

# Peace education in the curriculum for Wales

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"The activities have benefited the children's knowledge and understanding more than any other project... the skills are perfect for the new Welsh curriculum" *Teacher on Carmarthenshire Peace project*

Peace education supports young people's education and development as local and global citizens in the context of the Curriculum for Wales. This paper explores:

- what peace education is
- the significance of peace education to the new curriculum, the current Programme of Government in Wales and the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- how peace education makes a difference to your pupils, schools and communities
- some good practice here in Wales

For more information about the specific links between Peace Education and the New Curriculum, see our Welsh Curriculum Peace Education Mapping.

## What is peace education?

Peace education is of: "...fundamental importance to the mission of UNESCO and the United Nations" *Koichiro Matsuura, former Director-General of UNESCO*

Ian Harris and John Synott have described peace education as a series of "teaching encounters" that draw from people:

- their desire for peace,
- nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and
- skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality.

Peace education activities promote the knowledge, skills and attitudes that help people either to prevent the occurrence of conflict, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create social conditions conducive to peace.

Peace education programmes address a wide range of themes, including effective communication, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, gender equality, human rights, environmental responsibility, tolerance of diversity and international understanding. Intrinsic to peace education is the development of critical thinking, creative problem-solving, empathy, cooperation, active participation and reflection.

In the words of Cora Weiss, President of the Hague Appeal for Peace: 'People usually say, how wonderful, when you tell them you are in the field of peace education, but I doubt they know what it really means.' Because peace education is often poorly understood it can be difficult for educators and policy makers to see where it fits into curricula or programmes of learning.

In broad terms, peace education can contain any of the following elements:

- Personal peace – evident in practices such as mindfulness which promote positive mental health and wellbeing;
- Inter-personal peace – including approaches such as relationship-building, conflict resolution and mediation – also learning about the causes of prejudice, stereotyping and conflict and how they can be overcome;
- Education about peace and peacemakers. This could include learning about one's own peace heritage - how people have worked for peace locally, nationally and internationally both in the past and today; and
- Education for peace: supporting young people to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand current issues, to become peacemakers and take action for peace, justice and human rights.



Peace education is also a crucial part of contributing towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education. One of the aims here is to: "ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development".

In her 2020 report, the Future Generation's Commissioner, stresses that we have a unique opportunity in Wales, through our new curriculum, to lead the way on Goal 4.7 and to showcase excellence. She urges public bodies in Wales, including the Welsh Government to "demonstrate global citizenship and leadership by supporting sustainable behaviour and making the connections." She goes on to specify that "our young people must be educated and prepared for a changing world, and the new education curriculum provides Wales with a once in a generation opportunity to achieve this.

Peace education has a key role to play in supporting the development of young ethical citizens of Wales and the world, able to understand their heritage, critically appraise contemporary developments, and work alongside others to support human rights, equality and sustainable lifestyles.

## Peace education and policy

As demonstrated in our mapping (annex 1), peace education has strong links to the development of healthy, confident individuals and ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.

The 2021 Programme for Government seeks to build and strengthen Wales' global relationships and to celebrate different cultures and embrace internationalism which is supported by peace education.

There is a specific link between the commitment to establish an Academi Heddwch (Peace Institute) in Wales and peace education, since developing an understanding about and culture of peace needs to start in our educational settings.

"Peace is a big part of our lives, which maybe we didn't realise. Now I understand more about the news.... As a Peace Ambassador I learnt about the Rights of the Child and the Welsh Children's Commissioner came to our school. Our school is twinned with a school in Kathmandu, Nepal and the Peace Ambassadors led a session about that for the primary schools who will be coming here."  
Delyn, year 8, Ysgol Dyffryn Aman



## What difference does peace education make?



Because peace education is broad, outcomes vary according to the approach being evaluated. However, a number of studies in the UK point to positive outcomes. Reporting on their work in 2020, RJ Working, an organisation supporting schools in Cornwall to introduce and develop Restorative Justice Approaches, reported that 100% of the 125 young people trained in depth felt more confident after the training, had a better understanding of prejudice and better ways of working with conflict. One staff member said: "All of the students have found it thought provoking and I think on the whole it has changed their own perspective on how they deal with real life situations."

CRESST, a charity that delivers peer mediation training in Sheffield schools, recently evaluated their programme in primary schools over 5 years. Of the 543 learners trained as peer mediators over that period, 89.9% said the training had made a difference to them personally. Staff reported children having more confidence and being more responsible: "The children who've done the training are much more confident, not only in themselves but in their ability to change things, to make things happen." An analysis of responses showed that the training received highest responses from participants in deprived areas.





- Ysgol David Hughes in Anglesey revisited their school behaviour policy and pupils led a campaign to promote acceptance of difference; Alaw Primary School in the Rhondda have adopted a whole school behaviour policy based on restorative approaches.
- Several schools have involved learners in developing a school peace logo and pledge, which are then displayed around the school (e.g. Cyfarthfa High School, Merthyr and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tirdeunaw, Swansea)
- Victoria Primary School in Wrexham organised a Peace Week at the beginning of the school year where all learners were involved in a range of activities and then delivered a series of monthly assemblies, based on a piece of peace art or poetry
- Learners at Ysgol Gynradd Parc y Tywyn learnt about the poet Hedd Wyn who died in WWI; pupils in Alaw Primary School in the Rhondda learnt about the Welsh Women's Peace Petition in 1923 – 4 and engaged in cross-curricular work about it. In Ysgol Bro Myrddin, Carmarthen, Sixth Form pupils researched different aspects of Wales' peace heritage and led lessons with Yr 8 pupils.

**"The whole school is happier, more tolerant and more respectful" as a result of becoming a Peace School.**  
*Deputy Head in a Peace School*

- In Ysgol Dyffryn Aman, Yr 9 pupils developed and implemented a 'Kindness Project' in their local community; as part of their work around Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) in Ysgol Acrefair, Wrexham, learners learnt about children starving in Yemen because of the current conflict, and also helped out in their local food bank.
- In Ysgol Dyffryn Aman, Yr 8 pupils learnt about the conflict in Syria and engaged in a critical and respectful discussion as to how outside countries should respond. Learners in Cyfarthfa High School learnt about conscientious objectors in their area and considered the pros and cons of acting on one's conscience in times of conflict.

## Peace Schools in Wales

In Wales, the Peace Schools Scheme run by the WCIA supports schools to develop an holistic approach, embedding peace into their ethos and developing it as a cross-curricular theme. There is an emphasis on developing skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and conflict resolution, as well as encouraging young people to learn about Wales' peace heritage and to take action on contemporary issues as ethical, informed citizens. Pupil voice is central to the scheme.

The scheme provides a framework for schools which they can adapt to their needs and circumstances and include a variety of approaches, such as Rights Respecting Schools, European and international projects and Philosophy for Children. Schools develop an Action Plan and can gain Peace School status at three levels.

**"I was inspired by the idea and it fitted ideally with the work on critical thinking we wanted to do as a school. It is super for a cross-curriculum project...We now have a new fortnightly school theme based on the SDGs, beginning with a school assembly, followed by class discussions, TED talks and quotes from famous people. A group of pupil volunteers have been promoting the scheme as Peace Ambassadors. The Peace School Scheme helps promote well-rounded citizens - locally, in Wales and the world."**

*Rachel Evans, History teacher, Ysgol Dyffryn Aman*

Peace Schools aim to be places where:

- Everyone feels safe, respected and valued
- There is a school ethos based on cooperation, respect for difference and problem-solving
- Peace is a common thread in learners' everyday lives – in the way they learn and live together
- The curriculum contains opportunities to learn about and reflect upon stories of peacemakers – from Wales and beyond
- Learners are encouraged to be critical active citizens of Wales and the world





## RECOMMENDATIONS

- As with all areas of pupil enrichment, the funding of peace education in Wales is haphazard. The main recommendation of this paper is that the Welsh Government sets up a transparent competitive grants programme for pupil enrichment to support the delivery of the new curriculum.
- ESDGC (which includes global citizenship, environmental, rights-based and peace education) should be prioritised within that funding because of the complementarity to the new curriculum and the skills gaps in this area.



## ABOUT THE WCIA

The Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA) is a registered charity that aims to inspire people to learn about and act on global issues so that everyone in Wales can contribute to creating a fairer and more peaceful world.

This is achieved through delivering an exciting and innovative global learning programme; inspiring communities and organisations across Wales to take global action; and building global partnerships that connect Wales and the world.

All education programmes developed by the Welsh Centre for International Affairs are piloted using an action learning approach, where we explore the needs of learners and teachers, learn from delivery and feedback and adapt activities and materials as necessary.

## RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

[Wales Peace Schools Scheme](#)

[Peace education and global citizenship case studies](#)

[CRESST, 2021: 'Celebrating 5 years of Young Peacemakers Project'](#)

J. O'Flaherty & M. Liddy (2017): The impact of development education and education for sustainable development interventions: a synthesis of the research, Environmental Education Research

J Warin & R Hibbin (2020): Embedding Restorative Practice in Schools. University of Central Lancaster

[RJ Working \(2020\): 2020 Impact Report: The Ripple Effect of Restorative Practice in Cornwall](#)

[Scottish Mediation: What does Research say?](#)