



Rights Respecting Schools Award in Buckinghamshire 2009-2012

Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a Rights Respecting School not only teaches about children's human rights but also models rights and respect in all relationships in the community, teacher/teacher, pupil/teacher, pupil/pupil.

The ethos created leads children and young people to participate in all aspects of school life. This in turn helps them to learn how to formulate, express and listen to opinions and thus contribute effectively to improving schools. They learn to be outward looking active global citizens.

The Rights Respecting Schools Award (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 a wide range of settings – Early Years, Primary, Secondary, Special Needs and Pupil Referral Units – across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Experience has shown that the RRSA serves to give a coherent rationale to a range of Government-sponsored initiatives aimed at making teaching and learning more effective, rewarding, outward looking and enjoyable.

The award programme reflects the Every Child Matters outcomes and is complementary to the Healthy Schools Award, International Schools Award and Eco Schools and can be part of a programme to build a positive school ethos. There are two distinct levels to the award each taking at least 18 months to complete, although the award itself is not time bound.

In April 2009, headteachers from nine Amersham based schools met with UNICEF and County Council staff to explore how their school could begin the journey to becoming a Rights Respecting School. A subsequent meeting with link teachers took place in July, followed by a whole day's training for staff and pupils in September. The day enabled them to start to identify and plan what becoming a Rights Respecting School means for them and how they will influence all pupils, staff and parents linked to their school.

Now in the second year of the pilot, ***seven schools and seven Early Years settings from the Aylesbury Vale area are currently undertaking training on

how to teach children and young people about the UNCRC and use it as a values framework.

Schools have actively acknowledged the anniversary of the UNCRC and undertaken a number of cluster meetings, discussing pupil focus groups, developing classroom charters and looking at global dimensions. Schools have also participated in a 'Day for Change', when education and fundraising go hand-in-hand.

In November 2010 all schools involved in the initiative were invited to attend a celebration event, which took place at County Hall. The event recognised the achievements of Buckinghamshire schools that are working towards or have gained the UNICEF UK RRSA.

Three schools which are leading the way received certificates at the event for the work they have done so far: The Oaks Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Amersham has achieved full status as a Rights Respecting School the first PRU in the county to have achieved this. Coleshill Infant School, near Amersham and Brushwood Junior School, Chesham, have both gained their Level One Award. The schools received their awards from Frances Bestley, Education Programme Director, UNICEF UK. Since the event Chess Valley Grange has successfully passed their accreditation. They are now the third PRU in the country accredited at Level 1.

Pupil involvement is key from the start, ensuring not only that there is genuine participation in the work but that the 'whole' school makes a commitment to becoming a Rights Respecting School.

Buckinghamshire County Council has made a commitment to pilot the Rights Respecting School Award for three years across at least 30 schools and Early Years settings. The aim is that the settings involved will cover every stage of education from preschools and nurseries through to secondary education. This will make sure that young children and pupils can move from one Rights Respecting School/setting to another, further embedding and strengthening local children and young people's knowledge and implementation of the UNCRC.

For more information:

Please contact participation@buckscc.gov.uk for Buckinghamshire information.

Or for UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Programme and to register your school please go to: <http://www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa> or <http://www.unicef.org.uk/Education/Register-for-RRSA/>