

RIGHTS AT THE HEART OF SCHOOL LIFE



Rights
Respecting
Schools

UNITED KINGDOM

unicef 

Rights Respecting Secondary Schools

ENGLAND EDITION

“Children’s rights are important because they ensure we are listened to and help us know what we can say and do in the world.”

Medi, age 13

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Our impact	4
Supporting the Ofsted framework	6
How it works	8
School study	10
Support	11
Find out more	12

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2 Rights Respecting Secondary Schools

Young people have rights to education and information, and a right to have their opinion heard.



INTRODUCTION

Our approach to strategic change in schools is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF UK has been working with schools in the UK since 2006. We know that the rights of children and young people provide an effective and coherent framework to enhance a school's vision, aims and ethos, to shape everyday practice and to provide a common language for all members of the school community.

Becoming a community founded on human rights gives a school an outward facing, global dimension. At the same time, consistent messaging about respect for one's own rights and the rights of others leads to improved relationships and greater engagement with learning. It also empowers young people to become active and responsible citizens.



Young people at a secondary school in London.

OUR IMPACT

Wellbeing and attainment

Participating schools collect data as they progress through the Award. Schools at Gold show improvements in relationships and self-esteem that support pupils' wellbeing and attainment.

Compared to the start of their Rights Respecting journey, data from Gold secondary schools shows:



22%

more pupils say their peers are kind and helpful

16%

more pupils say they are treated with respect by adults

21%

more pupils feel safe in school

15%


more pupils say if they feel unsafe

16%

more pupils like school

13%

more pupils feel positive about themselves



“ You need to know children’s rights to properly respect them; it gives us the confidence and ability to challenge when someone isn’t being treated as they should be. ”

Pupil, Gold Secondary School, England



“ Reaching for a ball is like reaching for something you want to achieve. ”
Jare, age 15

OUR IMPACT

Ownership and community

The programme supports schools to develop a learning environment and ethos that encourages pupils to take ownership of their education and to have a positive view of their role in the wider world.

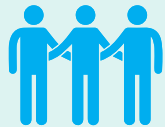
Compared to schools at the start of their Rights Respecting journey, data from Gold secondary schools shows:

13%

more pupils say they know how to make progress in class

83%

headteachers at Silver and Gold schools report a positive effect on pupils engagement with their learning



20%

more adults in school strongly agree pupils are engaged in school life

18%

more pupils say they can help others locally, and

19%

more help others globally

Most of the images in this brochure were produced and directed by secondary students.

SUPPORTING THE OFSTED FRAMEWORK

The outcomes of the Award and many Articles of the Convention have a direct relevance to the Ofsted Inspection Framework.

Quality of Education

At the heart of the Award is a vision of education founded on the right to an education. The Convention states that education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. Rights language supports the work of schools in oracy and critical thinking.



Leadership and Management

A child rights approach equips leaders with a coherent and globally recognised framework to underpin their vision for the school. The Convention on the Rights of the Child offers a unifying foundation for all school improvement priorities.



Personal Development of Learners

The Award helps schools to improve outcomes for children in the areas of ethos, relationships, participation, empowerment and action.

Knowledge of rights can contribute to young people's development of character, resilience and values, as well as encouraging aspiration and a commitment to global citizenship.



Behaviour and Attitudes

In a Rights Respecting School, children, young people and adults collaborate to develop and maintain a school community based on equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. This includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners and promotes wellbeing.



“As a Rights Respecting School, pupils understand how their behaviour has an impact on others. This means that the school community has mutual respect for others at its heart.”

A Gloucester high school, Ofsted
February 2024

“The school has successfully created a vibrant, inclusive culture where pupils succeed. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. A high value is placed on the ethos and values that pupils learn, for example as a UNICEF UK Rights Respecting School.”

A London high school, Ofsted
February 2024

“Pupils ... are proud to attend their rights respecting school. Their attendance is very high. They experience an inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment in school. The school community takes opportunities to celebrate its diversity often.”

A Medway grammar school, Ofsted,
May 2024



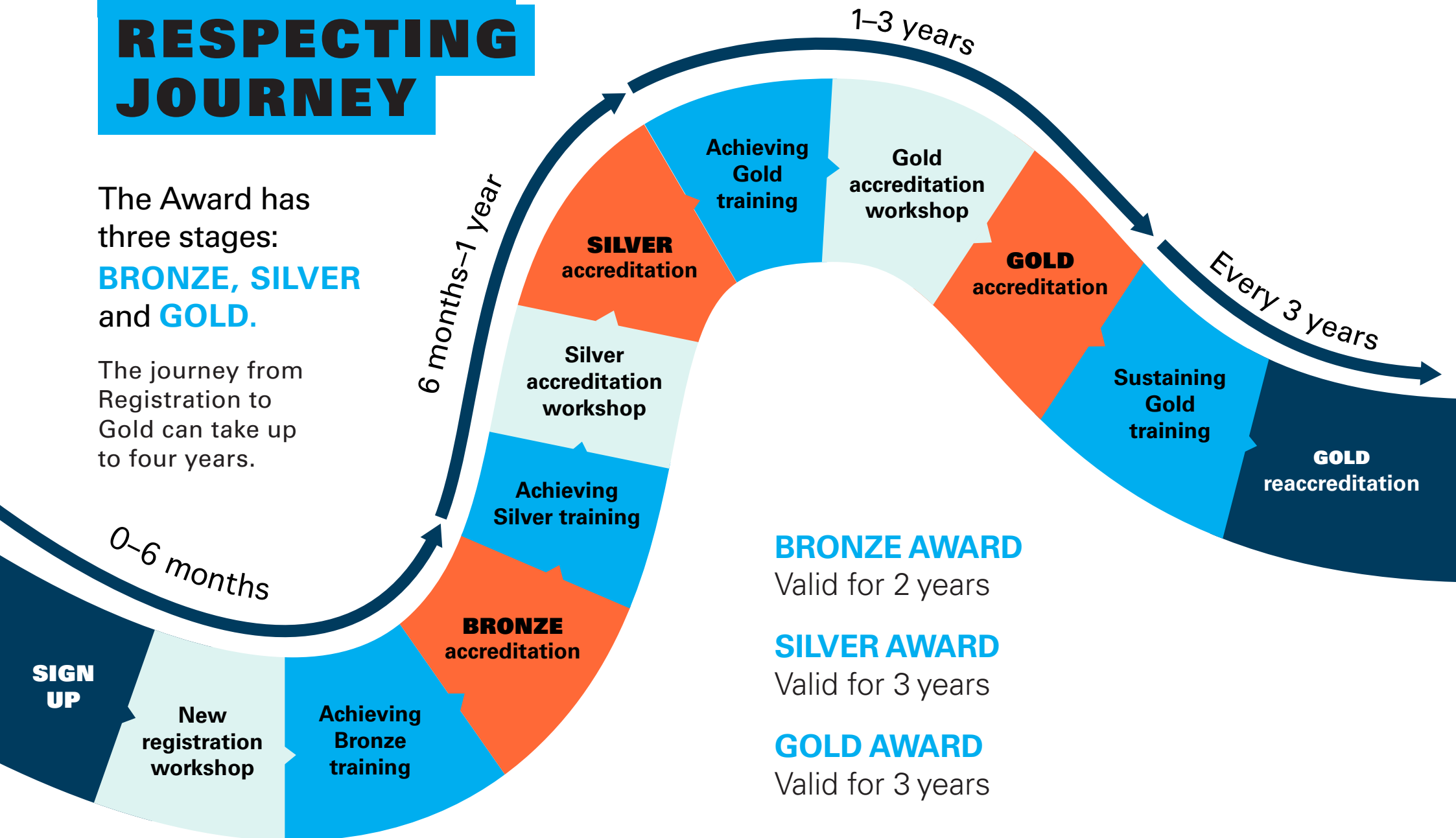
“Article 31, the right to rest, relax and play, is important to us. I always try and read as it helps me to relax, I really like reading adventure books.”

Esther, age 12

THE RIGHTS RESPECTING JOURNEY

The Award has three stages: **BRONZE, SILVER** and **GOLD**.

The journey from Registration to Gold can take up to four years.



BRONZE AWARD

Valid for 2 years

SILVER AWARD

Valid for 3 years

GOLD AWARD


Valid for 3 years

HOW IT WORKS

We offer a clear framework of nine outcomes with descriptors against which schools plan, develop their practice, and are subsequently accredited. Schools are free to determine their own ways of meeting these outcomes.

Silver accreditations take place online and always offer extensive feedback to senior leaders about their school's strengths and recommended next steps.

Gold accreditation can include an in-person visit and is a deeper exploration of the school's work to ensure that a child rights approach is fully embedded.



A student from a Rights Respecting School interviews another young person about the impact of the Award on school life for a co-created film.

Watch the film: unicef.uk/RRSA_Film

SCHOOL STUDY

Newman Catholic College

Understanding rights creates an inclusive community



Andrew Dunne, Headteacher at Newman Catholic College in the London Borough of Brent, discusses how focusing on children's rights supports inclusion and positive relationships.

At this school everyone feels supported and valued

The framework of rights helps us create an inclusive environment where every person feels supported and valued. Although we are a Catholic school, students are given space to enjoy their right to practise their own religion. Visiting professionals have noted how supportive our students are towards their peers with SEND, and those struggling with language. They will go out of their way to include everyone and understand that some students need extra support to reach their full potential.

Working with the community to keep young people safe

The framework of rights helps us keep a strong focus on safeguarding and reminding students that they have a right to speak up and seek help if they feel unsafe. Young people here tell me that they find the staff very approachable and feel comfortable to speak to them if they have any concerns.

Positive relationships based on dignity and respect

Our focus on children's rights is affecting relationships in a positive way. 'Respect' is a core Newman value, and students and staff treat each other with mutual respect and dignity. If a student has an idea to start a club or improve the school in some way, staff will listen, and when their ideas come to fruition it gives them an immense sense of pride.

“We are proud of having such a range of diverse pupils in the school, representing everyone’s nationality shows that we respect diversity.”

Jasmina, 13



SUPPORT

At each stage of the Rights Respecting journey, schools receive support including:

- Online training courses with our specialist team for all stages of the programme.
- In person, phone and email support from a dedicated regional Professional Adviser.
- Feedback on action plans and accreditation visit reports.
- Free downloadable resources to support assemblies, teaching and staff development.
- A comprehensive website with information for each stage of the Award.
- Regular newsletters and a closed social media group.
- E-learning available for all staff and governors.

GET IN TOUCH

You can find out more about how our programme supports the Ofsted inspection framework and our impact report on our website, or feel free to call or email us for more information. **Get started today.**

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Images for school study: Courtesy of Newman Catholic College.

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