



Rights Respecting School

Midlothian Council



“To achieve (Scotland being the best place to grow up), we require a positive culture towards children. One where children are welcomed and nurtured. One where we all are alert to their needs and look out for them. Where they are listened to – whatever their age – and where their views are heard and their rights protected. They should be respected as people in their own right..... with rights to a present day life that allows them to fulfil their potential.”

- Scottish Government (UNCRC: The Foundation of GIRFEC)

What is a child rights-based approach to education?

The aim of Rights Respecting School seeks to put the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school's ethos and culture. The aim is to improve well-being and develop every child's talents and abilities to their full potential. A Rights Respecting School is a community where children's rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted.

UNICEF's rights respecting approach in schools

UNICEF has developed a scheme to help schools adhere to the values and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – In the UK this scheme is known as the Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA). The Award seeks to put a children's rights approach at the heart of a school's culture and ethos. In a rights respecting school pupils learn that they have rights, what these rights are and learn how to be rights respecting by learning that rights are universal. Adults in the school recognise their responsibility to model rights respecting language and behaviour and put them into practice in every aspects of the life of the school, from how the school is run and the extent to which pupils are involved in this, to what is taught and how pupils and teachers relate to each other.

The Rights Respecting School Award Standards

In order to become a Rights Respecting School, implementation of four evidence-based standards are required:

1. The leadership is committed to the RRSA:

Leaders are committed to placing the values and principles of the UNCRC at the heart of all policies and practice.

2. The whole school community learns about the UNCRC:

Pupils and adults learn about the universal rights of the child and use this shared understanding to work for global justice and sustainable living.

3. The school has a rights respecting ethos:

Pupils and adults collaborate to develop and maintain a rights respecting school community, based on the UNCRC, in all areas and in all aspects of school life.

4. Pupils are empowered to become active citizens and learners:

Pupils 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 .

The Three Stages of the Rights Respecting School Award

Accreditation is achieved by an external assessment process to provide evidence that the four standards have been met. To help schools implement the RRSA effectively, this is broken down into three stages:

Recognition of Commitment

The head teacher and school leaders commit to becoming a right-respecting school. Children and young people work with adults to decide how to develop a whole-school rights-respecting approach. The school submits electronic evidence to show their progress.

Level 1

The school implements the action plan and makes good progress towards embedding the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into its ethos and curriculum. Assessors visit the school to accredit progress.

Level 2

The school has fully embedded the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into its ethos and curriculum across all areas. Assessors visit the school to establish that the Convention is embedded.

Rights Respecting Schools in Midlothian

Teaching children about their rights can reduce exclusions and bullying, improve teacher-pupil relationships, raise attainment and make for more mature, responsible students according to new research published in November 2010 by Unicef UK. Within Midlothian, a number of schools are embracing this approach and embedding the RRS principles in their school improvement plans, featuring it within the curriculum programme, promoting children's rights on a daily basis in class and displaying class charters in the school.

Level 1 Rights Respecting Schools in Midlothian:

·Penicuik High School ·Lasswade Primary ·Bonnyrigg Primary ·Mayfield Primary ·Paradykes Primary
·Rosewell Primary ·St David's Primary

Within these schools, the Rights Respecting Schools programme, which recognises achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school's planning, policies, practice and ethos, has provided a useful framework within which to build on the shared values of a rights respecting classroom. For a number of these schools, their journey began as part of a cluster approach, and although each of the schools has moved forward at a different pace, they still work closely in partnership. This way of working encourages the sharing of good practice and builds local capacity to sustain further development.

Resources

For a list of teaching resources please visit :

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/resources/rrsa-teaching-resources/>

Useful website reporting some of the ongoing work in Lasswade Primary in Midlothian:

<http://lasswade.mgfl.net/category/rights-respecting-schools/>

Or search for #RightsRespectingSchool on twitter 

The Importance of Voice in Choice

"Every child deserves a champion
-- an adult who will never give
up on them, who understands
the power of connection, and
insists that they become the
best that they can possibly be."
-- Rita Pierson

Supporting the views of children

All children and young people are entitled to express their opinion in deciding their future and there are legislative requirements that state that children and young people's views must be considered (Education ASL Scotland Act, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 & UNRC). For children with Additional Support Needs, this right is even more vital. Fundamental to all work involving children and young people is that the child's voice is at the centre.

Midlothian aims :

- All children and young people in Midlothian with speech, language and communication needs can contribute to and express their views about their education and wider plans.
- Education staff feel confident in using a range of appropriate strategies and tools to help these children achieve this.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) is in line with Scotland's vision for placing children and young people at the core of planning and decision making. Therefore, it is vital that we provide opportunity for children and young people to share their sense of identity, how they see others around them, the part those people play in their life and how, working collectively, each individual involved can help to build a plan which endeavours to support them.

Visible Learning drivers

How visible learning links with pupil voice:

Teacher mindframe of 'I engage in dialogue not monologue' – assessment capable learners are involved in their own learning and the teacher welcomes pupil feedback on their teaching. Pupil voice is central to this. In order for future planning to be effective, pupils should be encouraged to be involved, have their views and opinions sought and any input should be valued.

Error and mistakes – The essence of learning. We can link error and mistakes back to the depth of growth mindsets in that children and young people need to have the confidence to communicate, and not be afraid to ask for help, or worried about making a mistake. Within this, the teacher has a role in promoting the expectation that children will be meaningful participants in the decisions that affect them and their learning – as all pupils including those with communication difficulties internalise this message, their confidence in communicating their views increases.

Building Trust - Schools need a strong foundation of relational trust in order to work cooperatively to achieve school goals (there needs to be a whole school ethos) and building trust across the school community to create a positive learning atmosphere for students and staff.

Respect – recognising the role that each person plays in learning. Adults are encouraged to work with children and young people in an inclusive way to ensure that their views are heard and valued in decision-making.

Resources to support capturing views

Children's rights clearly relate to their wellbeing. If we value children and young people's rights, then we must provide a learning community which makes them feel included, where their achievements are valued and celebrated and where their voice is heard. To ensure we take practical approaches to supporting children and young people, the GIRFEC approach should underpin practice in eliciting these views.

There are a number of resources available to support capturing the views of children and young people. The following is not an extensive list, but provides some examples of approaches for consideration.

ACHIEVING: Developing new strategies and skills for thinking about and expressing choices are important. Having a meaningful say in learning plans so that the child/young person is motivated and it is meaningful to them will encourage ownership and will create more of an impact. To enable views to be captured in relation to choices in target setting and evaluation, talking mats may be a useful tool. Talking Mats is an interactive resource that uses three sets of picture communication symbols – topics, options and a visual scale – and a space on which to display them. Once the topic is chosen e.g., 'activities' or 'people', the participant is given the options one at a time and asked to think about what they feel about each one. They can then place the symbol under the appropriate visual scale symbol to indicate what they feel

ACTIVE: This indicator relates to the child/young person being an active learner in how to participate in decision making, and expressing their choices and feelings. Choice should be embedded in everyday educational experiences. The Mosaic approach is based on using multiple methods to gather multiple perspectives about a child/young person's experience, enabling children to communicate their views in alternative ways. Visual methods in which children are actively engaged -e.g. book making using children's own photographs or photographs of child-led tours to gain insight into how they perceive their environment- can inform planning.

RESPECTED: Having a meaningful, direct and consequential role in the planning process is essential for effective planning. Person Centered Planning (PCP) is an ongoing process used to support planning for the future. PCP is an inclusive approach where the focus is on the individual, what is important to them now, their vision of what they would like to do in the future and how this can be supported in alliance with key individuals. There are various tools that can be used to help support capturing views.

RESPONSIBLE: Supporting children and young people to understand their own needs, identify their own preferences and choices, and to take on a role in giving that information to the people around them is essential in ensuring the best support. Communication passports are a way of pulling complex information together and presenting it in an easy-to-follow format. This helps people to get to know the person with communication difficulties and provides information on how other around them can interact/respond in the most effective manner.

More information about resources can be provided by the EPS on request.

My Voice My Plan

Claire Finlay, Katie Hayes, Fiona Brown (Midlothian EPS) and Suzanne Smith-Main (speech and language therapist) have been developing the project 'My Voice My Plan' within Midlothian. The focus is on supporting children and young people with communication difficulties to express their views effectively. Planning and delivering of this new initiative is underway. So far, two sessions have been delivered within Midlothian, mainly attended by Support for Learning teachers but also other teaching staff and learning assistants interested in accessing children's views, especially those who have language and communication difficulties. The EPS are continuing to work with Suzanne and are now focusing on developing materials to support this work.

The ultimate aim of this project is to fulfil the vision that the voices of children in Midlothian are fully represented in all aspects of their educational lives. This will involve eliciting and including children's views in all plans such as their Child's Plan, IEPs and CSPs.