

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE INTERNET

1. About this pack

This pack is the product of the Harrow Way Community School's teams of *rights respecting* peer educators¹.

They have worked with some staff and *RealisingRights* (a UK-based Human Rights Learning network) towards making the Internet a resource that can be enjoyed without fear of abuse or exploitation.

The centrepiece of the pack is a workshop that can be led by students, for students and their parents.

The pack reflects a journey. To begin with, the school students were focused on their concern about cyberbullying.

They applied their *rights respecting* knowledge and skills² to examine the nature of their concern and decided that cyberbullying is just one (important) part of much broader concerns about how we make decisions when we use the internet whether via social media or as a website provider.

They decided to create a workshop for young people and parents which helped to show that knowing our human rights can help us make the internet a safer and more enjoyable "place".

They also realised that a global asset like the Internet needs globally agreed values based on universal human rights.

This makes cooperation and dialogue possible, irrespective of location or ethnicity. The pack is designed in such a way that schools, wherever they are throughout the world, can adopt this approach. This will help to establish a truly rights respecting culture for internet use.

¹Useful sites for finding out about human rights:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (summary):

http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_summary.pdf

The European Convention on Human Rights and the Court:

<http://rightsinfo.org>

UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award:

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/>

² These are acquired through being at a school where human rights underpin the school's values and practice

2. How the Rights Respecting Use of the Internet Project evolved.

Watch this short film (6 mins).

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/rrr-navigator/stories-of-positive-change/harrow-way.htm>

3. Implementing a human rights approach to the internet.

- a. This explanation (“About this pack”) is supported by 5 appendices.
- b. APPENDIX 1 is the introduction to the workshop the students used.
- c. APPENDIX 2 is a folder containing a set of slides, notes and a set of cards (A-K) used in the activity on internet abuse. These cards should be printed off.
- d. Human Rights peer educators leading the workshop.
- e. APPENDIX 3 provides some guidance on drawing up a charter for the rights respecting use of the Internet whilst
- f. APPENDIX 4 provides one example of what a charter might look like. This example is of a work in progress. A school and its community should use these for ideas as it develops its own charter through an inclusive participatory process.
- g. School staff can help to promote the rights respecting use of the internet. For example reminders can be posted on the school website. Here is what currently appears on Harrow Way School’s intranet in the VLE section:

ARTICLE OF THE WEEK

Article 19: Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and mistreatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

International & National Events this week: 2nd October: International Day of Non-Violence

Rights Respecting and the Internet. We learn about human rights and we help each other to enjoy them. This includes the virtual world. So: know your rights. Know other people’s rights and respect them when you use the internet. Unsure? Need help? Speak with a RR ambassador.

We are a Rights Respecting School.

Another action could be to insert a pop-up reminder of the rights respecting charter at log-in stage, requiring an “I agree” tick to progress.

4. About a Human Rights based Approach

A Human Rights based approach for schools has three dimensions.

- Knowing about Rights,
- Working through Rights,
- Acting for Rights.

They are interrelated. As young people learn about human rights and the rights of the child, so rights respecting language and behaviour have to be modeled by those who teach educate them. In this way young people learn not just about rights but how they too need to act for rights to be realised in specific situations. Human rights become a guide to living.

The process of developing a human rights based approach needs to ensure adults also learn about their own human rights. The rights of the child are an extension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so they should be seen as in harmony rather than in opposition.

Studies have demonstrated³ that in schools where young people are taught about rights and where adults model rights respecting language and behaviour, relationships improve, as do self-esteem, climate for learning and support for the rights of others. There is a greater respect for diversity and a solid basis for building wider community cohesion.

This suggests that where a Human Rights framework is implemented fully, it strengthens a school's work on a wide range of concerns including the core ones of teaching and learning, safeguarding and SMSC (Including the values identified in the 2014 guidance to schools).

Most Human Rights declarations were drawn up and agreed at a time when the Internet and social media were either science fiction or only in their infancy. This does not mean that Human Rights have no place in what happens on the Internet or on social media, rather it means that we have to interpret Human Rights for the digital age. In fact, the global nature of the Internet demands appropriate universal values (i.e. Human Rights) to govern its use.

It is hoped that this workshop pack will inspire schools to embrace a human rights based approach.

One way of getting started is via a learning walk. This can be either internal or done between schools. APPENDIX 5 provides an example of the latter.

Whilst schools can play their part in adopting a rights respecting approach to Internet use, there is much to be done to bring website providers on board too. This involves active citizenship. For example they need to be persuaded to ensure their sites are rights-respecting. How many food, drink and fashion companies ensure they respect our right to *reliable* information on their websites?

³ Evidence includes.

Covell and Howe: Rights, Respect and Responsibility in Hampshire County - RRR and Resilience Report 2011.

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/rrr-in-hampshire-rrr-and-resilience-report.pdf>

Sebba and Robison: Evaluation of UNICEF's Rights Respecting School Award (2010):

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=unicef-uks-rights-respecting-schools-initiative-and-evaluation---judy-sebba.pptx&site=387>

This project illustrates how a human rights based approach can help analyse a concern and map out a way forward. It helps to identify those elements over which one can have some direct control and those which require broader social action.

