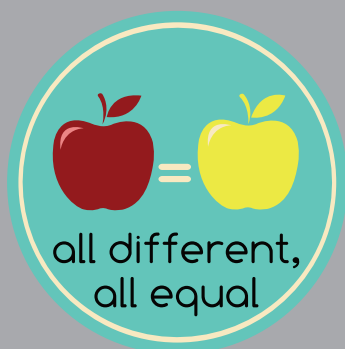




ombudsman
for children & young people



Small Places

Exploring Young People's Rights in their daily Lives

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home ... Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere." - Eleanor Roosevelt

Dear Teacher,

The Ombudsman for Children's Office has developed these materials to assist you to explore children's rights and responsibilities with your students in the context of curriculum teaching and learning. These materials are the third in a series of educational resources developed by my Office since 2007.

As Ombudsman for Children, my job, and statutory responsibility, is to promote and monitor the rights and welfare of children up to the age of eighteen and to ensure that in law, policy and practice their best interests are considered. People often ask me where children's rights are defined. There are two key reference points: the Constitution, which is the primary legal instrument in Ireland, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a set of internationally agreed human rights standards for children, ratified by Ireland in 1992.

Among my statutory obligations, as set out in the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002, is to promote awareness among members of the public, including children, of matters relating to children's rights and welfare. The 2002 Act refers explicitly in this regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The activities in this resource aim to support young people to make connections between children's rights, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and their own daily lives at home, at school and in their communities.

We hope that by exploring these connections with you, with each other and with their parents/guardians, young people will develop their understanding of how children's rights relate to their own lives and of the various ways in which a wide range of people, including young people themselves, can participate in the protection of children's rights on a daily basis.

These materials have been designed for work with young people in post-primary education (especially Junior Certificate CSPE students). You may wish to adapt the activities to take account of the needs, capacities and experiences of the young people you work with.

We appreciate the significant role that teachers play in young people's lives. We hope these materials will support your work and that you and the young people you work with will find them educational and enjoyable.

If you would like to find out more about the OCO and our work to promote the rights and welfare of children living in Ireland, please visit our website – www.oco.ie.

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Logan". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Emily" written in a larger, more prominent style than the surname "Logan".

Emily Logan
Ombudsman for Children

FACT FILE for TEACHERS

Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)



- Emily Logan was appointed Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children by President Mary McAleese in December 2003. In 2009, she was appointed for a second term.
- The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) was established under primary legislation, the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002. The OCO is the independent human rights organisation with statutory responsibility for promoting and monitoring the rights and welfare of children up to eighteen years of age living in Ireland.
- Under the 2002 Act, the OCO is obliged to:
 - promote public awareness of children's rights, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and including among children;
 - give advice to the Government on any matter affecting children;
 - encourage public bodies to develop policies, practices and procedures that promote children's rights and welfare;
 - consult children and highlight issues relating to their rights and welfare that are of concern to children themselves;
 - carry out research on matters relating to children's rights and welfare;
 - handle complaints made by or on behalf of children about schools, hospitals and other public organisations.
- The Ombudsman for Children is directly accountable to the Oireachtas in relation to the exercise of her statutory functions.
- To find out more about the OCO's work, please go to **www.oco.ie**.



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for children & young people

FACT FILE for TEACHERS

Bunreacht na hÉireann, Constitution of Ireland

- Bunreacht na hÉireann is the Irish Constitution. Enacted in 1937, the Constitution is the fundamental legal instrument in Ireland. It sets out how Ireland should be governed and the rights of Irish citizens.
- The Constitution establishes and describes the main institutions of the Irish State. The power to run the State is divided into three separate powers, the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power:
 - The Constitution gives legislative power (the power to make, amend and remove laws) to the Oireachtas, which comprises Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann and the President.
 - The executive power (the power to put laws into effect) rests with the Government, assisted by the gardaí, the defence forces and the civil service.
 - The judicial power (the power to interpret and apply the law to conflicts between the State and the individual as well as disputes between individuals) lies with the courts.
- The Constitution also sets out the fundamental rights that every Irish citizen is entitled to. They include the right to equality before the law, the right to personal liberty, the right to religious liberty, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to privacy.
- Among the articles of the Constitution that concern children are Articles 41 and 42. Article 41 relates to the family and recognises the family as having a special place in society. Article 42 of the Constitution concerns education. It acknowledges the family as the “primary and natural educator of the child” and defines the State’s role in relation to education.
- If the Government wishes to amend the Constitution, it must hold a referendum as any decision to change the Constitution rests with citizens of Ireland. If the majority of votes cast in a referendum are in favour of the proposed change, the Bill containing the proposed amendment is signed by the Irish President and the Constitution is then amended.

FACT FILE for TEACHERS

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. It is the most comprehensive definition of children's rights to date and has been ratified by almost every country in the world. Ireland ratified the Convention in 1992 and, in doing so, made a commitment under international law to realise the rights set out in it. Ireland's progress in this regard is monitored periodically by a group of children's rights experts called the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- The UNCRC recognises children as rights-holders who are entitled to special care, assistance and protection due their age and stage of development.
- The Preamble to the UNCRC clarifies that recognising and realising children's rights is about:
 - respecting children's inherent dignity and worth;
 - promoting improved living conditions and a better quality of life for children;
 - protecting and assisting the family as the "fundamental group of society" and the "natural environment for the growth and well-being" of children;
 - acknowledging that children "should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding";
 - supporting children to respect principles of "peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity";
 - recognising that there are children throughout the world who need special protection because they live in exceptionally difficult circumstances.
- The UNCRC sets out what rights children have. The Convention promotes an holistic view of children's lives and needs: the rights set out in it are to be seen as interdependent and as being of equal importance.
- Four rights in the UNCRC are considered vital to realising other Convention rights. Known as the Convention's "general principles", they are:
 - children's right not to be discriminated against on any grounds (Article 2);
 - children's right to have their best interests considered in all decisions and actions affecting them (Article 3);
 - children's right to life, survival and development (Article 6);
 - children's right to express their views in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken into account, in accordance with their age and maturity (Article 12).
- The UNCRC says that the State has primary responsibility for safeguarding children's rights (Article 4). Among the State's obligations in this regard are to respect parents' rights and to support parents to fulfil their roles and responsibilities towards their children.
- In defining children's rights, the UNCRC recognises the rights of others. The Convention also refers to responsibilities that children have, in accordance with their evolving capacities, to participate in respecting their own and others' rights. For example, Article 13 of the UNCRC says that children's right to freedom of expression should involve respecting the rights and reputations of others.

Young People's Rights in School

Purpose:

- To support students to make connections between different children's rights and things that can happen during the course of a school day and, with that, to develop students' awareness of the wide range of children's rights that schools can be involved in promoting and protecting

You will need:

- A copy of the images and a copy of the list of children's rights for each group of students.

Steps:

- Depending on any previous work you have done with your class on children's rights and responsibilities, you may wish to start this activity by briefly (re)introducing the students to the Constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Fact File provided can assist you with this.
- Divide the students into small groups.
- Give each group a copy of the images sheet and a copy of the list of children's rights.
- Ask the students to work together to identify one right that relates to each of the images and to write their answers in the space below each image. They can keep track of which rights they have identified by ticking them off the list of rights as they go.
- Bring the students back together and give each group an opportunity to share some of the connections they have made with the rest of the class. As some of the images can be connected with more than one right on the list, check in to see if there are variations between the groups as regards which right they have connected to a particular image.
- Facilitate a follow-up discussion with the class:
 - How similar are the activities depicted through the images to things that go on in their own school?
 - Thinking about their own daily lives in school, are there other rights that can come into play? If so, which rights and how do they come up?
 - What measures can help to make sure that the rights of every student in school are respected? (Measures might include school rules, policies and codes (e.g. an anti-bullying policy and a code of conduct); meetings (e.g. student council or parent-teacher meetings); special events (e.g. an annual event to celebrate diversity); and awareness raising campaigns (e.g. to promote mental or physical health).)
 - Which rights can they help to make sure are respected for all young people in the class/school? What can they do in this regard? Do young people have an important role to play in helping to make sure rights of other young people in school are respected?

Young People's Rights in School

Teachers' Sheet



education



rest and leisure



have your own
thoughts and ideas



nutritious food



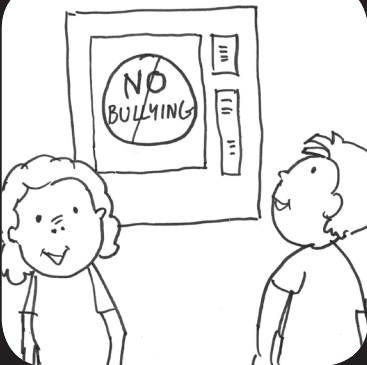
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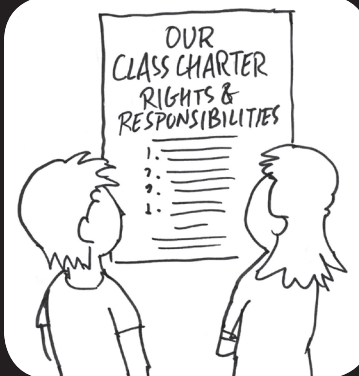
information



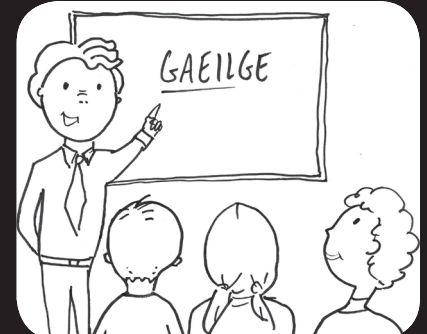
express views



be safe from harm

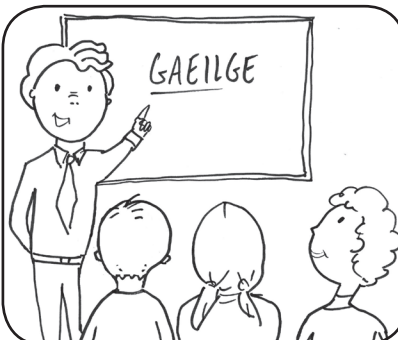
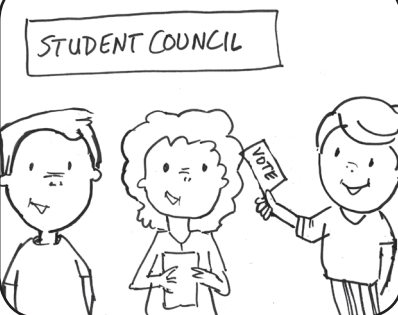
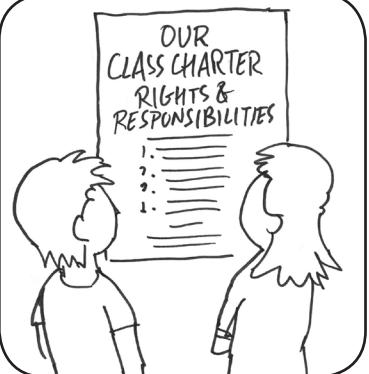
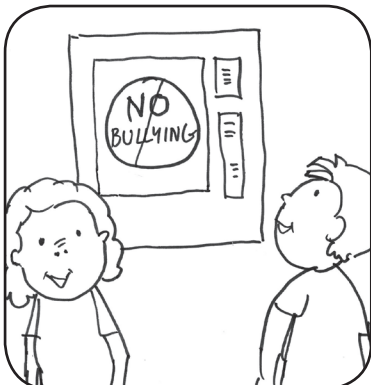


know your rights and
responsibilities



respect for your
language and culture

Young People's Rights in School



Young People's Rights in School

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the different rights that all children and young people have. Here is a list of some of these rights:

- **nutritious food** ☐
- **healthcare** ☐
- **a nationality** ☐
- **privacy** ☐
- **education** ☐
- **information** ☐
- **have your best interests considered** ☐
- **a name** ☐
- **rest and recreation** ☐
- **be safe from harm** ☐
- **respect for your language and culture** ☐
- **have an adequate standard of living**
(a home, clothing, etc.) ☐
- **express your views** ☐
- **be with your family or those who can care**
for you best ☐
- **know your rights and responsibilities** ☐
- **express yourself freely** ☐

Young People's Rights in the Community

Purpose:

- To facilitate students to think about the many different people living and working in children's and young people's local communities who can be involved in protecting children's rights on a daily basis and to discuss the role that attitudes and behaviours play in respecting children's rights

You will need:

- A copy of the activity sheet and a copy of the key words sheet for each group of students

Steps:

- If you have not already done so, you may wish to start this activity by (re)introducing the students to the Constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Fact File provided can assist you with this.
- Divide the students into small groups.
- Give each group a copy of the activity sheet and a copy of the key words sheet.
- In the case of each person on the sheet, the students should:
 1. identify one children's right that the person can respect through their job or role (column 3);
 2. identify one key word (a verb) that helps characterise how the person can respect the right in question through their job or role (column 2).








Before they start, clarify to the students that:

- they should avoid using the same right or the same key word as much as possible;
 - they shouldn't feel limited to using the key words provided on the sheet;
 - they should use the blank row at the bottom of the sheet to identify one other person living and working in young people's local communities who plays a role in respecting children's rights.
- Bring the students back together and invite feedback from each group. Ask the students to explain the connections they have made with an example (e.g. 'A doctor can look after young people's right to healthcare by')
 - Follow-up with a class discussion:
 - Are the students surprised by how many different people can be involved in protecting young people's rights through their roles / jobs?
 - Have they ever thought about any of these people in this way before?
 - Taking into account the key words they have used during this activity (e.g. 'care', 'protect', 'support'), how important do they think people's, including young people's, attitudes and behaviours are in making young people feel that their rights are respected?
 - What can they do to help make sure that different people living in their local community feel that their human rights are being respected?

Young People's Rights in the Community









Teachers' Sheet

In addition to young people's families, there are many different people living and working in young people's local communities who can be involved in respecting and protecting children's and young people's rights.

Person	keyword (sample answers)	young people's right to... (sample answers)
 doctor	look after	healthcare
 postman	support	information
 garda	defend	be safe
 shopkeeper	assist with	nutritious food
 friends	value	recreation
 teacher	safeguard	education
 bin man	contribute to	be safe

Young People's Rights in the Community

In addition to young people's families, there are many different people living and working in young people's local communities who can be involved in respecting and protecting children's and young people's rights.

Person	keyword	young people's right to...
 doctor		
 postman		
 garda		
 shopkeeper		
 friends		
 teacher		
 bin man		
		

Step 1: Choose a Right

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children and young people up to the age of 18 have the right to ...

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> be treated equally and fairly | <input type="checkbox"/> express their views when decisions are being made that affect them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> healthcare | <input type="checkbox"/> rest and recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an adequate standard of living (housing, clothing, clean water, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> culture, religion and language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> express themselves freely | <input type="checkbox"/> live and develop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> nutritious food | <input type="checkbox"/> a nationality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> information | <input type="checkbox"/> be safe from harm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> be cared for | <input type="checkbox"/> education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a name | <input type="checkbox"/> privacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> have their best interests considered | <input type="checkbox"/> know their rights and responsibilities |

Step 2: Pick a Verb

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> value | <input type="checkbox"/> promote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> support | <input type="checkbox"/> mind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> encourage | <input type="checkbox"/> affirm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protect | <input type="checkbox"/> assist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> nurture | <input type="checkbox"/> appreciate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> consider | <input type="checkbox"/> be concerned |
| <input type="checkbox"/> defend | <input type="checkbox"/> look after |
| <input type="checkbox"/> contribute | <input type="checkbox"/> respect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> uphold | <input type="checkbox"/> assert |
| <input type="checkbox"/> advocate | <input type="checkbox"/> safeguard |

Questionnaire on Children's and Young People's Rights

Purpose:

- To support young people to talk about children's and young people's rights with their parents/guardians and to build their awareness of the pivotal role that parents/guardians play in protecting different children's and young people's rights on a daily basis.

You will need:

- One copy of the letter to parents/guardians from the Ombudsman for Children and one copy of the questionnaire on children's rights for each young person.

Steps:

- Give each young person a copy of the letter to parents/guardians from the Ombudsman for Children and a copy of the Questionnaire on Children's Rights.
- Ask the young people to do the following for homework:
 - a) give the letter to their parent/guardian to read;
 - b) complete the questionnaire on children's rights with their parent/guardian.
- Explain to the young people that they should bring their completed questionnaires back into class.
- So that young people are familiar with the letter before bringing it home, you might ask one or more students to read it aloud to the rest of the class and ask some follow-up questions.

Follow-up in class:

- Facilitate a discussion that supports the young people to share their findings with each other:
 - Were their parents/guardians aware that they are involved in protecting so many children's rights?
 - Which rights do their parents/guardians think are most important and why?
 - What do their parents/guardians think 'children's rights' are all about?
- Assist the young people to work together to collate the findings from their questionnaires and to create a visual presentation of these findings in one or more ways. For example, they could make a graph to present parents'/guardians' views on the most important children's rights they are helping to protect or do a collage or make a poster based around the key words used.
- If possible, please send the Ombudsman for Children's Office the collated findings of the questionnaires the young people completed with their parents/guardians. A feedback sheet is provided to assist you with this. Alternatively, you can email your feedback to us at oco@oco.ie (please put 'Children's Rights Questionnaire – Feedback' in the subject line).

Questionnaire on Children's and Young People's Rights

Feedback to OCO

The Ombudsman for Children's Office would be very interested to hear about the findings of the questionnaire that students completed with their parents/guardians. You can use this sheet to summarise the findings from your class. Please post your completed sheet to: Ombudsman for Children's Office, 1st Floor, Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1.

1. Parents/guardians were asked if they were aware that they are protecting so many children's rights:

- Total number of parents/guardians who answered 'Yes'
- Total number of parents/guardians who answered 'No'

2. Parents/guardians were asked to consider the different children's rights they are helping to protect and to say which three rights they think are most important. Please tell us the five rights that were named most frequently by parents/guardians in order of frequency (where 1 = named most frequently):

1. Children's right to
2. Children's right to
3. Children's right to
4. Children's right to
5. Children's right to

3. Parents/guardians were asked what they think 'children's rights' are all about. Please summarise their views by using some key words (e.g. 'respecting', 'protecting', 'caring', 'helping'):

.....
.....
.....
.....

School's name: Teacher's name:

School contact details:.....

Class (e.g. '1st year CSPE'): Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am writing to you because your child is learning about children's rights and responsibilities in school through resource materials developed by the Ombudsman for Children's Office. These materials are the third in a series of educational resources developed by my Office since 2007.

As Ombudsman for Children, my job, and statutory responsibility, is to promote and monitor the rights and welfare of all children up to the age of 18. In doing this job, I am independent of government; I was appointed by the President and report to the Oireachtas.

Part of my job, as Ombudsman for Children, is to raise awareness of children's rights, including among children and young people. People often ask me where children's rights are defined. There are two main reference points as regards children's rights in Ireland: the Constitution, which is the basic legal instrument in Ireland, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a set of internationally agreed human rights standards for children that Ireland ratified in 1992.

Building understanding of what it means for children to have rights and what their rights are is a vital part of our efforts to ensure that children are respected, treated fairly and can experience their rights as they are growing up.

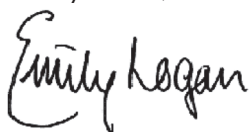
My Office can accept complaints about how the State provides services to children. Through investigating complaints, we see how lack of awareness and consideration of children's rights can have very damaging effects on the lives of children and their families. We have found that decisions which may have a profound impact on children's lives are sometimes not guided by children's best interests to any great extent. We have noticed that children are not always given the chance to express their views when these decisions are being made. And we have come across rules being applied in ways that are not always in the best interests of children and families.

We know that parents are the strongest advocates for their children's rights. The vast majority of the 6,000 complaints we have handled to date have been brought by parents on behalf of their children. Through this and other work we do, we are also aware of the many different ways in which parents, families and professionals throughout the country are protecting the rights of children every day, sometimes under very challenging circumstances. Thinking about what's best for children; working to provide for children's basic needs; protecting children from harm; caring for children when they are sick; supporting children to learn; encouraging children to talk about how they feel and listening to what they have to say; respecting children's dignity and nurturing their sense of self-worth. These are the kinds of things that give children's rights meaning to children themselves as they go about their daily lives.

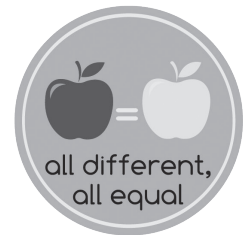
We have asked your child's teacher to give students in the class a questionnaire to fill out when they get home. We would be grateful if you could fill out this questionnaire with your child.

If you would like to know more about the work of our Office or if you have any questions we may be able to help with, please visit our website www.oco.ie, email us at oco@oco.ie or phone us on 01-8656800.

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Logan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Logan
Ombudsman for Children



Questionnaire on Children's and Young People's Rights

Please look at the different children's rights from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child shown on this sheet with your parent or guardian. When you have done this, please ask your parent or guardian these questions and write down their answers:

1. Were you aware that you are protecting so many children's rights?

● Yes ☐

● No ☐

2. Of the different children's rights that you are helping to protect, which 3 rights do you think are most important and why?

1.

because

2.

because

3.

because

3. As a parent or guardian, what do you think 'children's rights' are all about?

.....

.....

.....

Parent's / Guardian's signature:



Ombudsman for Children's Office
1st Floor
Millennium House
52-56 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1

Phone: 01-8656800
Email: oco@oco.ie
Website: www.oco.ie

