

Rights Respecting School Award Assessment Report

The Prince of Wales First School, Dorchester, Dorset
6th November 2008

Assessors: Debbie Brown and Peter Barton

Introduction

We would like to thank everyone involved in making our visit so informative and enjoyable. The programme you produced enabled us to gain a really comprehensive picture of how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has become such an important part of school life. We were welcomed by the Deputy Head, Clare Mewett, and taken to meet with a group of Year 2 pupils who gave us a strong flavour of the work they had been doing and a picture of their understanding of Children's Rights. The Year 4 ambassadors for the UNCRC, Katie and William, took us on a very thorough tour of the school taking in all classrooms, the nursery and additional learning facilities. They shared the importance of the role they play at The Prince of Wales School in leading an understanding of the UNCRC. We were shown the range of displays and charters around the school and were able to meet with and chat to a number of staff and children. Katie and William gave us a superb insight into how the Rights of the Child had been introduced and developed in their school. We were given the opportunity to meet with KS2 pupils and explore their knowledge and understanding of the issues of being a Rights Respecting School. The Head Teacher shared with us The Prince of Wales story using powerpoint presentations of his visits to India and described the way the link was being used to promote a positive global perspective for the pupils. We enjoyed lunch with a cross section of staff including lunchtime and support staff and were able to glean their perspective on changes to the school since the adoption of the UNCRC. Our afternoon consisted of an observation of a School Council meeting and an opportunity to reflect on our very interesting and well organised day.

The outcome

The external assessment confirms that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and that it has attained Rights Respecting School status at Level One. Many congratulations to everyone involved in this achievement.

The assessment process focused on the four aspects of the Unicef Rights-Respecting Schools Award audit / action plan and allowed the school to demonstrate the following:



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

The values and language of the UNCRC are now an established part of the daily life at The Prince of Wales School. All sections of the school community – children, staff, parents and governors – are fully aware of the school's commitment to the UNCRC and all it stands for. The school has appointed two pupil RRS ambassadors who lead on the Rights of the Child – this is the second pair of children who have taken this role and the previous young leaders trained the current very effective ambassadors. These children play a lead role in ensuring the Rights of the Child are valued and in evidence throughout the school. As part of the Dorchester Area Schools Partnership (DASP), the school has managed to incorporate the seven 'C's' of the 'DASP Citizen', the 'caterpillars' used by all DASP schools, into some of its charters. These responsibilities have been cleverly linked to the Rights work. In one classroom, the teacher has integrated the Golden Rules alongside the caterpillars and the Rights and the children were able to explain the links very well. The Rights of the Child permeate all classrooms and other areas of the school, including the pre-school facility and the specialist provision for those pupils with significant special needs. It was particularly heartening to see activities and display related rights and responsibilities in the pre-school area.

Parents have been regularly informed of the work pupils have done and are invited during parents' evenings to view the many displays and classrooms. The children report that adults listen to them and use the language of 'rights, respect and responsibility' when dealing with conflict issues. They were also keen to express their views on the improved relationships in the school since the work began and believed bullying to be virtually non-existent in their school. Children feel safe, respected and have a deep belief in the importance of the Rights of the Child in their school. *'If you take away children's rights they won't feel safe'* and *'The Rights and responsibilities are like a tree trunk. If you go off on the branches you go off course'* were two heartfelt comments children made during our visit.

The Head Teacher, Peter Farrington is very committed to the values of the Convention and, along with Janet Moger, the teacher with lead responsibility for the RRS Award, has led an effective and equally committed staff on their successful journey so far. The excellent displays around the school are full of inventive ideas to promote the UNCRC. The Governing Body has been well informed about the RRS process and governors are in full support of it.



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

The children whom we met demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the Rights of the Child as set out in the UNCRC. They could give many examples of individual rights. They understand that these rights are universal and children as young as Year 2 knew that they stem from the UNCRC. The awareness shown by the Key Stage 1 children of the rights and the responsibilities that are attached to them was particularly strong for their age. Bethany told us *'It's for every child in the world but some countries didn't sign up...America was one I think'*.

The school often shares assemblies that feature RRS principles and follow up lessons are used to secure knowledge and understanding for all ages of pupils. Oscar commented that *'Our head teacher showed us a film about a boy in India on a rubbish tip – everyone has the right to a good home'*. Teachers and pupils have worked together to produce clear age-appropriate charters that are effective and inventive. Pupils can explain these well and use them to guide their behaviour and attitudes in school.

Building on their understanding that the Rights of the Child are universal, the children are also aware that many children around the world are denied the means of enjoying these rights. In this regard it was most impressive and highly encouraging to hear children as young as Year 2 explaining the complexities of fair-trade. Imogen told us *'We learnt about Dubble Choc, the money goes to farmers. They get treated better and children can have more food'*.

Many children mentioned the use of 'Rainbow' time in which they talk about the Rights of the Child alongside SEAL topics. This is a useful and effective way to ensure the subject is always on the curriculum and links into the other area creatively. The children understood the value of this reflective time each week. Displays around the school are also cross curricular and incorporate Articles of the UNCRC in their presentation – a particularly effective one showing 'The Right to have different beliefs' from a RE lesson adorns the entrance hall.

The school UNCRC ambassadors are present at a variety of different meetings run by different groups including the SNAG (nutrition group) ensuring that the rights perspective is ever present.

Many of the children used the word 'Included' in their descriptions during our visit. We felt that one of the overriding messages to come from our visit was of a very inclusive school on many different levels – well done. Talking with the Inclusion coordinator during lunch supported the pupils' views and gave a clear view of the big picture of inclusion for the school.



3. Teaching and Learning in Rights Respecting Classrooms

As previously noted, the children hear the staff using the language of rights and responsibilities in the daily life of the school, including in their classrooms. Each class has drawn up their individual charters. The language of these charters is used well and understood by all pupils. Pupils told us they felt they had a shared ownership of these charters and everyone signed up in agreement. Rainbow time and circle time are used as vehicles for discussing rights issues. All pupils recognised these special times and referred to the work carried out during the sessions.

The children referred to a number of ways in which they were enabled to express their own opinions in the classroom. They decide what they would like to do during 'Golden Time' and some children say they were asked what they might like to learn about electricity during a science topic.

Reference was made to AFL (Assessment for Learning) strategies by some children. *'We do green amber and red in our books'; 'We have cards on the table' and 'We are asked what we have learnt.'* These assessment tools are being used well to ensure that pupils are able to make judgements about their own learning and how well they feel they are doing in lessons.

The school council are given time to talk to their classmates during circle time although some felt that maybe this could have been more regular. All pupils felt that they were able to tell the adults in their room and in school if something was important to them and that they would be listened to.

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

The children reported that the school values and respects opinions and ideas from all who belong to the school. Pupils are represented on some key groups within the school. The ambassadors sit on the SNAG committee (nutrition group) and feel they are able to give their opinions freely. Children have been consulted about hot lunches and about being safe in school.

The school council meet once a month to discuss a variety of issues and representatives from all year groups are now present. During discussion it was felt that these meetings would probably be held fortnightly in the future. This group has made key decisions concerning playground equipment and often has agenda items concerning how to support charitable organisations. From discussion with some of the children there was an indication that the selecting of appropriate councillors could be a little more consistent throughout the school.



Qualities relating to global citizenship.

There was further evidence of children developing as global citizens. In addition to the understanding in Year 2 of how fair trade supports children's rights in many parts of the world that has already been referred to, children also demonstrated an awareness of how taking steps to improve the environment and recycle to avoid waste supports children's rights.

The HeadTeacher is developing a link with India which is enabling the pupils to visualise the contrasting elements of a country other than their own. This link will offer many ways of exploring children's rights and responsibilities in contrasting geographical and social contexts. It is important to note that the Head Teacher is very aware of the need to avoid a deficit model of contrasting localities.

Finally, the children have been involved in raising funds to support many charities around the world that they have been denied access to basic rights.

The Future

The following suggestions / recommendations are made to assist the school in identifying key areas for further development as a Rights Respecting School:

- *Consolidate understanding of the Rights of the Child by making even more explicit links to the Articles of the UNCRC and to the UNCRC as the source of the Rights of the Child.*
- *Develop the role of the school council by meeting fortnightly and offering dedicated time to feedback to classes; possibly also putting a Rights issue on the agenda each month raised by the ambassadors for the UNCRC.*
- *Consider how best to extend and develop as 'rights-respecting global citizens' understanding how we can support the rights of those children whose rights are denied through e.g. supporting fair trade and taking action as well as raising money for charities.*
- *Consider the idea of appointing and training pupils as 'peer mediators'. These pupils would support the lunch staff in mediating disagreements between their peers using the language of the UNCRC.*
- *Think about opening further the channels of communication for all pupils and allowing 'pupil voice' to flourish even further by extending opportunities for children to suggest what they would like to learn and how they would like to learn it.*

Name: Debbie Brown, Deputy Headteacher, Bridport Primary School and RRS Partner;
Peter Barton, Education Officer – Southern England

Signature

Date: 17th November 2008

