use higher order thinking
- they are more likely to attend school
- they are less likely to be excluded
- they begin to behave like citizens

Covell & Howe Research in 2007 – Initial findings – schools where RRR embedded

Main impact is on

- Children's self regulation of both learning and social behaviours
- Pupil performance in tests
- Perceived impact on critical thinking

Why does this happen? It puts children at the centre of a world that cares about them and appeals to their desire for universality

Standards

Schools own evaluations, Unicef RRSA reports and Ofsted inspections are now indicating higher levels of oracy, literacy (especially writing), personal development and well being in schools where rights based approaches are embedded as a whole school philosophy. It makes the difference between a school being judged 'outstanding' rather than 'good'. More detail at, www3.hants.gov.uk/education/childrensrights/

Examples of impact.

“The school's involvement in the 'Rights, Respect and Responsibility' programme has contributed to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for pupils .
Oftsed Report. Tweseldown Infant May 2006

“The RRR framework is not another add-on, it is part of everything we do at Harrison. We believe that by using RRR we can improve children’s social skills helping them to become responsible, fully involved citizens within the community, enjoying, achieving and contributing in every aspect of their lives”. **Carolyn Clarke, Harrison Primary, Chair of Primary Head teachers Executive**

“‘Rights, Respect and Responsibilities’ is becoming established as the cornerstone of the improvement strategy. The school trains 15 year old ‘peer educators’ to teach their classmates about RRR in the context of the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child. Surveyed a year after these lessons, the majority of students in the year group reported their peers as respecting each other more, and displaying a greater awareness of each other. More than 10% of the year group reported a decrease in bullying, and some responses demonstrate how RRR has enabled the young people to stand up for themselves and each other.” **Steve Evatt HT John Hanson School.**

Junior school Teachers – reviewing RRR after 2 years. **How has our practice changed. . .**

- Encourage co-operation in children more and by our team working
- Self evaluate more
- More responsibility given to children
- Higher expectations of children
- Take more risks by experimenting with teaching
- Give children time to talk more
- Give children more chances to comment to each other about their work and issues that are important to them- not just lip service
- Reviewing and using classroom charters more
- Deal with behaviour differently and reflect back more
- Involve the whole class in decision making more
- When speaking & teaching we refer to RRR

Rights Respecting school - exemplar

1. Leadership and Management for embedding the values of the UNCRC in the life of the school.

The values of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) are fully embedded in all aspects of the school community. A key factor in this achievement has been the strong, well-informed commitment of the school leadership. All staff have received appropriate training...an ethos has been created that centres on valuing and respecting the voice of children in all aspects of the life of the school. There has been a healthy element of risk-taking in this process. Staff in all roles in the school demonstrate strong commitment to the Rights of the Child. Staff and children form a community of reflective practitioners and learners in open dialogue about teaching, learning, global citizenship and human rights. One member of staff commented, *'It's not them and us . . . it's teamwork.'* This emphasis on the UNCRC as a moral framework for living is reflected in the very supportive relationships and the positive, relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere in classrooms.

2. Teachers, other adults and pupils know and understand the UNCRC and its relevance to the school ethos and curriculum.

The children don't merely know about the UNCRC; they have been encouraged and enabled to engage with it and reflect on its relevance for their lives. As one child commented, *'We are a democratic school; therefore we decide which rights are most important for us.'* The children are very aware of the universality of the Rights of the Child and this underpins the strong sense of justice and global citizenship that many of the children demonstrate. The language of rights, respect and responsibilities regularly shapes the discourse of children and adults alike and is a strong contributory factor in the high quality of moral thinking demonstrated by children.

3. Teaching and Learning in Rights Respecting Classrooms

Every class, children and adults, negotiates and agrees a charter of rights and responsibilities which underpins relationships. Children are encouraged and enabled to be actively involved in shaping the process of teaching and learning, e.g. they make choices in relation to aspects of the curriculum, the organisation of the classroom and have regular opportunities to reflect on what helps them learn and their learning preferences. One teacher commented, *'My class this year have had total responsibility for the arrangement of the classroom. They all made sensible decisions.'* The children are able to give feedback to their teachers on aspects of the teaching process.

4. Pupils actively participate in decision-making throughout the school

One of the children commented during our visit, *'If adults have a decision to make they try to bring the children in as much as they can.'* The children have a genuine sense of empowerment and are able to participate in decision-making in relation to a very wide range of aspects of the life of the school. There is a flourishing school council which is valued highly by the children. It operates effectively because teachers support it. The council operates inclusively and is well chaired, minuted and managed by children.