

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	St. Mary and St Thomas Church of England Primary School
Headteacher:	Lyndsey Lewis
RRSA coordinator:	Linda Smith
Local authority:	St Helen's Council (The school is a founding member of The Three Saints Academy Trust)
Assessor(s):	Martin Russell
Date:	16 th July 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessor would like to thank the children, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and governors for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with adults and children during the assessment and for the detailed evidence provided to support the process. Prior to the assessment visit, the school completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form.

It was evident that children's rights are embedded across the school and underpin every facet of school life.

Particular strengths of the school include:

- The breadth and depth of children's knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and their understanding of the related concepts such as the unconditional and inherent nature of rights.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of all staff, inspired by their Headteacher, to the embedding of a rights-based approach and to their role as duty bearers.
- The ongoing growth in pupil voice and participation since the Silver accreditation.

Outcomes for Strands A, B and C have all been achieved.

2. MAINTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING STATUS

Our experience has shown that there are actions that have proven useful in other RRSA schools and settings in helping them to maintain and build on their practice at Gold level. Here are our recommendations for your school:

- Build on the excellent ambassadorial activity undertaken so far by reaching out to local secondary schools to help them to know about rights and to encourage their engagement with RRSA.
- Strengthen the children's understanding of and commitment to campaigning and activism by reconnecting with and extending the use of Unicef UK's [OutRight](#) resources.
- Continue to expand the reach and impact of pupil voice into all areas of school improvement and strategic planning, systemising the excellent practice already in place.
- Look for ways of building additional support to help parents and carers to understand their role in supporting their children to access their rights.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	A town centre primary school with 223 children on roll. Over a quarter of the children are identified as having some additional learning needs with around 2% having an EHCP. Fewer than 4% speak English as an additional language but just over half the children receive additional funding through the Pupil Premium. The school was judged to be Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted in February 2019.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher, 3 members of SLT and and RRSA coordinator.
Number of children and young people interviewed	22 children in focus groups and over 60 spoken with in three class visits.
Number of adults interviewed	3 teaching staff, 3 support staff (one a governor), 2 parents, 1 governor who is also the minister of the partner church.
Evidence provided	Learning walk, focus groups, written evidence and class visits.
Registered for RRSA: August 2017	Silver achieved: July 2018

STRAND A: TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT RIGHTS

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is made known to children, young people and adults, who use this shared understanding to work for improved child wellbeing, school improvement, global justice and sustainable development.

Strand A has been achieved

Children across the school were confident in speaking about and explaining a wide range of different articles from the CRC. They were very clear in articulating the role of duty bearers in ensuring that children have access to their rights. The school has made very effective use of Unicef's 'ABCDE of Rights' resource, with children of all ages readily referring to the fact that no one can take rights away, that *"You have them all from your birth."* and that they can't be divided. One pupil sought to explain something of the history of the CRC, recognising that many people thought that the conditions faced by children in Victorian times was *"dangerous and unfair"* so people started the idea of children having rights. Several conversations included reference to the rights being both inalienable and unconditional. The children were confident in pointing out that, despite the universal nature of rights, children in many parts of the world are prevented from enjoying all their rights as a consequence of poverty, war or natural disasters. They were able to explore the impact on rights such as shelter, clean water, protection from harm, family life and the right to education. Direct examples included, *"If there is not enough rain some children have to get up early and walk miles for water, so they are not getting their education."* Pupils also recognised that there are situations in the UK context which might mean that some children can't enjoy their rights for example, as a result of homelessness, bullying or not being treated fairly.

In addition to a very well-planned assembly programme and effective use of special events and days, the school's curriculum offers numerous opportunities for the children to encounter different rights in the context of planned learning. Numerous planning examples were seen together with a system of rights stickers which staff could attach to children's work; for example, Article 24 was highlighted in a science book where the work was about water purification. The school has also introduced the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Global Goals) and these are prevalent in the planning and in pupil work, alongside articles from the Convention. The Convention is very visible around the school and the children explained that they now have homework tasks about rights each half term so that families can be more involved in learning about them. The website and references in letters and newsletters are also ways in which the knowledge of rights is reaching families. There is an awareness among the parents and in the community that the children's knowledge of rights is starting to have an impact, *"They are more interested in watching the world and they ask more questions now."* One of the Governors pointed out that *"You see a difference in the way the children are with each other in the neighbourhood and in the Parish."*

The headteacher, governors and senior leaders are fully committed to a rights-based approach across the school. They see the commitment to the Convention as an essential way of supporting their children; in a community context that has the potential to be insular, *"We want them to be more outward looking and have a real engagement with the global dimension."* The headteacher explained, *"We want to take the children beyond 'Fundamental British Values' to see that they have a real voice and a roll to play in the world. We want them to be empowered to fight for their rights so they can break out of some of the traditional cycles."* This strong sense of aspiration was echoed by all adults spoken with and there was a consistent narrative around rights respecting being trusted by all as the catalyst to bring about this change.

STRAND B: TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH RIGHTS – ETHOS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Actions and decisions affecting children are rooted in, reviewed and resolved through rights. Children, young people and adults collaborate to develop and maintain a school community based on equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation; this includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners and promotes wellbeing.

Strand B has been achieved

The children's understanding of themselves as rights holders provided an excellent framework for them to articulate all the different ways in which they can enjoy their rights in school. Among many other elements, they referred to the right to relax and play, having a good education, being kept safe and having their privacy respected and their opinions listened to and taken seriously. Asked about what happens if there is a challenge to their rights a Y2 pupil summed it up by saying *"You have to find a way to get them back."* And others went on to explain about the importance of speaking up and seeking the help of a trusted adult, *"A person you are happy around... and you know they will do something about it."* There was certainty among the children that the school's systems for dealing with concerns raised by any pupil were both accessible and trusted; a number of children confirmed this to be so, from their own experience or that of a friend. There was unanimity that their school was very fair, and they had a good understanding what this meant, relating it to equality, good treatment and everybody being listened to. An exploration of equity led to the children citing a range of comments including, *"Some people might have a difficulty, so they need extra help with some things."*

Throughout the visit, it was very clear that mutually respectful relationships are prevalent across the school. The children spoke about how well everyone gets on and how friendly their school is, *"Nobody ever really disrespects people."* When asked about how rights help when there are disagreements or problems, pupils said *"People should listen to everybody's thoughts and not just one."* It was explained that *"this approach"* is always part of the solution whether self-managed by the children or when adult intervention is needed. The pupils in leadership roles of Wellbeing Ambassadors and Wellbeing Class Companions have been trained in restorative justice strategies and their scripted dialogue is linked to rights. The SLT explained that, partly as a consequence of their RRS work, they have developed a new Behaviour and Relationships policy. This includes class charters which, adults commented, *"Have largely replaced traditional class rules."* The pupils spoke positively about how incidents are dealt with and had a sense of what it is to be treated with dignity, despite not yet being particularly familiar with the word itself.

Safety is a high priority for the school and was referred to, in various conversations throughout the visit. Contexts explored included safeguarding, the playground and use of the internet. The recent Ofsted report highlighted strategies around safeguarding as a strength of the school. To help the children understand their right to be safe in situations beyond school, the leadership have established involvement in the 'Mini Police' which is helping the children to grow in both awareness and resilience within their local community. Incidents of discriminatory behaviours and bullying are rare and decreasing and the school's anti-bullying input is linked to all other aspects of being safe from harm and is woven through with appropriate articles from the Convention. The School Council has a standing item on their agenda about health and safety, so the children are routinely able to raise any concerns or questions.

The school is proactive in highlighting and supporting all aspects of the children's health. Staff, pupils and parents all spoke positively about the impact of this work with regard to diet and exercise. All children spoken with demonstrated a very mature understanding of mental health and of the

vocabulary associated with expressing their emotions. Numerous layers of provision support this including Year 3 taking part in weekly yoga sessions to improve mental wellbeing and to teach the children self-calming techniques and an open-door policy to the Wellbeing Team for children to speak and resolve worries or anxieties. One child pointed out the risks associated with not expressing emotions, *"It would feel like you were carrying something on your shoulder all the time."* Their work in this area has been recognised with a Gold Award from the Carnegie Centre of Excellence in School Mental Health

The school has a highly inclusive culture and the SLT emphasised that this is fundamental to the school's success. The individuality of each child is paramount to the school supporting them in realising their rights. Significant resource is channelled to an impressive range of strategies and services to ensure that such provision is effective as it can be. For example, transition support is provided for children across the whole school, whenever they are facing change including those moving onto high school; all children have the opportunity to be included in extracurricular activities and school has 100% take up and 'stay and play' which is highly successful in younger classes has been modified to Y6. Adults shared examples relating to particularly vulnerable children growing in confidence and feeling empowered through knowing their rights to make choices in their life out school such as engaging in other activities aimed at young people.

The children were passionate about their right to an education and the role they can play in making the most of this. With minimal prompting they launched into detailed explanations of peer assessment, and different ways of helping each other. Some children explained that, *"We have the 'Mastery Curriculum', so you would show somebody the method to do something, but you wouldn't tell them the answer."* Staff pointed out that *"Pupil voice is sought during subject monitoring and are able to discuss their learning and indicate if their rights are being met and if not, why not?"* Both staff and parents commented upon the children's heightened appreciation of their learning since becoming rights respecting. This was exemplified with the following anecdote: Following worship focussing on child labour one child commented, *"I can't believe I sometimes moan about coming to school when they don't have a choice."*

STRAND C: TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR RIGHTS – PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT AND ACTION

Children are empowered to enjoy and exercise their rights and to promote the rights of others locally and globally. Duty bearers are accountable for ensuring that children experience their rights.

Strand C has been achieved

The voice of the children has become particularly influential in the school and conversation with the headteacher made it apparent that the culture established across the school is one in which the children must come first, consequently their opinions are paramount, *"the voice of the child is the most important thing here."* One pupil encapsulated this, saying, *"We have a lot of democracy in this school!"* The school offers multiple opportunities for the children to take on leadership roles and have their voice heard; in addition to the Rights Ambassadors, teams include the Bully Busters (who have chosen to re-brand as Wellbeing Champions, to be more positive), Peer Listeners, Mini Police and the School Council. Many of these groups lead assemblies, deliver training to their peers and feedback views about improvements they would like to see to the SLT or governors. Examples discussed include, the SIP priority of improving reading across the school children involved pupils in a consultation as to what the school needed to do, and National Parliament Day involved a school referendum which resulted in the introduction of 'Run a Weekly Mile'. The pupils also contribute to the

staff appointment process by feeding back to SLT and Governors after the candidates have taught them.

The school has developed an effective ambassadorial role, taking the Convention beyond their own community; presentations about Rights Respecting to other primary schools in the locality have led to these schools making more progress with or registering for the programme. The commitment of the children at St. Mary and St. Thomas to advocate for the rights of others is becoming embedded, one member of staff explained that *"Our children are more confident now. They have begun to see the bigger picture and they realise that they can make a difference in the world."* Parents and carers particularly are impressed by this and welcome the fact that their children take an active interest in the world around them, whether on environmental issues or injustices locally or globally.

The children spoke confidently about campaigning and speaking out for the rights of others. This has been structured on a class by class basis with Y1, for example, researching access to education using the 'Send My friend...' materials and writing letters to their MP. Y5's engagement with OutRight engaged the children in advocating for national policy change but also had a positive impact locally: by writing to the local Asda store, they have secured a parking permit scheme which means many parents no longer park so close to the school. The children were very proud that their actions can make a difference, as one said, *"It's our right to have our voice heard, so adults should listen to us properly."* The children also recognise how fundraising can make a difference to the lives of children. Together with staff, they initiated a 'Reverse Advent Calendar' which proved to be very popular and generated significant contributions for the local Foodbank.