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Dear Pupils of Greenhaw Primary School

### **UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)**

Thank you for your recent letters regarding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) We have really enjoyed reading why you feel particular rights are important to you and we wanted to set out why we believe that the UNCRC is important here.

First of all, can we say that we are very pleased that you have been learning about your rights in school. Some of you have asked why it took so long to develop the Convention. Like anything else we do in life, it often takes time to get the important things right and we believe there is nothing more important than the rights of children and young people.

We're sure you will agree that developing one set of children's rights across one hundred and ninety-four countries where children live very different lives with very different experiences, beliefs and cultures is great news.

You asked which of the rights we believe is most important and this is a very difficult question! We think that it is important to remember that the Convention has to cover all children across all countries, many of whom do not have the benefits which we have of good schools and hospitals.

Indeed even within our own society, some children unfortunately do not have the things we take for granted – they may not be able to live with their families, they may not have enough to eat or they may suffer discrimination because of the country they are from, the religion they are or the colour of their skin. So all of the rights in the Convention are very important as if you take away any one of those rights it will leave some children exposed to exploitation or abuse.

There are four 'Principles in the Convention that are really very important because they are the foundations for everything else. Basically, the first one says that all children are entitled to the same rights – it doesn't matter whether they are a boy or a girl, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is or whether they are rich or poor.

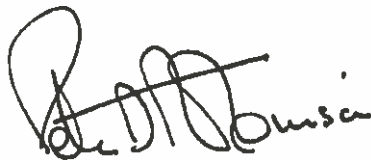
The second principle says that all adults should do what is best for you. The next important principle is that every child has the right to life, survival and development; for example you should be able to go to school and access health care.

Finally - children have the right to be heard. As adults we have to listen to what you have to say about decisions that affect you and more importantly we have to take your opinions into account.

We want to make sure that the work we are doing in the Executive takes into consideration these principles. This means that we need you to keep doing what you have done by writing to us as we want to hear your opinion on the things that impact you.

We hope that you will continue to learn more about your rights and keep up the good work in speaking out and letting us know what you think.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter D. Robinson'.

**RT HON PETER D ROBINSON MLA**  
**First Minister**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin'.

**MARTIN McGUINNESS MLA**  
**deputy First Minister**