

Torriano Junior School, Kentish Town

Described by Head of School, Helen Bruckdorfer, as 'a small school with big aspirations', global learning is built into the fabric of Torriano Junior School. Work on a range of issues is linked with the wider community and external organisations, embedded within the curriculum using a rights-based lens. A structured approach enables staff to take risks and build pupil participation; global learning at Torriano Junior School has deep roots linked to the school's wider philosophy and vision.

School motivations and ethos

At the heart of Torriano Junior School is a commitment for all pupils to grow and develop through providing relevant and engaging learning experiences, which support every pupil's personal development. Essential to achieving this is the Senior Leadership Team's (SLT) desire to ensure equality of experience in response to the needs of their diverse school community.

In keeping with this undertaking to the children, the school vision is determined in consultation with the pupils and is focused around the key question 'Who do you want to be?' From this flow 'Big Questions' for each year group, which guide critical engagement with relevant and meaningful issues to connect learning to the wider world.

Essential to this child-centred approach is a focus on children's rights, with a school strategic priority to be a Rights Respecting community that promotes active and global citizenship, advocating children's right to learn about and understand their changing world.

Consequently, this rights focus underpins global learning in the school; seen as a core part of their work in promoting local and global community links. It is a holistic view of learning that develops critical, active and engaged pupils who recognise and communicate their role as agents of change.

'We want children to be confident, we want them to be curious, we want them to have all the knowledge and skills that they need. But we also want them to understand the changing world and to be part of a discussion of how they can promote equality, and know that they are the citizens of now.' - *Susan Bush, Curriculum Development Leader*

The structure of activities

The key to Torriano's whole school approach is the curriculum which the SLT recognises as a crucial driving force. This is based on simple clear principles, using a rights lens to look at complex issues.

Their innovative approach features non-negotiable whole school curriculum themes and events, set by SLT. This cascades through to year group curriculum planning teams who devise schemes of work based around their Big Questions, always incorporating whole school outcomes to draw together and celebrate the children's work.

Torriano in context

Torriano is an average-sized junior school in a diverse area of Kentish Town in north London. Pupils have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, and nearly 50% learn English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and a high number have a statement of special educational needs.

A recent example was a whole school project on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which followed a focus on the second goal (achieving universal primary education) as part of the annual Send My Friend to School campaign learning about global inequality in access to school. The focus on rights aligned with Torriano's Rights Respecting School approach. This campaign was then used by teaching staff to support pupils' attendance.

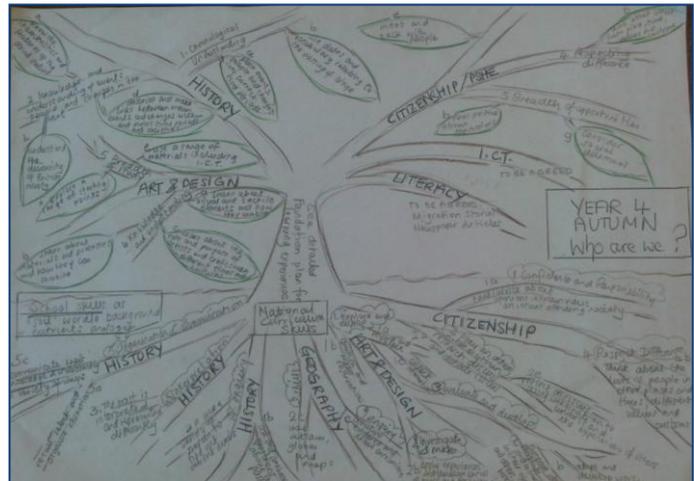
Rights Respecting at Torriano

Torriano is a level 2 UNICEF Rights Respecting school, which means a school commitment to the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is embedded in their curriculum. This provides a values-based lens to engage with global learning topics, ensuring everyone's engagement – parents, governors and pupils. The children elect Rights Respecting councillors who consult with their classmates ranging from issues within the school community to global campaigns. Their contributions play an important role in school improvement at Torriano.

Pupils from Year 5 also decided to form a task force in the school to raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals after some additional work with UNICEF.

'You need equality - the children absolutely have to have the same experience. And the only way to do it is through the curriculum. It has to permeate learning and influence the way the children learn. That's when you get the real benefits.' - *Helen Bruckdorfer, Head of School*

This approach blends national curriculum core literacy and numeracy knowledge, skills and understanding with meaningful global topics to create an engaging school curriculum. Delivering this through a cohesive, team approach ensures a spirit of consultation and evaluation. It supports a wide array of pupil-led projects and the involvement of parents and the wider community.



Curriculum planning using Big Questions

The school has begun a process of co-creating aspects of the curriculum in collaboration with external partner organisations.



Pupils take part in Oxfam's Water Week

Essential to the school's approach to its curriculum is the curriculum development leader, Susan Bush. Her role includes, at a macro level, helping set the whole school focus and reviewing and evaluating a project's effectiveness, to more specific support with the detailed planning of topics. However, all staff play an active role in curriculum development and are committed to this philosophy and approach. Critically, the school invests heavily in INSET and planning time for teachers to co-create and feed into the SLT vision.

'The Rights Respecting School ethos is in the arteries of our school.' - *Susan Bush, Curriculum Development Leader*

Torriano's global learning journey

The journey towards whole school global learning for Torriano began in 2005 when Bavaani Nanthabalan, Executive Head, joined the school as head teacher. This led to fresh thinking; returning to their vision for the school and deliberating what they wanted for the children. Fundamental to their renewed vision was a belief that pupils needed to relate to the world through considering local to global connections. This led to a curriculum review using the Global Dimension concepts as a framework.

Big Questions at Torriano

With one for each year group, Big Questions frame all teacher planning, building a learning scaffold for the whole school based around rights and global citizenship. For example, in Year 5 the Big Question is 'What makes me a responsible and respectful citizen?' Other Big Questions are what makes me 'caring and active', 'informed and understanding' and 'caring and just'.

As part of a further review process, in 2007, the school decided this more geographical focus on locality didn't support pupils' personal development. This led to a desire to explore further the school's vision and refocus on the values underpinning global learning. Pupils were consulted using the key question 'Who do you want to be?' and this led naturally to the school joining UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools programme.

Working with UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools programme allowed Torriano to build a curriculum framework focusing on five basic children's rights, which could connect learning into the vision for the school through an agreed rights-based 'meta-language'. The end result was a re-framing of the year group Big Questions to reflect this approach.

This approach to the curriculum has proved enormously successful, motivating and engaging teachers to design innovative learning experiences, and inspiring pupils to participate in a wide variety of pupil-led projects across the school, supported by their Rights Respecting School Council. Success has bred success, with the school receiving a host of awards and national recognition, including the Rights Respecting Council presenting to a conference of teachers; being visited as part of various national curriculum consultation processes; and working with UNICEF to support other Rights Respecting Schools. This has resulted in rich experiences now embedded within the culture and practice of the school.

The impact of global learning

Global learning has had a transformative effect at Torriano, impacting on multiple areas including quality of teaching, parental engagement, pupils' motivation to learn and an active community presence. For the SLT at Torriano it is a significant contributing factor to both engagement and achievement across the school.

Torriano's focus on citizenship and rights encourages pupils to build respect, value diversity and evolve a desire to care for others. Opportunities for pupils to exercise their right to be heard are essential to improve confidence and self-esteem; providing an excellent grounding for secondary school. Being able to communicate their ideas for change very clearly and not being afraid to ask questions are key attributes seen in the pupils at Torriano.



Maggie Atkinson, the Children's Commissioner for England, visits

‘It develops a part of us that will be helpful in the future. The being kind part, the emotional part to be a kind, nice, successful person in the future.’ - *Year 5 pupil*

Key links from Torriano

Rights Respecting Schools Award

www.unicef.org/rrsa

Eco-Schools Award

www.eco-schools.org.uk/

Send My Friend to School

www.sendmyfriend.org/

Oxfam Water Week

www.oxfam.org.uk/education/school-projects/water-week

Pupils say that global learning makes ‘school more exciting’ and encourages them to work hard. This motivation to learn has led to improved attendance in the school. Pupils also enjoy learning about other countries and global issues making them feel that they have a much better awareness and know things that others don’t know.

‘It helps you not just to think about yourself but to think about other people around the world.’ - *Year 5 pupil*

Being Rights Respecting is at the heart of the school’s behaviour policy, written in consultation with pupils. The common language of fairness and respect supports a positive and tolerant environment with improved behaviour. Allowing opportunity for pupil voice also improves pupil-teacher relationships and has a very positive impact on the

learning ethos within the classroom, enshrined in each Class Charter.

Teachers at Torriano enjoy the greater freedom the school’s approach to embedding global learning in the curriculum offers. Dealing with global content in ways sensitive to pupils’ needs supports their pedagogy, and despite the challenges of time required for planning, they find the opportunity to create relevant projects co-created with pupils exciting. SLT believe this has helped teacher retention.

Torriano’s focus on global learning has helped community engagement, building global awareness across the community. Parents and families were recently encouraged to attend a Speak Out event that enabled pupils to share what they had learnt about the MDGs with the community; parents are even set homework! Pupils also engage more widely in the community, for example, through surveying attitudes about the Millennium Development Goals and taking their views to their local MP, Frank Dobson.



Parent consultation as part of the MDG project

‘It raises awareness for everyone. What we learn we pass onto our family and our families pass it on. It spreads the word.’ - *Year 5 pupil*

The culture of community engagement is essential for the school’s outward looking perspective and has helped to improve relationships with parents.

Torriano’s advice for other schools

Begin curriculum design with your vision: determining your philosophy is the key to getting started with global learning. Getting the whole school community involved is essential to build your shared vision. Pilot ideas but remember to be rigorous; evaluate and consult. Develop ideas jointly with other schools; reciprocity is useful. But remember that the curriculum needs to be yours and that it must constantly evolve. Don’t be afraid to take risks; it makes the school more exciting and helps prepare children for their role as citizens of now, shaping the world they live in.