

## Establishing a Human Rights approach at Wallscourt Farm Academy

Vision, Values, Ethos and Culture – Realising a Human Rights approach for all



### **Champions of Human Rights Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)**

As the chair of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Eleanor Roosevelt was the driving force in creating the 1948 charter of liberties which will always be her legacy: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**“Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility. For the person who is unwilling to grow up, the person who does not want to carry his own weight, this is a frightening prospect.”**

—Eleanor Roosevelt, American Delegate to the United Nations

### **Core principles of Rights Respecting School:**

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.

#### **Who is the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) for?**

The RRSA is a UK-wide initiative for all children and all those working with or for children in formal education. It is being successfully implemented in all settings – Primary, Secondary, Special Needs and Pupil Referral Units – across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

#### **How does the RRSA link with other school initiatives?**

The initiative unifies a range of educational priorities in all UK jurisdictions; the global dimension, SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning), community cohesion and sustainable development.

#### **What impact does the RRSA have?**

A three year [qualitative study](#) by researchers at the Universities of Sussex and Brighton found that "The RRSA has had a profound effect on the majority of the schools involved in the programme."

## RRSA and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The universality of the CRC provides a clear link for pupils between building up their rights-respecting school, understanding their rights and the need for children's rights to be realised everywhere. Children and young people in rights-respecting schools develop a stronger sense of the need to act for global justice.

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.

### Key principles and provision of the Convention

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
- They should be helped to exercise their rights
- They should be able to enforce their rights
- There should be a community of interest to advocate young people's rights

These tenets of the CRC are true for children and young people worldwide, making the Convention an excellent starting point for understanding global citizenship.

## 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.

In a rights-respecting school, participation runs like a thread through all aspects of school life. For children and young people, knowing that they have the right to be heard in decisions which affect them boosts not only their sense of security but also their self-confidence. This opens the way to developing and applying the skills, language and concepts that allow them to realise their rights and to advocate for the rights of children everywhere.

## Standards

The 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.

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.

A school uses the standards and other guidance provided to plan and monitor progress.

## Links between a Rights Respecting approach and the Early Years Statutory Framework

### Article 4 (protection of rights)

Governments must do all they can to fulfil the rights of every child.

### Introduction:

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

### Article 5 (parental guidance)

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide and advise their child so that, as they grow, they learn to apply their rights properly.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

The EYFS seeks to provide:

- **quality and consistency** in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind;
- **a secure foundation** through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly;
- **partnership working** between practitioners and with parents and/or carers;
- **equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

### Article 1 (definition of the child)

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

### Article 2 (without discrimination)

The Convention applies to every child whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, no matter what type of family they come from.

## Overarching principles

Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- **children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

### Article 29 (goals of education)

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.

1.6 Educational programmes must involve activities and experiences for children, as follows.

- **Communication and language** development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- **Physical development** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- **Personal, social and emotional development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.
- **Literacy** development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.
- **Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.
- **Understanding the world** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- **Expressive arts and design** involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

1.10 In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go';
- **active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

**Within and beyond the EYFS Statutory Framework, the links with a Rights Respecting approach is clear:**

Across the Prime Areas- with significant links with:

### ***Communication and language***

**Listening and attention:** children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.

**Understanding:** children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.

**Speaking:** children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

#### **Article 30** (children of minorities)

Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

### ***Physical Development***

**Health and self-care:** children know the importance for good health of physical exercise, and a healthy diet, and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.

#### **Article 6** (survival and development)

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and grow up healthy.

### ***Personal, social and emotional development***

**Self-confidence and self-awareness:** children are confident to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or don't need help.

**Managing feelings and behaviour:** children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. They work as part of a group or class, and

understand and follow the rules. They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.

**Making relationships:** children play co-operatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.

**Article 6** (survival and development)

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and grow up healthy.

**Throughout the Specific Areas- with particular links with:**

***Understanding the world***

**People and communities:** children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. They know that other children don't always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions.

**The world:** children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things. They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes.

***Expressive arts and design***

**Exploring and using media and materials:** children sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them. They safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.

**Being imaginative:** children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play and stories.

**Article 42** (knowledge of rights)

Governments must make the Convention known to children and adults.