



# STEP Academy Trust

## Rights Respecting School Engagement Policy

Date of Policy: April 2019

Review: January 2022

### Introduction

STEP Academy Trust Board of Trustees has agreed this Policy and as such, it applies to all Academies within the Trust.

The Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) Policy was reviewed in autumn 2018 following consultation with RRS Leaders and other interested parties across STEP Academy Trust. Accordingly, the existing RRS policy is replaced with an *RRS Engagement Policy*.

Since *every child has the right to know about their rights [Article 42]*, this STEP policy is non-negotiable. This revised policy does however ensure flexibility in terms of the methods by which it is implemented by academies.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, statements and procedures:

- *Safeguarding and Child Protection;*
- *Intimate Care;*
- *Positive Handling;*
- *Anti-Bullying;*
- *Behaviour;*
- *Health and Safety;*
- *Staff Code of Conduct;*
- *Online Safety and Social Media;*
- *Procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff;*
- *Equality;*
- *Admissions;*
- *Whistleblowing.*

## Values Statement

STEP Academies uphold their moral duty to enable pupils to learn broadly and practically about their rights – as set out by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – and act upon them within their learning environment, local community and the wider world. By understanding and applying their rights, children learn to respect and value the rights of others which in turn, helps to promote more respectful and responsible behaviour. We believe that by encouraging respect for each other and valuing available opportunities we all grow and learn together.

## STEP Vision, Values and Mission

The moral fabric of STEP Academy Trust is particularly evident through its academies' commitment towards RRS Engagement, principally by the ways in which:

- *pupil voice is at the heart* of RRS Engagement, conspicuously through various pupil-led forums (STEP vision);
- pupils noticeably *adopt and apply PUPAC values* for effective active citizenship (STEP values); and
- *pupils' life chances are improved* by way of their active participation in RRS Engagement approaches which enable development of important, 21<sup>st</sup> century lifelong skills such as collaboration, critical thinking and global citizenship (STEP mission).

## UNCRC and UNICEF

UNICEF is the world's leading organisation working for children and their rights. In 1989, governments worldwide promised all children the same rights by adopting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These rights are based on what a child needs to survive, grow, participate and fulfil their potential. The convention sets out the rights of children in 54 articles (see useful links). These basic rights encompass survival, protection, development and participation.

The UNCRC is underpinned by four principles:

- Non-discrimination;
- Commitment to the best interests of the child;
- A right to life, survival and development;
- Respect for the views of the child.

Rights are universal and cannot be taken away: the main responsibility for ensuring that all children (who are 'rights holders') enjoy their rights lies with adults, (who are 'duty bearers'). All rights are equally important.

Rights Respecting values underpin Leadership and Management: development as a rights respecting school through effective pupil engagement strategies is an integral part of strategic planning. All decisions are taken in the best interests of our children. As Academy policies are reviewed, links with the values and principles of the UNCRC are made explicit. Recruitment and induction practices reflect our rights respecting through pupil engagement ethos.

The whole school community learns about the UNCRC: each year group learns about the UNCRC. In some of our academies, displays and approaches to behaviour training are explicitly linked to the UNCRC and assemblies are linked to the values. All members of the community are encouraged to be ambassadors for children's rights. Parents, governors and the wider community are included in our work as a rights respecting multi academy trust.

Each Academy has a Rights Respecting Ethos: for example, charters can be drawn up in consultation between children and adults to identify the rights that are most relevant to that situation together with the ways in which adults and children will act in order to ensure that these rights are respected. All members of the community model Rights Respecting Schools language. The environment is safe physically and emotionally. Conflicts are resolved using approaches where children are empowered to seek solutions to problems.

Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners: pupils' opinions and thoughts are sought, encouraged and respected in all aspects of our work. Pupil leadership is an integral part of the RRS engagement approaches taken by STEP academies. Children are given opportunities to be active participants in school life through a range of groups including: Academy Council, Eco Committee, Junior Road Safety Officers, RRS Warriors, Pupil Advocates, Pupil Parliament and Learning Ambassadors. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as Global Citizens, to make them more aware of the wider world, to discuss issues that the world is facing and to make links between children in other countries and themselves. This is to develop their knowledge and awareness of how they can have a positive impact on the world, now and in the future.

### **RRS Engagement approaches**

A number of complimentary teaching and learning pedagogies, curriculums and resources are available to support pupils' progress as effective, rights respecting citizens. Academies determine which approaches are most befitting to their circumstances, culture and priority development areas. Examples of approaches are listed below (and associated, useful links on the last page of this policy document). None of these complimentary approaches should be regarded as 'the only approach' towards achieving STEP standards for RRS Engagement. This list is not exhaustive.

UNICEF Teaching & Learning Toolbox – about, through and for rights: a methodology for practically implementing the RRS Award in every aspect of school life. Resources are provided for teaching the whole school about children's rights and this knowledge is used to improve child well-being and the school, as well as advocate for global justice and sustainable living. Support materials for teaching through rights are concerned with the planning and structures that underpin school life, ensuring that the operational structures of a school are rights respecting. A section on teaching for rights focuses on looking out to the wider community and beyond, becoming active global citizens.

Philosophy for Children (P4C): a proven enquiry-based pedagogy that aims to help children in developing critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking skills. Accordingly, pupils develop the skills to be more effective community members and more empathic global citizens with increased capacity to communicate effectively and reason with others. Pupils hone their oracy and listening skills through P4C and think collaboratively to author questions reflective of matters that are important to them. With guidance from the teacher, dialogue is focused on the assumptions that lie behind answers and the criteria used to make judgements. P4C aims to help pupils' to think logically, to voice their opinions, to use appropriate language in argumentation, and to listen to the views and opinions of others. As a result, pupils are more self-assured and able in the ways in which they learn across the curriculum, and more dynamic in the approaches they take towards independent and collaborative work.

WE Schools: a unique, four-step programme—delivered in more than 14,500 schools across the UK and North America—that challenges young people to identify the local and global issues that spark their passion and then empowers them with the tools to take action. The WE Schools programme provides teachers and students with curriculum-matched lesson plans, educational resources and a full calendar of action campaign ideas. Through WE Schools, children gain an understanding of the root causes of pressing issues like hunger, poverty and poor access to education, and explore what they can do to help. They also plan at least one local and one global action to improve their community and the world.

Votes for Schools: a subscription-based organisation focused on: 1) engaging and educating young people about current affairs, 2) giving students a voice on national/community issues, 3) assisting teachers with evidencing British values teaching and addressing the Prevent strategy and 4) Encouraging debate beyond the school gates with parents & carers. Each week, Votes for Schools provides:

- A set of lessons that can be delivered with no preparation.
- Lesson plans and cross-curricular ideas for whole-school focus.
- Evidence for inspection bodies of meeting SMSC, British values and Prevent requirements.
- The ability for all students to vote and comment on the issue.
- Feedback on the impact the students' vote has had.
- Ideas to inspire young people to be active in their local communities.
- Lesson diaries to track skills development.

Education for Global Citizenship: Education for global citizenship is a framework published by Oxfam to equip learners for critical and active engagement with the challenges and opportunities of life in a fast-changing and interdependent world. It is transformative, developing the knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes that learners need both to participate fully in a globalised society and economy, and to secure a more just, secure and sustainable world than the one they have inherited.

EWC - Exploring Children's Rights: A manual and set of lesson plans which include nine small projects of four lessons each, for children in their first nine years of school. It includes detailed lesson instructions that can be followed by beginners or used in teacher training. A task-based learning approach is taken, focusing on problem solving and supporting pupils in conceptual learning, skills training and the development of values and attitudes. It follows the key principles of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC), methods and encourages open-mindedness and co-operative learning.

Children's Rights – A Teacher's Guide: Published by Save The Children to support schools when introducing rights education into the classroom. As well as practical information about children's rights and their importance to well-governed societies, the guide contains ideas about how to introduce the topic into the curriculum and incorporate rights into everyday teaching practice.

Quality Assurance: In its quality assurance of RRS through Pupil Engagement, a cross section of stakeholders will initially refer to UNICEF's RRS framework and the STEP Compass to determine criteria for STEP success standards in this area of teaching and learning. Expected outcomes will therefore be high and also contribute to furthering the Mission, and Vision of STEP Academy Trust. Mapping goals and progress against this framework can help our pupils to grow into confident, caring and responsible young citizens both within our academies and the wider community. By learning about their rights our pupils also learn about the importance of respecting the rights of others.

Roles and Responsibilities: the responsibility for STEP being a Rights Respecting MAT lies with every member of the community. The main responsibility rests with adults.

Placing the UNCRC at the heart of our Academy's core values and ethos



Placing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart the school's core values and ethos provides a coherent framework for other whole-school statutory requirements.

#### Useful Links

- A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child:  
[www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)
- UNICEF: [www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk)
- Teaching resources:  
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/resources/teaching-learning-toolbox/>  
[www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/resources/rrsa-teaching-resources/](http://rightsrespectingschools.ca/school-resources)  
<http://rightsrespectingschools.ca/school-resources>  
<https://www.sapere.org.uk/resources.aspx>  
<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/exploring-childrens-rights-nine-short-projects-primary-level>  
[http://peacefulschoolsinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/childrens\\_rights\\_a\\_teachers\\_guide.pdf](http://peacefulschoolsinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/childrens_rights_a_teachers_guide.pdf)  
<https://www.votesforschools.com/>  
<https://www.we.org/gb/we-at-school/we-schools/>

Access to a shared RRS through Pupil Engagement file is available for all RRS leaders and other interested parties on the STEP One Drive. It has a comprehensive range of support materials freely available. A culture of uploading and sharing useful materials is encouraged.