

Cardiff's Leadership in Rights-Respecting Education

Child
Friendly
CARDIFF

CAERDYDD
Sy'n Dda i
Blant


CARDIFF
CAERDYDD

2023–2026

 CHILD
FRIENDLY
CITY

 unicef
UNITED KINGDOM

Cardiff, the UK's first UNICEF Child Friendly City, is embedding children's rights into education. Inspired by children's call for an education that empowers them to understand and exercise their rights, we proudly champion the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA). With a commitment to equitable access and a tailored, sustainable approach, Cardiff has set a national benchmark for rights-based education.

Cardiff was the first city in the Wales and England to centrally fund the award for all schools. This commitment is complemented by Cardiff becoming the first city in the UK to have fully trained local authority officers as assessors, allowing for tailored support and reduced costs.

Our goal is clear: A city where all primary and special schools are Rights Respecting having achieved Gold, making children's rights a rite of passage for every child in Cardiff. Cardiff's direction is driven by a vision where every school embeds rights as a cornerstone of its ethos and practice.



**Watch UNICEF's Video about the RRSA
featuring Pupils from Mount Stuart Primary**

What is the RRSA?

The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) is best understood as a comprehensive framework (with resources and training) that supports schools on a journey to embedding children's rights into every aspect of school life. From policies and practices to curriculum design, pupil voice, and relationships within the school community, the RRSA provides a structured and quality assured approach to creating rights-respecting educational environments.

The journey through the RRSA framework includes three key stages:

Bronze

(Rights Committed)

The initial planning stage, where schools outline their commitment to becoming rights-respecting. This stage typically takes 3-6 months to achieve.

Silver

(Rights Aware)

At silver, schools can demonstrate significant progress in embedding children's rights throughout the school in its policies, practice and ethos. This stage usually takes 6-12 months and includes a formal assessment visit, providing feedback and guidance for the next steps.

Gold

(Rights Respecting)

Gold is granted by UNICEF UK to schools that have fully embedded children's rights throughout the school in its policies, practice and ethos, as outlined in the [RRSA Strands and Outcomes](#).

This stage usually takes 1-3 years and includes a rigorous formal assessment visit. Schools are re-assessed for gold every 3 years.

Why Does the RRSA Matter?

The RRSA transforms schools into environments where children's rights are embedded into every aspect of education. It aligns closely with Cardiff's commitment to being a UNICEF Child-Friendly City, delivering a tangible impact on children's experiences, learning outcomes, and personal development. Key reasons why the RRSA matters include:

Empowering Children:

The RRSA fosters children's understanding of their rights under the UNCRC, enabling them to advocate for themselves and others. It helps develop confident, informed, and active citizens.

Positive School Culture:

By embedding children's rights, schools foster inclusive, respectful environments that improve relationships between pupils, staff, and the wider community. This creates safer, happier schools where everyone feels valued.

Improved Outcomes:

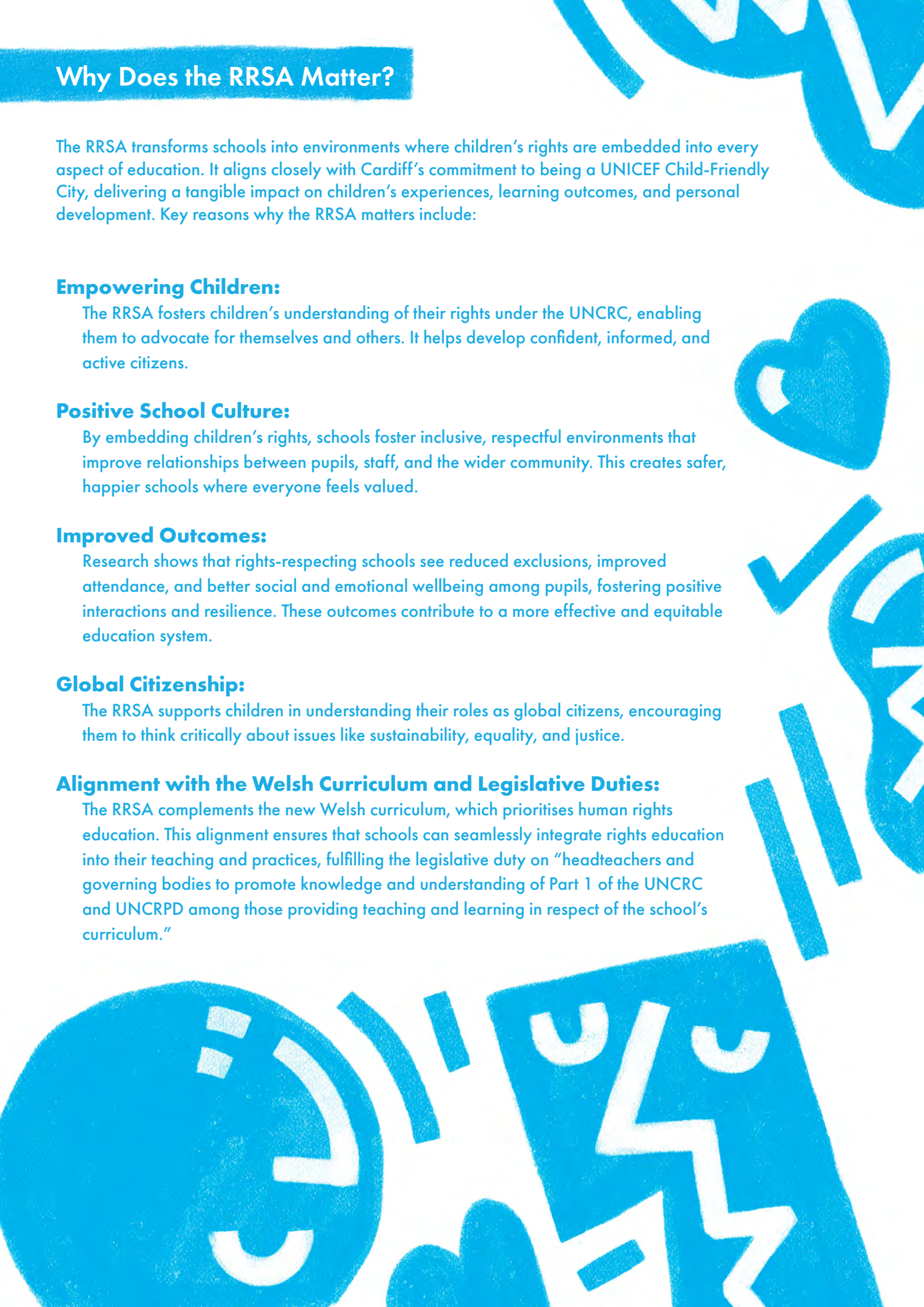
Research shows that rights-respecting schools see reduced exclusions, improved attendance, and better social and emotional wellbeing among pupils, fostering positive interactions and resilience. These outcomes contribute to a more effective and equitable education system.

Global Citizenship:

The RRSA supports children in understanding their roles as global citizens, encouraging them to think critically about issues like sustainability, equality, and justice.

Alignment with the Welsh Curriculum and Legislative Duties:

The RRSA complements the new Welsh curriculum, which prioritises human rights education. This alignment ensures that schools can seamlessly integrate rights education into their teaching and practices, fulfilling the legislative duty on "headteachers and governing bodies to promote knowledge and understanding of Part 1 of the UNCRC and UNCRPD among those providing teaching and learning in respect of the school's curriculum."



How Cardiff is Doing It?

Tailored Support and Sustainability:

Cardiff has adopted a sustainable model by becoming the first city in the UK to train local authority officers as RRSA assessors. This innovative approach reduces reliance on UNICEF assessors, saving costs while offering Cardiff-specific guidance and support. Schools benefit from bespoke assistance through in-person visits and tailored mentoring, ensuring they progress confidently through the RRSA stages while embedding sustainable practices.

Centrally Funded Access:

Cardiff was the first city in England and Wales to centrally fund the RRSA for all maintained schools, removing financial barriers and ensuring equal access for schools of all sizes and settings.

Showcasing Success:

Stories from Gold schools demonstrate the transformative power of the RRSA, showcasing improvements in attendance, behaviour, and inclusivity. These success stories inspire other schools to follow suit.

Community of Practice:

Our RRSA Events and activities bring together teachers, pupils, and staff from across the city to share best practices, celebrate achievements, and inspire further action. These events create a network of schools united by their commitment to children's rights.

Collaboration with UNICEF:

Cardiff works closely with UNICEF to maintain the programme's credibility and high standards, ensuring that school's benefit from the best resources and training.

What's Next?

Continue Progressing with a Sustainable Approach:

Train Gold assessors to build on the success of local silver assessors, further enhancing Cardiff's tailored and cost-effective model.

Rite of Passage:

Aim for 62% of primary and special schools in Cardiff to achieve Silver or Gold by April 2026, evidencing significant progress in embedding children's rights.

Expand Resources and Training:

Continue to develop and provide resources, training, and support to ensure schools have the tools needed for success.

Strengthen the RRSA Network:

Run more events and initiatives to create a stronger community of practice, encouraging collaboration and shared learning among schools.