

VOTESFORSCHOOLS & THE RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS AWARD

Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff



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The ethos of VotesforSchools is clearly aligned with that of UNICEF UK and their established Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA). The following document outlines how VotesforSchools can be used to embed rights education in your setting and to support an RRSA application.

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We are very proud to have had input from UNICEF UK on this guidance. They are responsible for the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA), and currently work with nearly 5,000 schools across the UK to ensure that children & young people are informed about and empowered by their rights.

UNDERSTANDING RRSA

UNICEF UK outlines RRSA as follows:

“The Rights Respecting Schools Award puts children’s rights at the heart of schools in the UK.

The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) works with schools in the UK to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they are able to thrive. Our Rights Respecting Schools Award embeds these values in daily school life and gives children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens.

Using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as our guide, we are working with more UK schools than almost any other organisation. Over 1.6 million children in the UK go to a Rights Respecting School and over 5,000 schools up and down the country are working through the Award. Schools work with us on a journey to become fully Rights Respecting.

The Award recognises a school’s achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond.”

The UNICEF UK website has more information about RRSA, such as a [printable map](#) of The Rights Respecting Journey. It also details the specifications of the three award categories: [Bronze](#) (Rights Committed), [Silver](#) (Rights Aware), and [Gold](#) (Rights Respecting).





HOW VFS SUPPORTS RRSA

To gain the RRSA Accreditation, it is vital that the whole school community is committed to promoting an ethos with children's rights and empowerment at its heart. As a whole-school solution itself, VotesforSchools provides resources for teachers, support staff and, of course, young people, thereby engaging the whole school community in topical conversations and encouraging them all to make themselves heard.

There are three RRSA strands, and VotesforSchools supports these in the following ways:

STRAND A: TEACHING & LEARNING ABOUT RIGHTS

VotesforSchools' weekly resources are mapped to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This allows for consistent engagement with and promotion of children's rights and the UNCRC, and gives young people the space to dig deeper into what these rights mean and the role they play in the wider world. It also gives adults the confidence that these rights are being sufficiently promoted and discussed on a regular basis.

STRAND B: TEACHING & LEARNING THROUGH RIGHTS | ETHOS & RELATIONSHIPS

Although every VotesforSchools topic is mapped to a different article from the UNCRC, there are five articles which are integral to VotesforSchools as an educational programme:

- Art 3) Best interests of the child
- Art 12) Respect for children's views
- Art 13) Sharing thoughts freely
- Art 28) Access to education
- Art 29) Aims of education.

These articles are implicit in all the resources that VotesforSchools provides. VotesforSchools consistently promotes an appreciation for diversity; models what respect for others' views looks like, and encourages active participation in society. The resources emphasise the important role these factors play in building cohesive communities and supporting holistic development.





STRAND C: TEACHING & LEARNING FOR RIGHTS | PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT & ACTION

In addition to promoting the right for children to share their own views with those in positions of authority, VotesforSchools also encourages young people to advocate for those whose voices may go unheard, whether in their local communities or further afield.

Plus, VotesforSchools practically supports adults as duty bearers by enabling them to promote Article 17 (“access to information from a range of sources, and information that is not harmful”) through weekly use of the resources. All of VotesforSchools’ materials maintain political impartiality by representing a range of views from diverse sources and asking young people to challenge harmful views or misconceptions.

To find out more about VotesforSchools’ commitment to political impartiality, please use the contact details provided at the end of this document.

BRINGING RRSA TO LIFE

To establish an understanding of the UNCRC in your setting and subsequently make it a fundamental part of your ethos, UUK recommend having an RRSA Lead. It would be fitting that this individual also be well-versed in the benefits of VotesforSchools for promoting children's rights.

Ideally, all young people will be engaged in the same discussion every week through VotesforSchools. This collective conversation is an ideal vehicle within which to simultaneously promote and question different articles from the UNCRC.

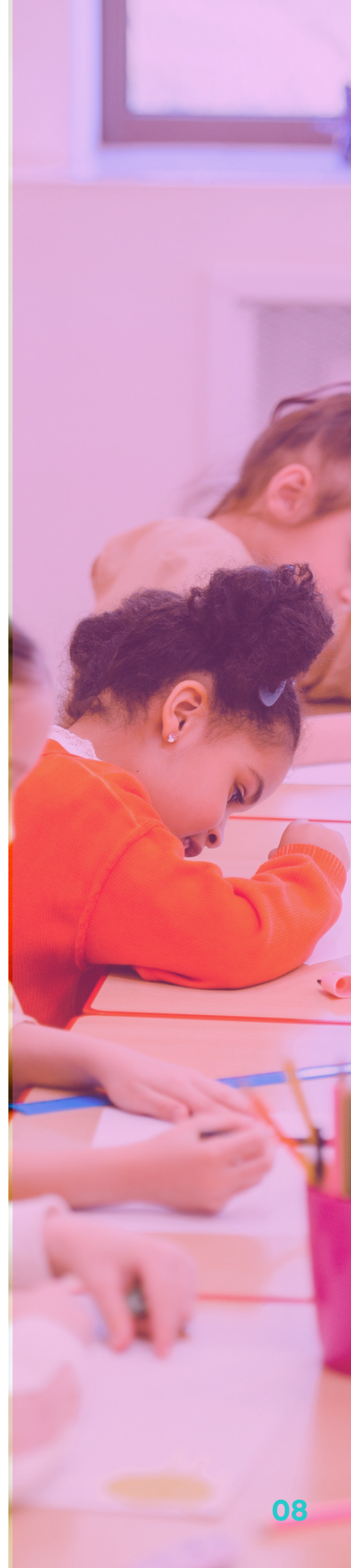


PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consistency is key, so it is crucial that the principles of RRSA and VotesforSchools are integrated into your setting's wider ethos and into your weekly timetable. This will allow staff and pupils to fully invest in rights education. It is also important that the RRSA / VotesforSchools Lead be given the time and opportunity to participate in relevant training courses and share their findings with colleagues (and possibly with parents and carers too, if desired).

UNICEF has a range of guidance on their website, and VotesforSchools offers a free trial for interested staff, as well as teacher demos and/or training for new and existing subscribers.

Both RRSA (in most of the UK) and VotesforSchools have costs attached, so it is important that these are shared with the relevant staff as part of any provisional discussions. However, any settings who are existing RRS members will be given an initial 10% discount on their VotesforSchools subscription.





WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

To find out more about the information outlined in this document, please contact Georgie Emery (georgie@votesforschools.com), or visit the [VotesforSchools website](#).

For more information about the wider RRSA programme, please contact Martin Russell (martinr@unicef.org.uk), or visit the [UUK website](#).