



**An approach based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

**Common questions about Rights, Respect and Responsibilities in schools.**

### *Why are children learning about their rights at school?*

In signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child all Governments have a responsibility to make both children and adults aware of these rights. Schools are the best place to reach the vast majority of children. The RRS programme is based on teaching about and through the UN Convention.

### *What is meant by 'rights'?*

These are not the same as 'wants'. What are termed rights are the basic human needs and values that apply to everyone. The UNICEF leaflet available from the school outlines them in more detail

### *Does the Convention talk about responsibilities?*

Yes, with rights come responsibilities. These include:

- For children: the responsibility to respect the rights of others.
- For parents: to respect and provide for the rights of their children.
- For governments: to support families and to respect and provide for the rights of children.

### *How does teaching about children's rights fit in with the aims of the school?*

The aim of both RRS and the school is to help children in achieving their potential and become responsible citizens. What is taught in the RRS curriculum helps children learn respect for themselves and others, critical thinking skills and informed decision-making.

### *Will children take advantage of adults if they are taught about their rights?*

It is made clear that children not only have rights, but also the responsibility to respect the rights of others. That includes respect for parents, their values and culture. The Convention recognises the central importance of parents. It says that the government must respect the responsibility of parents for providing appropriate guidance for their children, including how children shall exercise their rights

### *What about children's respect for the rights of others?*

Research evidence shows that when children are taught in school about their rights and responsibilities under the UN Convention, they are more respecting of the rights of others.

Children who have learnt about their rights show:

- a better understanding of what it means to have rights and responsibilities
- more positive attitudes to school
- better relationships with their classmates and teachers
- higher self-esteem.

### *Can children still be expected to help their parents with jobs in the home?*

Yes, the Convention does not regulate the day-to-day details of home life. Its aim is to protect children from exploitation or work that is dangerous to their health or interferes with their other rights, such as to education, rest, leisure, play and recreation. There is nothing in the Convention which prevents parents from expecting that their children clean their rooms and help out at home as long as it is safe and appropriate to their age.

### *What does the Convention say about the ways parents discipline their children?*

The UN Convention makes it clear that children should be protected from all forms of mental and physical violence. It does not specify what methods parents should use. It strongly supports parents providing guidance and direction to their children in non-violent ways, taking account of the age of the child and their best interest.

### *How can parents support what children are learning about the Convention at school?*

- Take the time to ask your child what he/she has learned recently regarding children's rights.
- Discuss the ideas learned in class, and try to think of examples from your own experiences, or from the media, of rights being respected or denied.
- Discuss how your child or your family can promote respect for rights, or help those whose rights have been violated.
- Ask your child's opinion on children's rights.

As with most things, the learning of rights, respect, and responsibilities begins at home. Children often learn what they see and hear. By becoming involved in your child's learning and showing an interest in who he/she is and what he/she is doing, you help your child to learn the importance of giving and sharing with others.