

# A GUIDE TO GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN A RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL

At the heart of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the principle that all human beings are of equal worth and share an equal entitlement to enjoy the rights set out in the Convention.

An understanding of human rights is central to global citizenship.

A global citizen is someone who understands everybody has rights and is committed to working towards a world where everyone can realise their rights.

**In a Rights Respecting school, therefore, a global citizen can be defined as someone who believes in global justice and acts to make the world a safer, fairer and more sustainable place in which human rights are protected and respected.**

Global citizenship in a Rights Respecting School promotes the idea of taking action and building solidarity **with** people, rather than doing things **to** or **for** people.

The world today is facing challenges that will require both present and future generations to learn how to respond and adapt effectively to complex global phenomena. These include for example, climate change, environmental degradation, chronic poverty, inequality, racism, outbreaks of pandemic diseases, the rise of populism and nationalism and mass/forced migration. We are living in a globalised world and our perception of it is increasingly determined by information we receive through social media and the internet. Considerable skill is required to avoid fake news and ensure that we are exposed to multiple perspectives. These challenges impact on children's lives in different ways in the UK and in the wider world.

It is also important to recognise the progress that has been made and the many positives in our world today. For example, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty is decreasing and more children are surviving the first years of their lives. Global citizenship is also about being optimistic. Statistics show that people who are better informed are more optimistic. Being optimistic motivates people and can lead to positive change.

## WHAT IS MEANT BY GLOBAL?

Global issues are challenges that cut across national borders and affect people at different scales and in multiple places around the world. The impact of these challenges can be felt in your community and in other communities around the world and their causes are often interconnected. For example:

- Poverty affects children in the UK as well as in other countries as illustrated by the increasing use of food banks and the problem of overcrowded housing and homelessness.
- Fossil fuel burning leading to climate change causes increased flooding in the UK as well as increased extreme weather events in parts of Asia and Africa.
- Racism – what happened after the death of George Floyd in America had repercussions around the world and gave the Black Lives Matter movement greater prominence globally.

In a Rights Respecting School, global citizenship involves children taking action to claim their rights and to promote the rights of others at a range of levels from the local to the global.

# WHAT ATTRIBUTES DOES A GLOBAL CITIZEN NEED?

Global citizens need to be brave and honest. Events, movements, terminology and the language we use is in a constant state of flux. We need to be brave and ask if we are unsure about appropriate and respectful language to use in sensitive situations, or if we are struggling to understand events that are happening. Talking, keeping ourselves informed and recognising that we are always learning is an important part of global citizenship.

When discussing what being a global citizen means it is useful to consider the skills, knowledge and values that a global citizen might have. Here are some examples:



## SKILLS

Research, presentation, communication, teamwork, objective judgement, critical thinking and reflection, recognising and challenging stereotypes

## VALUES

Empathy, respect, open-minded, sense of justice, resilience, optimism, fairness, agency and empowerment (belief that they can make a difference)

## KNOWLEDGE

Human Rights and Children's Rights, Geography, current affairs, environmental issues, poverty and inequality, historical context of

NB: You may wish to add to this list!

## RECOGNISING AND CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

A key skill relating to global citizenship is the ability to challenge stereotypes and recognise that there are multiple perspectives on the world. Sometimes charity work in schools can reinforce negative stereotypes, for example portraying all people in Africa as victims of poverty. Our communities often have much to learn from others who we may be supporting in a charitable way, for example, whilst we may have possessions and funding to share, communities in less industrialised countries are often more experienced in how to live sustainably. International school links should aim to be respectful partnerships for mutual learning and benefit.

'The danger of a single story' by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a TED talk available on YouTube which helps to reflect on how the stereotypes we hold are influenced by our own lives and view of the world and how activities in school can avoid the 'single story' and ensure that negative stereotypes are challenged rather than enforced. You can find it on YouTube as a 3-minute shortened clip or a longer 19-minute talk.

# THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL GOALS

Knowledge and understanding of global issues are an important part of global citizenship and engagement with the UN Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals can provide a useful framework. In September 2015, world leaders came together to review progress against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was recognised that whilst incredible progress has been made in relation to human development, for example, access to clean drinking water and declined infant mortality, the world continues to face extreme challenges, for example, rising inequality, war and conflict, the climate crisis and declining biodiversity. As a result, the UN, in consultation with governments and civil society, developed a further set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the SDGs or the UN Global Goals. These apply to every country in the world including the UK.



The Global Goals will be reviewed in 2030 and aim to help drive change and ensure that children's rights will be realised. For these goals to be effective, children and young people must be aware of them and feel inspired to help achieve them. Over 25% of the world's population are under the age of 14 years old and it is their future the Global Goals are committing to improve.

Exploring the goals is a way of helping children to understand children's rights in a global context.

The World's Largest Lesson and the British Council Connecting Classrooms Global Learning Project have resources to help you introduce Global Goals to children – the WLL even has a free online course to go into more depth on how to teach the Global Goals. Watch this video to learn more:

<https://vimeo.com/138852758>

Check out the World's Largest Lesson resources: <http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>

Investigate the British Council Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning Project and their teaching resources linked to the global goals: <https://connecting-classrooms.britishcouncil.org/resources>

# THE GLOBAL LEARNING SPECTRUM

There are many different ways to explore global learning/global citizenship in schools. These different approaches can be considered as sitting along a spectrum from ‘adapting’ to the world as it is and ‘changing’ the world to make it more socially just and environmentally sustainable.



(Developed with permission from a concept originally developed by Raúl Valdivia)

Examples of the ‘adapting to the world’ approach:

- Preparing citizens to make the most of the global economy they will work in
- Developing skills for living in a globalised world (e.g. using the latest communication technologies, speaking more than one language, understanding different cultures).

Examples of the ‘changing the world’ approach:

- Recognising that the world faces challenges, such as poverty and climate change, which prevent people from accessing their rights and that these challenges are often rooted in long established and unequal power relationships
- Developing skills for analysing local and global issues (e.g. critical thinking), believing that another world is possible and taking responsible action to make the world a better place.

Activities in school which are more on the ‘adapting’ end of the spectrum (left-hand side) are not ‘wrong’ and can often be a useful starting point especially for those who are new to global citizenship. However, the Rights Respecting Schools definition of a global citizen is firmly on the ‘changing’ side of the spectrum so the aim should be to develop the activities to move along the spectrum.

To give an example of how this might look in the classroom, if your pupils are learning about the Olympic Games – or other major sporting events - the ‘adapting to the world’ approach (the left-hand side of the spectrum), might involve learning about the countries attending the Olympics, making their flags and learning about their languages and cultures. A ‘changing the world’ approach might involve learning about the ethics of the games, for example, the conditions of the workers producing the sportswear, or the impact of building a new stadium on the local residents and taking some action to address this, for example, writing to sportswear companies about their policy and practice on child labour.

In schools, **fundraising activities** that show empathy and concern for children living in situations where all rights might not be accessed such as those living in poverty, in areas of conflict, or affected by natural disasters might be the **starting point** for global citizenship, but how can we challenge ourselves to go beyond this?

We can:

- Recognise that our world is a complex web of connections and interdependencies in which our own choices and actions may have repercussions for people and communities both locally, nationally and internationally.

- Tell more than a single story of people's lives and instead recognise the rich and complex aspects of our diverse world.
- Explore some of the reasons, e.g. historical and environmental, why children locally and globally are not accessing their rights.

This might lead us to thinking about global citizenship in two ways:

1. As investigators and campaigners: exploring what decisions are being made every day - including by us as individuals, that support or hinder progress to ensuring the world is fair and just and children's rights are met. Who is making those decisions and how can we influence those decisions in a practical and positive way by being campaigners and advocates for children's rights?
2. As learners and change makers: finding out about how the world works, listening to the viewpoints of others and making small changes in our own actions and attitudes to make the world a fairer and more sustainable place, for example, through buying fair trade or saving energy.

When developing global citizenship in school it might be useful to consider the following questions:

- Do the children understand the purpose of the activity and how it relates to children's rights in a global context?
- Who has been involved in deciding what activities to undertake? (Ensure there are opportunities for the children/young people to influence this.)
- Have the children/young people learnt about the underlying cause of the issue they are trying to address?
- Does the activity address the root cause of the problem it is trying to deal with?
- Will the activity challenge stereotypes of the people that we are trying to help and promote the idea of justice, equality and dignity for the people that it supports?
- What impact will this activity have and how will this be reported back to the children/young people?
- Can we increase the impact by raising awareness with others in school and in the local community?
- Are there any opportunities to influence decision makers such as MPs or local government to have a greater impact on addressing the problem?

# IDEAS AND TIPS

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EXAMPLES FROM RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

Here are some examples of global citizenship projects which have taken place in Rights Respecting Schools (some of these are a composite of activities from different schools).

**Air pollution outside the school gates:** Using the UNICEF UK's Outright campaign materials from 2019/2020, the pupils learnt about air pollution in a global context, recognising that air pollution affects children's rights all over the world. They then monitored air pollution in their own locality and took action to reduce pollution from cars outside the school through encouraging drivers to switch off their engines and supporting children and their families to walk to school. They also wrote to their local councillors to ask them to increase affordable bus routes and make roads safer for cycling.

**Autism Awareness Project:** The children learnt about learning difficulties such as autism and the amazing achievements of autistic people worldwide. They also learnt about the challenges that autistic people face and that sometimes people do not understand them, give them the support they need or respect them. They explored the core principles of universal dignity and non-discrimination which underpin the Convention on the Rights of the Child and recognised that these principles are not always applied to autistic children in their community. The children ran an awareness campaign with their local shop keepers to help them understand their autistic peers and how to support them. They also took part in the global 'Send My Friend to School' campaign which that year was focussing on access to education for children with a disability worldwide.

**Campaigning to reduce single use plastic:** The children learnt about how poor disposal of plastics creates a problem for wildlife around the world and impacts on children's rights to a clean and safe environment. To address this in their school environment they wrote letters to the headteacher and Parent Teacher Association to encourage them to reduce their use of single use plastic at school events and replace with alternatives, for example, using bubbles at events rather than balloons. As part of their learning, they also heard about how children in other parts of the world are taking action to reduce plastics in the environment through watching this [Global Goals film](#). They then wrote to their local council to encourage them to collect plastics from schools for recycling.

**Fair Trade School Uniform:** The project grew from the children learning about child slave labour in Victorian times, they recognised that slave labour still takes place today and that workers are not always paid a fair price for their labour. They wrote to their headteacher to ask them to source a fair-trade supplier for school uniforms.

**Homelessness in the UK:** As part of a topic on 'homes and houses', the pupils learnt about different homes around the world and every child's right to an adequate standard of living. The pupils explored how not all children are accessing this right in various countries including the UK. They were incensed by homelessness in their own local area and invited a local charity that supports the homeless to come into school to speak about the causes of homelessness and how they could help. In response they ran a 'sleep out' to raise awareness of what it might be like to live on the streets and they raised money to support the charity to provide travel fares and clothes for homeless people to be able to go to interviews for jobs. They also wrote to the UK government to ask that they do more to reduce the problem of homelessness.

**No Hunger campaign:** The pupils learnt about the UN Global Goals and focussed on Goal 2 'no hunger'. Using statistics in Maths, the pupils explored the percentages of children experiencing hunger in different parts of the world including in their own local area. They were surprised to learn that some children in their



own local area were not accessing their right to healthy food. In response to this, the pupils invited a representative from the local food bank to come into school and talk about their specific requirements and how the school could help. After collecting items for the food bank, they also invited their MP into the school to question him as to the reasons why children were going hungry and what the government plans to do to address this.

**Tackling climate change:** In Geography, the pupils learnt about climate change and how this impacts on children's rights around the world. In Science, they learnt about how trees soak up carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and that they can therefore help to tackle climate change. As a response to this, they raised money and support from the Parent Teacher Association to plant 100 trees in their school grounds.

**The rights of children in Yemen:** The pupils in school learnt about children's universal rights to safety, nutritional food and education and discovered how these rights and more are denied to children in conflict. They learnt about the war in Yemen and how this is impacting children. In response to their learning, they joined the international campaign to protect children's rights in Yemen and visited the Houses of Parliament to hand in a petition of 60,000 signatures from across the UK calling on the government to protect the children of Yemen.

## FURTHER IDEAS FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP PROJECTS:

- Explore the impact of fast fashion on children's rights and the environment in countries such as Ghana. This report from ITV News will help introduce the issue <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-02-18/recycling-upcycling-and-buying-new-how-to-balance-fast-fashion-with-ethics/>. Hold a fashion show using upcycled materials and/or a second-hand clothes swap.
- Explore the impact of climate change on children's rights in the UK and globally. Work with the school eco-committee and business manager to reduce energy use in school and hold a vegetarian or vegan tasting day and debate to reflect on whether eating less meat and dairy might reduce their carbon footprint.
- In the context of children's right to play and leisure, investigate access to leisure facilities for children in your community. Write to the local council to improve access to leisure facilities for all children including those who are disabled or who lack the means to pay for travel, and to make play areas safe for children to use. If you have a link to a school overseas ask them to investigate the right to play in their locality and support them in advocating for improvements.

## TOP TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED WITH GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP:

1. Don't forget to think local and global and consider the links between the two
2. Utilise our Youth Advocacy Toolkit to help you and your pupils identify a topic you're passionate about and to get you started <https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Youth-Advocacy-Toolkit.pdf>
3. Always underpin your work with the impact on children's rights and links to the Global Goals
4. Check out the World's Largest Lesson resources: <http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>
5. Investigate the British Council Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning Project and their teaching resources linked to the global goals: <https://connecting-classrooms.britishcouncil.org/resources>
6. Register for UNICEF UK's OutRight campaign which features a different campaign theme every year <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/resources/teaching-resources/outright/>
7. Consider using other relevant UNICEF resources, for example, '[In search of safety – teaching about Europe's refugee crisis](#)' which includes guidance on teaching sensitive issues and '[Forced to Flee](#)', exploring global displacement.
8. Access campaigning resources from other organisations such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, Save the Children, Cafod.
9. Encourage debate and pupil voice on global issues through the '[Votes for Schools](#)' project
10. Encourage regular access to reliable and age-appropriate news sources.