

Gaining respect through the teaching of human rights

November 3 2010

Teaching school children about their rights can reduce exclusions and bullying, raise attainment and improve respect between staff and pupils, according to new research carried out by education researchers at the universities of Sussex and Brighton.

This evidence is highlighted in a [three-year qualitative study of UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting School Award \(RRSA\)](#), published today (2 November).

The project, which is running in more than 1,000 UK schools, teaches [children](#) to distinguish between their wants, needs and rights. Through working with teachers to develop school charters on classroom behaviour, children learn that with rights come responsibilities.

Judy Sebba, Professor of Education at Sussex, has been working with Dr. Carol Robinson at the University of Brighton on the study.

Judy said: "The aim of the scheme is to give children, young people and those who work with them far more say about their lives. Our evaluation shows that doing this reduces exclusions and bullying and improves respect."

The evaluation assessed the impact of the initiative on the well-being and achievement of children in 31 schools participating in RRSA across English local authorities.

Main findings in the evaluation report include:

- Pupils became more engaged in their learning.
- Little bullying or shouting was reported. Where conflicts do arise, pupils are more likely to resolve these themselves.
- Fixed term exclusions decreased in 13 schools and stabilised in three; five schools reported no exclusions.
- Students developed more positive attitudes to diversity and difference.
- Nearly two-thirds of schools raised their attainment.
- The award scheme could help mitigate the disadvantages associated with child poverty. Three of the four schools with over 50 per cent of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) increased their attendance, attainment and reduced fixed-term exclusions. Of the 14 schools that had 20 per cent FSM, eight improved their attainment, seven improved their attendance and six reduced exclusions.
- Pupils actively participated in decisions in their schools.

The evaluation report highlights the Rights Respecting School Award as good value for money and recommends that UNICEF UK and the Department for Education should discuss how best to publicise the Award scheme to schools and local authorities so as to encourage further take up in the UK.

Anita Tiessen, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF UK, commented: "It is wrong that all children in the UK don't learn about their rights - today's evaluation report shows what a profound effect it can have not only on children, but teachers, [school](#) leaders, governors and parents.

"We strongly urge the government and local authorities to put it right by promoting the award scheme to more UK schools so they too can reap the benefits and foster responsible adults of the future."

Provided by University of Sussex

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