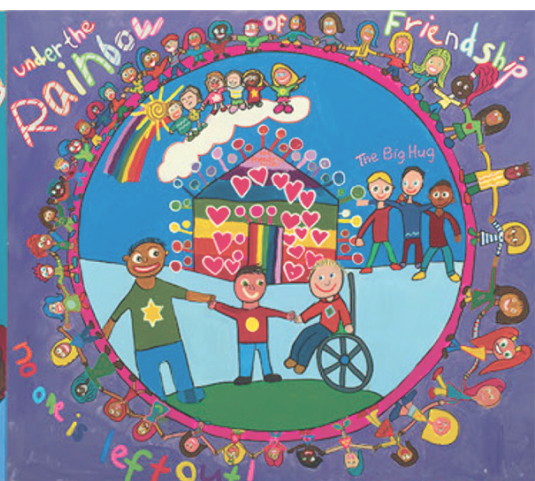


Manor Park Primary School Case Study

A Children's Parliament project



In 2016 Children's Parliament began a journey with Manor Park Primary School to embed a children's human rights approach at the heart of their school community, through modelling practice and supporting culture change. Five years on, Manor Park continues on that journey as a place that values and loves children and supports the realisation of their human rights. The work sits within local and national government frameworks to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in practice in line with the recent incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law by the Scottish Parliament. This case study summarises how a children's human rights-based approach was developed and embedded at Manor Park and the impact it had on achievement and wellbeing.

A children's human rights-based approach:

- Aligns practice and policy with the UNCRC.
- Supports and enables the realisation of children's rights.
- Equips rights-holders (children) with knowledge and agency in the realisation of their human rights.
- Equips management, teachers, Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs), school staff and parents/carers (all adult duty-bearers) with the awareness, knowledge, skills and values to embed rights into their everyday planning, behaviours and practice.

A children's human rights-based approach is rooted in kindness, trust, empathy and respect for every individual's human dignity. It treats every person as equal, recognising children's place in society as equal citizens and ensures that children's views and experiences are sought and enabled to inform and shape all matters that affect them.



When	What	Outputs	Council/School
Aug 2015 – Feb 2020	The Imagining Aberdeen programme ensured children’s voices influenced services within the city. As a Scottish Attainment Challenge school, Manor Park was identified as a partner. This opened the door to future work.	Film: tinyurl.com/mwsbbrxj Last magazine: tinyurl.com/3793upun Mural leaflet: tinyurl.com/yne3pces	The agenda was to offer strategic support to Aberdeen City Council on their journey to become a child-friendly city.
Jan – Apr 2016	For the Imagining Aberdeen programme, Children’s Parliament began working with P4-P7 classes to explore what children need to be happy, healthy and safe in the environments of home, school and community. The idea of human dignity was introduced. Teachers participated in continual professional development (CPD) sessions around human rights.	A Manor Park Primary School report: tinyurl.com/2n72kb43	The agenda was for children’s voices to inform community locality planning.
Aug 2016 – June 2017	Children’s Parliament worked in partnership with a P4/5 teacher and their class over a 12-week programme to address attainment-gap issues by focusing on relationships and developing learner self-perception.	Doing Our Best report/ Education Scotland exemplar practice: tinyurl.com/24pyhxja	The agenda was to address the poverty-related attainment gap as a children’s human rights issue.

When	What	Outputs	Council/School
Aug 2017 – Mar 2018	Children’s Parliament worked with all children from P1-P7 to create a child-led vision for Manor Park. 20 children from across the school created a mural, which is now located in the main corridor. Key messages from the mural have been incorporated into the school improvement plan.	School vision (mural): tinyurl.com/46m465jr	The agenda was to change the reputation of the school and make children, families and staff feel they belong and can feel proud of being part of the Manor Park community. The vision had to be created and owned by everyone. It was visually represented to ensure inclusivity.
Aug 2018 – June 2019	Children’s Parliament developed a programme to ensure the children’s vision for the school became a reality through creating a culture of learner participation. Manor Park Parliament involved all children in the school, from P1-P7 – the structure and direction of the Manor Park Parliament was co-constructed by the children and Children’s Parliament team. The CP team worked with all teaching staff (in their classes and by providing training opportunities) to ensure sustainability beyond CP’s time at the school.	Policy document Pledges: tinyurl.com/2e9fnb95 tinyurl.com/nm5x2azb	The agenda was to create a children’s rights-based approach to learner participation in self-evaluation and school improvement, that was underpinned by the How Good is Our School framework.

When	What	Outputs	Council/School
Feb – March 2020	Children's Parliament revisited Manor Park Primary School to further support a rights-based approach to school improvement with a focus on learner participation in the school curriculum. As part of this visit, children from P1-P7 became Curriculum Explorers.	Curriculum Progression Maps: tinyurl.com/5953867d	The agenda was to listen to the children by giving them a greater say on what and how they learn.



Manor Park before starting its rights-based approach journey:

Manor Park Primary School was identified publicly as the primary school with the highest level of temporary exclusions in Scotland.

Teaching and learning is rated unsatisfactory.

Only **12%** of parents/ carers attended parents' evenings.

10% of P7 pupils attained at expected National Level and Individual milestones.

In 2015-16, one class had **11** teachers over the course of the session. In session 2016-17, there were **6** HTs involved in the school.

Children reported concerns about how they are treated at school, for example P.E. sessions were taken off the whole class due to one child's 'bad behaviour', being shouted at by the adults, and feeling unsafe at school.

What changed through embedding a rights-based approach?

Impact	Evidence	Participant's words
Children now directly influence the learning and teaching agenda.	<p>The children created their own policies after their ideas and experiences were not reflected in the adult versions of these documents. These policies have informed training of staff, how effective teaching is measured in school and goals within the school improvement plan - children are involved in all aspects of this.</p> <p>Policy document Pledges: tinyurl.com/2e9fnb95 tinyurl.com/nm5x2azb</p>	<p>Teacher: "When planning for learning opportunities, I still refer to the Relationship Policy designed and constructed by the pupils in my school to ensure I am continuously addressing their expectations from me as their teacher."</p> <p>Teacher: "Children's Parliament has had a positive impact on my teaching practice. After spending time with members of the team and being a part of the activities they provide, I now check-in with the children in a more effective way and realise the importance of getting this right to gauge a child's readiness to learn."</p>

Children understand they have a voice and that adults will take them seriously.

¹² Children have the right to be listened to and taken seriously

Children co-led CPD sessions for all the teachers, PSAs and parent/carer council explaining what they needed from the adults in their school in order to do their best. In response to the children's findings, adults made pledges about the actions they would take. An example is that the children shared how important it is that their teacher welcomes and connects with them as they enter the school. One teacher heard this and spent the term greeting all children in her class with a smile, a hug, a handshake or sometimes a dance!

MCP:
"The adults respect me by listening to my ideas and other people's. They give me eye contact when I am talking."

Parent:
"I heard that children enjoy hugs. Being friends. Being nice to each other. I will always give my kids hugs and be there to help the school."

Impact

Evidence

Participant's words

Children have a sense of agency and hold adults to account.

When Soft Start was cancelled, due to issues concerning damaged resources, children expressed that they wanted it to resume because it helped them settle in in the morning and provided time to talk to the teacher. Children and adults worked together to come up with ideas for how to overcome the challenges and bring back a softer start.

Deputy Head Teacher:
"As a member of SLT [Senior Leadership Team] I have used the relationship and learning and teaching policies when carrying out classroom observations alongside the children, which has been valuable when feeding back to staff."

Behaviour is recognised as a form of communication.

If children are finding it difficult to be in class they are allowed to leave of their own accord, using the time out card and going find a quiet and calming space to let the storm in their head settle. The Senior Leadership Team check in on children, asking them if they are ok.

Teacher:
"In P6 we have become such a strong team and one in which children feel safe and confident. It has also given me new strategies to deal with challenging behaviour and understand the 'whys' of certain negative behaviours."

13 Children have the right to freedom of expression

Teacher:
"When a child has a sore head or is stressed, they might need to get it all out, so they know why they are angry. The teacher asks, 'what is wrong?'"

Shouting is understood to make children feel unsafe.

The school is (nearly) shout-free. Teachers have made commitments to stop shouting in class and together with the children are exploring positive behavioural management strategies.

Teacher:
"I heard that the children wish for a calmer environment. I will try not to shout as much and listen to them more."

28 Children have the right to education

MCP:
"Shouting at a child won't do anything, it just makes them feel scared."

Impact

Self-regulation is valued by creating space and support around a child.

Evidence

Routines like Feelings Check-In and opportunities to talk about feelings, like girls meeting with the teacher at lunchtime, are now part of daily life at Manor Park.

Participant's words

MCP:
"We have a way to share our feelings and ideas. Before I knew about feelings, but I didn't know how to feel. Now I know what I am feeling."

Teacher:
"Children's Parliament has contributed to an ethos of calm and positivity. It has allowed children to realise it is 'ok not to be ok' and there are people who can help them to feel safe and talk about their worries.."

Learning is creative and active so that everyone can engage in learning opportunities.

Informed by the Curriculum Progression Maps, children received gardening packs to continue their learning during the initial lockdown.

MCP:
"Our teachers find fun ways to teach boring things – like playing games or being outdoors."

Curriculum Progression Maps:
tinyurl.com/5953867d

MCP:
"If you are interested or if it's fun you can learn better - learning deteriorates when you're bored."

29 Children have the right to reach their full potential through their education



Impact

Processes that support children to learn and develop self-confidence are valued.

Evidence

Children are encouraged to express their opinion and their successes are celebrated within and beyond the school.

Participant's words

MCP:
"I'm less angry and more confident about talking to people. Before I didn't talk much and now I talk a lot."

Head Teacher:
"When I think of one child in particular, the change has just been massive. We have kept this child until the end of P7, which we didn't think we'd manage. He is confident, will raise opinions, wants to be here and is keen."

Children's human rights are understood by children in relation to their own daily lived experiences.

Children have the vocabulary to talk about what keeps them healthy, happy, safe and able to do their best at home, in school and in their community. Children understand what isn't ok.

Head Teacher:
"There are ways to do children's rights without having to tick an award criteria. We still respect rights and we still talk about the four foundations for the UNCRC and for me that's really important because actually that connects with our pupils; the protection, the survival, the development, that's huge for them because that's actually their lives. So that way [connecting it to their lives] is more meaningful than reading out all the articles."

Teacher:
"The children are more aware of what they need from the school in order to thrive. They have become more aware of the differences between 'thriving' and 'surviving' and have started to open up more and feel confident and safe to do so. "

The result of implementing a rights-based approach?

96% reduction
in exclusions

58% rise in
parental/ carers
engagement.

60% of P7 children attaining
across the board in national
expectations.

Teaching and learning is
rated Satisfactory with some
elements Good. This was
confirmed by the Local
Authority's Improvement
Agenda.

Children report all children are getting
access to free fruit and vegetable
snacks at every break, teachers are
making commitments to be shout
free (and keeping them), and during
national lockdown, all children
were sent gardening packs to learn
how to grow their own flowers and
veg, as expressed in the curriculum
progression plan.

In 2019-20, after the initial national
lockdown, all teachers were
supported by management to
continue with the same class and
use positive relationships as a tool
for recovery.

Children's Parliament
project worker:
**"Manor Park is
a place where
everyone is
made to feel
welcome, adults
and children say
good morning
and chat in the
corridors. The
relationships
the Manor Park
team have with
the children they
work with really
shines through."**

What is needed to take this forward in other schools?

Strong leadership with a commitment to effectively raise awareness and levels of knowledge and follow through by:

- Ensuring children have a say in all educational discussions affecting them. For example: how the school is run, planning, teaching and assessment, school improvement, school curriculum, school policies and school environment.
- Being flexible and responsive to the needs of the children, staff and school community.
- Working beyond an initiative. A children's rights-based approach has to be a school-wide approach. It has to feed into the school ethos and all aspects of learning.
- Human dignity and relationships must be at its heart. This is a journey, and people will make mistakes and take their own time to get there. There has to be kindness, trust and empathy.
- Unfearties [<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/unfearties/>]: adults unafraid to challenge infringements of children's human rights and embrace valuing and listening to children.
- Prioritising and allocating time for specifically listening to children. Schools can be intensely pressurised environments, but a commitment has to be made to create space for children's voices and establish an effective feedback loop.

The need for perseverance. Not all staff will initially recognise the value of using a rights-based approach. Work towards overcoming this by:

- Developing positive relationships with all staff members.
- Modelling calm, creative and kind ways of working with children.
- Creating time and space for the children to directly share their ideas and experiences with staff.
- Keeping an open and honest dialogue with the Senior Management Team. Their belief and understanding of the value of a rights-based approach can drive change across a school.
- Acknowledging and celebrating good practice among staff.