



CLASS CHARTER

GUIDELINES

A classroom charter is an agreement amongst the children and adults in your classroom that sets out the rights from the CRC that are deemed most relevant to your class and the actions to ensure that the rights can be realised and enjoyed by everyone.

The charter is not a behaviour management tool. Rules in codes of behaviours are often externally imposed, whereas charters are democratically negotiated. The participatory process in developing a charter is as important as the end product.

The term responsibility should only be used when referring to what adults will do as duty bearers to uphold children's rights. Remember that rights are inalienable, meaning they cannot be taken away. Having rights doesn't depend on fulfilling responsibilities. Rights can't be used as a reward or a punishment.

Benefits for children

- It builds shared values for a rights respecting classroom.
- It is a real and meaningful guide to action on a day-to-day basis.
- It develops a sense of ownership of the classroom learning.
- Its acts as the 'social glue' that binds everyone together.

Decide which articles to represent

A charter will take several sessions to complete. Children, staff and possibly parents, should be involved in the process.

Facilitate a child-led discussion and reach a consensus on which articles to include (whilst still acknowledging that rights are indivisible). You could use a diamond ranking activity to do this.

In infant settings two or three rights on a charter is typical, a senior primary class may have five or six.

Consider the language

The language of the Convention can be complicated. While it is good to encourage children to use their own words, it is important not to lose the accuracy in the meaning.

One way to simplify an article is to use fewer words, so for example, Article 31: "Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities" can, in a nursery setting, become "The right to play (31)" but not "The right to toys". Using the article number (at all ages) shows that rights are not just a nice idea but actually belong to part of something bigger, namely the Convention.

Agree actions

Agree actions for children as Rights Holders and actions for adults as Duty Bearers. Consider each chosen article and identify ways to respect these rights in the classroom.

For example, "We have agreed that the right to have your voice heard will be on our charter – how will you respect this right for yourself and for each other? What will adults (duty bearers) do to ensure you can enjoy this right in class?"

This may begin with a long list of suggested actions which will need to be streamlined or whittled down through discussion, agreement and, perhaps, more voting.

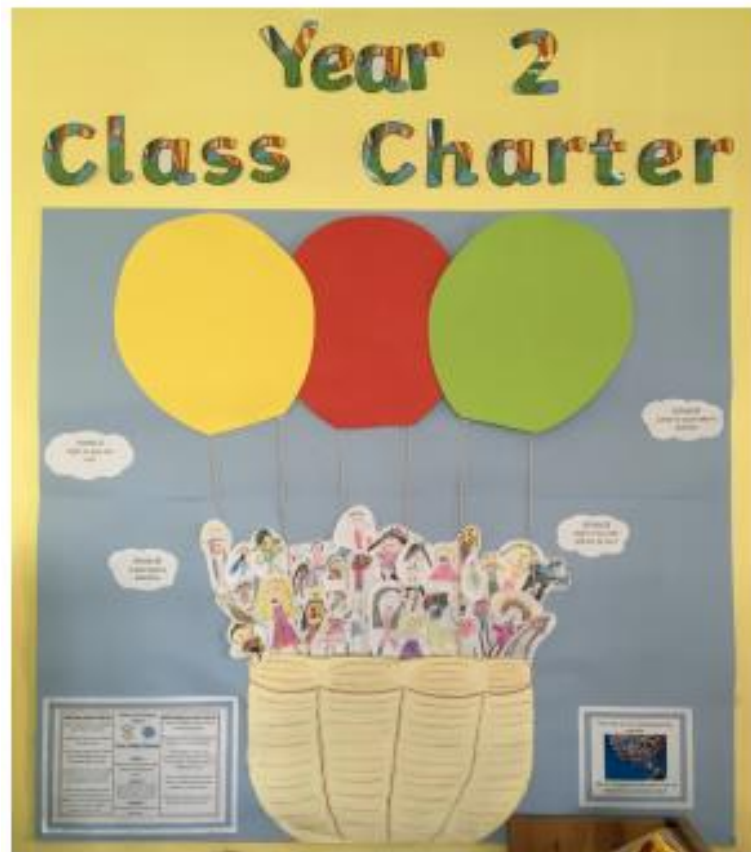
Design the charter

Encourage the children to create a design that represents their chosen articles, using a theme of their choosing.

Charters vary from class to class and from school to school. This is encouraged. Some are very creative, linking their charter to current learning themes or particular interests (butterflies, planets, kites, hand prints, super heroes perhaps) but they should all have the same content:

Child friendly description of rights (linked to specific articles from the CRC) - without losing the true meaning of the article being referenced. The article number should always be mentioned (Article 12 for example).

Actions for children to respect the rights of others and themselves and actions for adults as Duty Bearers to ensure that rights are being upheld and respected.



Sign and display

The pupils and adults based in that class should sign the charter in some way to show their agreement.

Signing may be attaching their photograph around the edge of the charter or adding a thumb print for example.

Ensure it is displayed in a place visible to all signatories. Refer to the charter on a regular basis to reinforce learning, for example, celebrate when the relevant rights are being positively respected, or remind children and adults of their mutual agreement if a problem arises.



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Cover photo: children participating in child rights programme, South Africa