

This policy has been written by the school, building on national best practice, East Renfrewshire Council and Education Scotland guidance.



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 2: The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, no matter what type of family they come from.

Article 28: Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education they are capable of.

Article 29: Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others' human rights and their own and other cultures.

Our Lady of the Missions Primary are currently working towards achieving the Level 2 award.

As a Rights Respecting School, our philosophy is underpinned by the values and principles of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

UNCRC

- The Convention sets out the rights of children in 54 Articles and two optional Protocols. These basic rights encompass survival, protection, development and participation.
- The UNCRC is underpinned by four principles:
 1. non-discrimination
 2. commitment to the best interests of the child
 3. the right to life, survival and development
 4. respect for the views of the child
- Rights are universal and cannot be taken away.
- The main responsibility for ensuring that all children enjoy their rights lies with adults.
- All rights are equally important.

Core Learning Values

At Our Lady of the Missions, we enable children to fulfil their role as responsible citizens now and in the future by developing skills of independence, creativity and teamwork. As part of thinking independently we seek to develop each child's ability to make informed choices, recognising that their actions contribute towards ensuring that the rights of all are respected. Our curriculum, particularly in the areas of Health and Wellbeing and Religious Education, is

founded upon the explicit development of these skills. Our House System is closely allied to the Convention of the rights of the Child.

Rights Respecting Values Underpin Leadership and Management

- Development as a rights respecting school is an integral part of strategic planning.
- All decisions are taken in the best interests of children.
- As school policies are reviewed, links with the values and principles of the UNCRC are made explicit.
- Refresher training takes place annually for all staff to ensure that knowledge and understanding remains relevant.

The Whole School Community Learns about the UNCRC

- Every year group learns about the UNCRC, and view different areas of learning from a rights' perspective.
- Displays are linked to the UNCRC.
- All members of the community are encouraged to be ambassadors for children's rights.
- Parents and the wider community are included in our work as a Rights Respecting School.
- Class Charters are on display in each classroom. Charters are drawn up in consultation between adults and children and identify the rights that are most relevant to that situation together with the ways in which adults and children will act in order to ensure that these rights are respected.

Classroom Charters

Building the shared values of a Rights Respecting Classroom

Introduction

The collaboration between children and adults in age and ability-appropriate ways to agree a charter for a rights-respecting classroom has proved to be a very valuable part of the process of making the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child a real and meaningful guide to action at a day to day level.

What is a class charter?

Children and adults in a class or group select those rights they agree are the most important in relation to what is done in that classroom. The process of developing a charter is as important as the end product. The process must be participatory, inclusive and build on the prior learning about the difference between wants and needs. How this might be done is explained below in greater detail.

For very young children rights may need to be reworded. As children move beyond their early years, they will learn that their rights under the UNCRC are based on their needs to thrive as human beings. These rights are related to:

- their health and safety (survival)
- their protection from harm and abuse
- the development of their potential

- their inclusion and participation in the life of the society around them (immediately, locally and globally).

In learning that these rights are universal, children understand that this means that their rights are bound up in respecting the rights of others. Some like to refer to this reciprocity as rights and responsibilities. There is a danger, however, in that by just looking at this reciprocity the responsibilities of adults are left out.

Children also learn that adults, especially their parents, carers and policy makers have the responsibility to ensure that these rights are known about, promoted and respected by all. So the charter for a rights respecting classroom is for all, including adults.

The end product itself is always subject to review by the class from time to time in order to reinforce / refresh commitment. It helps if the charter is therefore dated.

What is agreed is then set out in a way that can be easily seen around the room and signed up to by all those participating.

What is the aim of a class charter?

It is a way of making the rights of the child real and meaningful to pupils based on where they are now and their own lives. The process of developing the class charter can serve to unite the class. It develops a sense of ownership of the classroom and learning. Once developed, the charter becomes a point of reference for the class and once signed by teacher, assistants and pupils it signifies a shared enterprise and acts as the ‘social glue’ which binds everyone together. We would recommend that children also have a say in how it is displayed.

In what way is it different from ‘Golden rules’ or ‘Codes of behaviour’?

The class charter is not a direct behaviour management tool. It’s indicating that a significant part of the role of the school and the teacher is to help realise the rights of the child. Rules are something which are often externally imposed, whereas charters are democratically negotiated using an internationally agreed values framework. It should begin a process of replacing rules.

How do you approach the linking of rights with responsibilities?

The main point to remember is that ***the rights of the child are not conditional on responsibilities. Rights do imply but are independent of responsibilities.*** A right cannot be withdrawn as a punishment but what can be withdrawn is the opportunity to infringe other people’s rights. Adults working with children need to model rights respecting behaviour and use rights respecting language in order to reinforce the benefits of this values system.

A child needs to see and hear how rights abusing / denying behaviour is identified by an adult and how the adult uses the language of rights to help a child understand how they have failed to respect the rights of others and how this choice has negative consequences. This will help the children themselves become empowered by the language and concepts they acquire from this rights respecting culture. This reasoning may still lead to a child being

removed from their classroom to have their right to education experienced alone or in a different setting, but the rationale is clearly rooted in the rights respecting framework. Pupils who may end up excluded from school still have the same right to education as children in school. Under the Convention it is up to the state to organise this.

How might the charters be structured?

As children grow the charter should be rooted more in the Convention with pupils selecting the articles that they consider are most appropriate to them. A common way is to have columns of Rights and Responsibilities. In arriving at responsibilities it is not unusual for pupils to be unable to agree on one responsibility and where that is the case it is acceptable to have more than one responsibility allied to an agreed right.

An alternative is to set out the charter with rights but instead of using the term responsibilities, insert the phrase “actions (by children / adults) to ensure these rights are enjoyed by all”. It is still a charter for a Rights Respecting Classroom.

Why do teachers and assistants sign?

This is more than a symbolic gesture. It is about indicating to children that the whole experience of teaching and learning is a shared enterprise and will work best if we all keep to the class charter. It strengthens the relationship between children and adults.

Do charters vary with the age of children?

Yes, initially with very young children they may be very simple and use images instead of words or as well as. As children move into middle stages, it would be more common for children to make more references to the Articles in the convention.

What is the best way to develop a class charter with pupils?

- Recap on the UNCRC.
- Consolidate why the convention was agreed upon and why it exists, and the importance of children under 18 having rights. Extend to include the Human Declaration of Rights for adults and the similarities and differences.
- Pick the articles, from the UNCRC, that specifically relate to their lives in school (eg: Articles 3, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 37, 39) then get the children to discuss how and why these relate to life in school.
- Highlight the children’s choices making sure they can justify their reasons. These may differ in each class depending on the pupils, ethnic /social backgrounds etc.
- The next task is to use the six most popular and reasoned Articles for the class charter, then the children need to identify the responsibilities that then link with the six most popular Articles.
- The next process is the agreement of wording and ownership by the class/ group or school of the Charter. Voting democratically about its design, placement within the school/class, signing of the Charter and what role the teacher plays on the Charter (responsibilities /rights /signature etc). Talk about any issues that the children have – eg: not signing, wording, if new people arrive.
- The wording on the Charter should make a link to the UNCRC and that as suggested above in this document, that each Article has one main responsibility.
- The next stage is to link the Charter to rewards and sanctions, discussing and agreeing as a class how these link into the classroom.

- It's important to revisit and tweak the Charter as a class, a good exercise if new people join the class, good for Circle Time and helps with children settling into a new class/school.

The School has a Rights Respecting Ethos

- All members of the community model Rights Respecting language.
- The environment is safe physically and emotionally.
- Conflicts are resolved using restorative approaches where children are empowered to seek solutions to problems.

Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners

- Pupils' opinions and thoughts are sought, encouraged and respected in all aspects of the school's work. Promoted staff conduct termly pupil dialogue sessions to ascertain the views and opinions of pupils. Class teachers conduct learning conversations regularly centred around the SHANARRI indicators.
- Pupil Leadership is an integral part of the school's approach. Children are given opportunities to lead aspects of school life through a range of groups including: Pupil Council, Rights Respecting Team, Peer Mediators, EcoTeam and Playground Buddies.
- Pupils are encouraged to identify themselves as Global Citizens and given opportunities to develop their knowledge and awareness of how they can have a positive impact on the world, now and in the future.

Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibility for Our Lady of the Missions being a rights respecting school lies with every member of the community. The main responsibility rests with adults.