

NEWS ARTICLE



CAN KIDS HAVE A SAY? THE RIGHT OF CHILDREN TO BE HEARD IN SCHOOL AND SOCIETY

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Turks and Caicos Islands Human Rights Commission



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Can Kids Have a Say? The Right of Children to Be Heard in School and Society

Imagine a classroom where students help shape their lessons, a home where children's feelings are valued, or a community where young voices are not just heard but respected. This isn't a fantasy; it's a right. According to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), every child has the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and for those views to be given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity.

This principle holds profound significance in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Children's perspectives are no longer considered trivial or secondary in schools, households, or policymaking spaces. Their input is not a disruption; it's an asset. When we truly listen to children, we not only validate their dignity, we strengthen our society.

Understanding what children are trying to say, whether in words, actions, or even silence, has preventative advantages. It can help detect bullying, stress, or abuse early, while also giving educators and parents the insight needed to support a child's development effectively. By encouraging children to speak up about how they learn best, how they feel at home, or what kind of community they want to grow up in, we are investing in smarter, more responsive policies and practices.

Such communication does not mean abandoning adult guidance or discipline. Rather, it challenges us not to take things personally when children express frustration or disagreement. Instead of silencing them, we should teach them how to speak politely, respectfully, and constructively. Emotional intelligence, after all, starts with being allowed to feel and speak safely.

Involving children in decisions about education, family life, and even national planning in TCI is not only possible, it's essential. Whether it's through student councils, family discussions, or youth forums, we must build the habit of asking children, "What do you think?" And more importantly, we must be ready to listen with open minds and hearts.

When children feel heard, they feel valued. When they feel valued, they thrive. And when they thrive, so does our entire nation.

Let's ensure every child in the Turks and Caicos Islands knows: yes, you can have a say. And we're listening.

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