

UNICEF UK & SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Rights Respecting Schools Award in Scotland Final Impact Report 2025

The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) inspires, protects and empowers children and young people, by placing children's rights at the heart of the school environment.

Since May 2022, the partnership between the Scottish Government and UNICEF has helped to expand and embed RRSA across Scotland.

Our partnership with the Scottish Government to support the implementation of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 has enabled us to offer RRSA registration to all state primary and secondary schools in Scotland – for no cost. This funding also provided participating schools with access to all training, support and RRSA accreditations until March 2025.

Since the start of the partnership:

2,074 SCHOOLS

have registered with RRSA, surpassing our original target of 2,000 schools.

83% OF ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS

are registered with RRSA, up from 54% before the start of the partnership.

1,002 SCHOOLS

have reached Silver or Gold accreditation, far exceeding our target of 800.

RRSA, one of UNICEF's key domestic programmes, aims to put children's rights at the heart of school life throughout the United Kingdom.

Centred around the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), RRSA teaches children about their fundamental rights, encouraging them to see themselves as Rights Holders and members of a compassionate, global community.

RRSA also creates a framework for embedding children's rights throughout the school environment, creating safe, inclusive and respectful spaces for students and teachers.

Today, more than 1.6 million students attend one of the UK's 5,000 Rights Respecting schools.

Through our partnership with the Scottish Government, we have brought RRSA to hundreds of new schools in Scotland. This year, we focused on embedding RRSA within schools and communities, maintaining the programme's sustainability and ensuring that children will continue to be reached by RRSA, even after the end of this funding period.

Cover image: Students play at St Mary's Primary School, in Leith, Edinburgh. St Mary's has recently become a Gold-accredited school.

A GROUNDBREAKING PARTNERSHIP

For three years, UNICEF UK and the Scottish Government have come together to promote and protect children's rights across Scotland through the Rights Respecting Schools Award.

Through this landmark partnership, over 600,000 students have learned to stand up for their rights, and we have helped to create a safe, inclusive and respectful environment in more than 2,000 schools.

Crucially, this ground-breaking partnership has laid the foundations for long-term and lasting change. As we look towards further embedding RRSA, we can be confident that this partnership will continue to have an incredible impact for children for many years to come.

Lucinda Rivers

Director,
UNICEF Scotland

Learning about the UNCRC in primary school, then transitioning to an RRSA high school, made children's rights a standard part of my school life.

It was not until I learnt more about RRSA's UK reach, during my time on the UNICEF UK Youth Advisory Board, that I realised what I had taken for granted was not accessible everywhere.

This is why I think the funding was crucial in alleviating the barrier to learning about children's rights within educational settings. UNCRC is a fundamental part of my school, which made it a place where young people felt safe and all staff empowered us to develop to our full potential.

RRSA being prominent in both my primary school and high school made education a place where I felt safe and excited to learn, play and be myself.

Poppy

Former member of UNICEF
UK's Youth Advisory Board

As a member of the UNICEF Youth Advisory Board, personally experiencing the positive impacts of the RRSA programme through my high-school and seeing the increase in uptake of the scheme as a result of the Government's support has been heartwarming.

I'm really proud that more students across Scotland have been able to get involved with the programme. Realising that I had rights appended with responsibilities to others was a key takeaway of mine and this understanding must surely have expanded the student's mindsets.

It's really exciting to think about how these students will develop this foundational knowledge of the UNCRC and apply their perspective of global citizenship in the future!

Arushi

Former member of UNICEF
UK's Youth Advisory Board
Current member of UNICEF
UK's Scotland Advisory Board

OUR IMPACT

Since May 2022, the Scottish Government's funding has transformed RRSA provision throughout Scotland. Thanks to this partnership, RRSA has seen huge growth in Scotland, reaching hundreds of new schools and hundreds of thousands of new students.

Over the last three years, we have:

- Brought RRSA to **696 new schools**, bringing the total to **2,074 schools across Scotland** – 83 per cent of eligible schools, up from just 54 per cent before the funding period.
- Currently, **more than 640,000 students** attend a Rights Respecting school.
- Helped a total of **1,002 schools to reach Silver or Gold accreditation**, exceeding our target of 800 schools, with more schools reaching Silver and progressing to Gold in the coming months.
- Improved equality of access across Scotland, as **all but one Local Authorities have more than 50 per cent of schools registered** with RRSA.
- Formed strong relationships with **30 out of 32 Local Authorities**, building nine new partnerships over the funding period.
- Provided **training for 35 Local Authority Assessors**, with ten more Assessors currently competing the training. These new Assessors will help to maintain the programme's sustainability.

Our Impact in 2024/25

Over the past year, our focus has been on embedding the UNCRC within accredited schools, and building the sustainable legacy of the programme.

In late 2024, we developed a new [Theory of Change document](#), which can help teachers, students and parents to embed the UNCRC in an intuitive, accessible and understandable way.

Meanwhile, we continued to meet regularly with the Scottish Government's Children's Rights team, to identify opportunities to further embed the UNCRC beyond the end of the funding period.

Crucially, we continued to **build on our strong relationships with Local Authority Strategic Leads** to increase the sustainability of the programme.

We produced bespoke reporting for each Local Authority, highlighting the cost savings available if they increased engagement with RRSA during the funding period.

As a result of these reports, we expect that 21 Local Authorities will sign up to continue the programme, with 18 doing so by carrying out their own Silver assessments.



Two students attend a class on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at St Mary's Primary School, in Leith, Edinburgh.

CREATING LASTING IMPACT

Our Theory of Change

RRSA is a key tool for integrating children's rights within schools, by enshrining the UNCRC as a guiding principle within the school environment. This leads to significant improvements in wellbeing, engagement and attainment. By embedding and raising awareness of children's rights, RRSA can:

Create safe, inclusive and respectful school environments. Our research shows that RRSA helps children to learn about their own rights, making students feel more protected, valued and respected. It also encourages children to recognise others as Rights-Holders, helping to create school environments which are safe and inclusive.

Foster inclusive policies and guidance. RRSA encourages teachers and adults to put children's rights into action. Adults are encouraged to listen to children's views, respond to their concerns and consider their inputs when making decisions, helping them to develop policies and guidance which centre children's rights and wellbeing.

Increase engagement and attainment at school. With children's rights enshrined in the school environment, children feel listened to, valued and involved in key decisions. This encourages students to take their right to education seriously, increasing engagement and helping them to reach their full potential.

Create a sense of global citizenship. RRSA teaches children to become Rights Champions, locally and globally. Children learn to recognise the rights of others and fosters a sense of global citizenship, and it helps children to believe they can change the world for the better, by becoming active citizens in their local and global communities.

Levels of the Rights Respecting Schools Award

RRSA has three levels, each of which must be worked through in turn:

BRONZE: RIGHTS COMMITTED

A planning stage where Rights Respecting has been introduced to the school community

SILVER: RIGHTS AWARE

Children's rights are explicitly referenced and beginning to impact many areas of school policy, culture and learning

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

Children's rights are embedded and connections are made to almost all areas of school policy, culture and learning

The Scottish Government's Impact

The partnership between UNICEF UK and the Scottish Government has opened up incredible new opportunities for children and young people across Scotland, while also contributing positively to the National Outcomes for Children and Young People, Human Rights and Education. Removing the financial burden for schools – and informing Local Authorities about the benefits of RRSA – has meant that:

An increased numbers of schools have signed up to the Rights Respecting Schools Award.

Children have an increased understanding and awareness of their rights, helping them to stand up for their rights and to respect the rights of others.

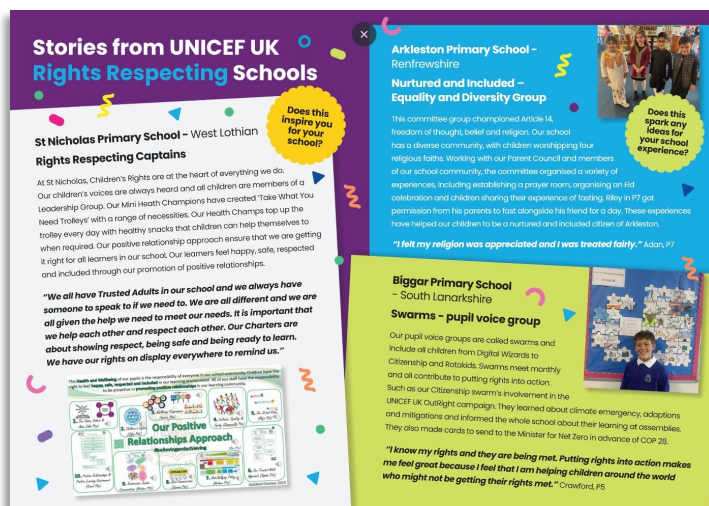
Children's voices are heard and valued within schools, and students are taught that they are part of a shared global community.

RRSA helps to create safe and inclusive school environments, where children are respected, engaged and inspired, and they are able to thrive.

Partnership Visibility

Towards the end of 2024, we worked with Young Scot to secure case study content from Rights Respecting Schools for inclusion in a children's rights special of their magazine for young people.

Three schools – from Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian – were featured in the Spring/Summer 2025 edition, **"Celebrating their Rights in Action,"** which reached tens of thousands of 11- to 12-year-olds across the country.



Promoting Global Citizenship in South Ayrshire

At Troon Primary School – a Gold-accredited school in South Ayrshire – learning about the UNCRC has helped students to stand up for their own rights and advocate for the rights of others.

The school builds children's rights into its annual calendar, with a focus on global issues and current events affecting children around the world.

"By increasing the children's awareness of their rights, this has led to an awareness of the rights of others, and empathy towards children around the world," says headteacher Aileen Roan.

When earthquakes, storms and flooding hit communities in Haiti, the students at Troon Primary School wanted to do something to help. They helped to create a Community Partnership Project, which brought together schools, churches and local businesses to raise money for families in Haiti.

The funds raised by this project helped to rebuild a school for affected children in Haiti – and the school celebrated with a Zoom call with some of the impacted students in Haiti.

Inspired by the success of this programme, students have raised money for other emergencies, including for families displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.

"Our children showed huge concern for the children in affected areas," says headteacher Aileen Roan. **"[The students] are highly aware of their impact as a Global Citizen."**

Alongside this vital fundraising work, the students are now turning their attention to local concerns. Over one third of students attend the Global Impactors group, where they plan community walks, beach cleans and road safety audits.

Thank You

Thank You to the Scottish Government for making this incredible impact possible, and to the many school communities and Local Authorities who took the opportunity to embed children's rights in their schools.

Through this partnership, we have brought RRSA to hundreds of new schools, helped hundreds of thousands of young people to learn about their rights, and created inclusive and supportive school environments, where everyone's rights are respected and upheld. Together, we have developed a partnership that will have a sustainable impact for many years to come.

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