

NEWS ARTICLE



CHILDREN FIRST: WHAT EVERY PARENT AND TEACHER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD RIGHTS

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Turks and Caicos Islands Human Rights Commission



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Children First: What Every Parent and Teacher Should Know About Child Rights

As the 2025–2026 academic year begins, the Turks and Caicos Islands Human Rights Commission extends a warm welcome back to all teachers, students, school administrators, the Ministry of Education, Social Development, and all other departments associated with providing access to education. We wish you a successful and rewarding year ahead, filled with growth, discovery, and achievement. This first week of school is not just the start of a new term; it's an opportunity to recommit ourselves to one of the most powerful principles in education: putting children first.

But what does it really mean to put children first? Is it about feeding them well, sending them to school, or keeping them safe? Absolutely, but it's more than that. It's about recognizing that children are not just “future adults” or “students in waiting”; they are human beings with rights, voices, and potential that deserve protection and participation right now.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), of which the Turks and Caicos Islands is a signatory and obliged to embrace as part of our human rights framework, sets out a clear message: every child has the right to survive, thrive, be protected, and be heard.

Education is not a privilege; it's a right. Article 28 of the CRC states that every child has the right to a quality education that develops their personality, talents, and abilities to the fullest. In the classroom, this means more than just teaching math and reading. It means nurturing confidence, curiosity, and creativity. It means making sure schools are safe places free from fear, violence, or discrimination.

All children have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Teachers, parents, guardians, and community leaders all—



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share a duty to protect children, whether it's from physical harm, emotional neglect, or online dangers. Recognizing the signs of abuse and speaking up is not "getting involved"; it's doing what's right. Prevention starts with awareness.

Perhaps the most overlooked but powerful of all rights is the right of children to have a say in matters that affect them. Article 12 of the CRC emphasizes that children's opinions should be considered and respected, whether in school policies, home rules, or national laws. When we ask children what they think and truly listen, we help them grow into thoughtful, engaged citizens. We also build trust and strengthen relationships at home and in school.

As parents, teachers, and caregivers, we are not just caretakers; we are duty-bearers. This means we are responsible for ensuring that children's rights are respected and upheld every day. That responsibility is not always easy, especially when children push back or challenge decisions. But by guiding them with patience, modeling respectful dialogue, and showing them that their voice matters, we prepare them to lead with empathy and integrity.

Children's rights are not just words in a treaty; they are promises we must keep. In putting children first, we don't just protect their future; we enrich our present.

Let's make the Turks and Caicos Islands a place where every child knows their rights, feels safe, and is empowered to dream, speak, and grow.

Because when children come first, everyone wins.

Samuel Lightbourn
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