



UNICEF UK RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL AWARD ASSESSMENT REPORT LEVEL TWO

School:	St Mary's CE Primary School
Headteacher:	Jenny McGarry
RRSA coordinator:	Phil Trohear
Local authority:	Manchester
Assessors:	Martin Russell and Pat Peaker
Date:	19 th May 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessors would like to thank everyone at St Mary's for the warmth of their welcome and for making so much high quality evidence available both prior to and during the assessment visit. The extensive use of video material and electronic versions of the evidence was particularly impressive.

It is particularly notable that the whole school community has embraced the UNCRC and children's rights have become integral to how the school functions and communicates its work both internally and to wider audiences – as one adult said during the assessment: 'They are putting it into practice!'

2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING LEVEL 2

No requirements noted



3. MAINTAINING LEVEL 2

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 Level 2. Here are our recommendations for your school:

Continue to embed the Unicef guidance about rights and respect to ensure no future risk of ambiguity or misunderstanding about 'rights and responsibilities'.

Continue to provide support for other schools by actively promoting RRSA within the Local Authority and beyond.

Maintain the focus on developing opportunities for children to enhance their sense of what it means to be rights respecting global citizens.

4. THE ASSESSMENT IN DETAIL

4.1. The school context

St Mary's is a larger than average city centre primary school with around 425 pupils on roll. It serves a highly diverse community with a wide range of ethnicities and cultures represented. Three quarters of the children speak English as an additional language and around the same number are entitled to support through the Pupil Premium. Both figures are significantly higher than the national average. The percentage of children with a statement of additional needs or being supported at School Action Plus is less than half the national average at 2.6%.

At its last full inspection in 2009, the school was graded Outstanding overall. Among other awards and accreditations, St Mary's was the TES Primary School of the Year in 2014 and has achieved Healthy School Status and the Eco Schools award. They first registered to become a Unicef UK Rights Respecting School in 2011 and were awarded Level 1 in June 2013.



4.2. Assessment information

Self-evaluation form received	Yes
Impact evaluation form received	Yes
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher RRSA coordinator - deputy headteacher Assistant Headteachers, SENCO and Pastoral and Community support colleagues.
Number of children and young people interviewed	Approximately 30 children in formal meetings, 60 in class based Q&A sessions plus many spoken with around the school..
Number of staff interviewed	6 teaching staff 3 support staff 2 parents 2 Governors including the Chair
Evidence provided	Learning walk Assembly Written evidence with e-links to documents, PowerPoint presentations and videos Website

Standard A:

Rights-respecting values underpin leadership and management

Standard A has been achieved

The whole school community has embraced the UN Convention on the rights of the child and lives it out in day to day practice; this is because the school's leaders are passionate about and totally commitment to the access of all children to their rights.

The headteacher and senior team at St Mary's have succeeded in placing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the very heart of the school. It was immediately evident to the assessors that every aspect of the school's life and work is underpinned by a strong and accurate understanding of children's rights. The headteacher sees the convention as a 'framework' that supports everything and in very challenging situations



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enables you to 'check and be confident that you are doing the right thing.' The sustained improvement in the school and the culture of success is seen by senior leaders as intrinsic to their rights respecting ethos. They explained that 'children have completely understood this culture... the whole school has taken on a better quality.' The school's diverse multicultural intake is embraced as a significant asset and the strong links with partner schools in other parts of Manchester has been hugely influential as well as mutually supportive. The school provided extensive data and other evidence to demonstrate that all key indicators around wellbeing, attendance, relationships and attainment continue to be very positive and it is taken as a 'given' that being a rights respecting school contributes significantly to this. The 'cooperative learning' philosophy and the Success for All literacy programme are seen as examples of how a rights respecting approach can be manifested in practice.

The UNCRC is at the heart of all strategic thinking at St Mary's and governors spoke with enthusiasm about how the language of rights is enabling them to address the challenge of being faithful to the Church of England mission whilst embracing and engaging with a multi faith community. Last year's SIAMS inspection noted that the *'school's deep commitment to the UNCRC is skilfully linked to Christian values and experience, producing worship which is engaging and inspiring.'* Both governors and senior leaders spoke passionately about the extent to which RRS is 'so embedded' that it is completely sustainable: 'Distributed leadership has ensured that it is now completely part of the school.' Governors described how the CRC has become part of their policy review process and the SLT explained that for 'all documents and policies the rights are always the starting point.' A 'position statement', linking the school's ethos to the CRC prefaces all policies and all the practice discussed and evidenced through the visit made clear that children's rights are fundamental to the school's thinking. An example of this is the behaviour strategy which includes a 'reflection' template requiring linkage to rights.

The inclusive and participatory nature of the school is apparent in numerous ways, most significantly in the powerful level of parental and community engagement such as making the school available at weekends in response to parents wanting to provide Somali lessons for their children; parents attending residential team building events to improve their confidence in contributing to focus groups for school improvement; the early help model of parental and family support. One professional who works with St Mary's as well as many other schools explained that you can really see the difference here because the leadership is so focussed on the children's rights. The school's powerful collaboration with The Willows and Haveley Hey as a TLC – Transforming Learning Community - has been founded on their RRS work and is the embodiment of rights respecting relationships among and between the schools, their children and families.

St Mary's is ambassadorial for Unicef and the RRS and is a powerful advocate for children's rights. As a school with a significant public profile, they take every opportunity to celebrate their RRS commitment and it is clearly portrayed as a contributing element of their wider success. On the morning of the assessment the headteacher had heard that Shami Chakrabarti, the Director of Liberty, had become aware of their work at a conference and would like to visit. The school has encouraged other schools to register for RRS and has been influential in the recent improved growth of the Award in Manchester. The SLT constantly monitor the impact of all aspects of their work and invariably consult children, families and staff. Responses are extremely positive with an almost unanimous affirmation of the statement 'RRS and the CRC is good for St Mary's'. The schools self-evaluation for assessment stated: *Observations of learning in the classroom show that RRS behaviours*



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are happening in the classrooms. All classes have classroom charters and relate to St Mary's behaviour policy..... In previous School Improvement visitsSt Mary's School Improvement Officer rated the school as outstanding and learning to be outstanding. For Key Stage 2 results, St Mary's reading was in the top 2% and top 9% for Numeracy. This accelerated progress reflects a positive, collaborative practise in the classroom.'

The leadership team at St Mary's is fully committed to developing the children's sense of their place and their role in the wider world, of global citizenship and of sustainable development. The work of the school's eco committee is explicitly linked to rights and the curriculum is developed and monitored by SLT to ensure good global learning. An example for the school's leadership placing rights at the heart of their thinking was the a recent selection process to identify staff to travel to India as part of an ongoing British Council project; this included questions about how the opportunities afforded by this visit might link with and contribute to RRS priorities.

Standard B:
The whole school community learns about the CRC

Standard B has been achieved

Knowledge of the Convention is a very high priority for the school with every opportunity being taken to plan for, teach and promote a strong awareness and deep understanding of children's rights.

During the assessment visit extensive conversations took place which demonstrated that virtually all members of the school community knew about and could discuss a wide range of Articles from the Convention. There was a clear appreciation of the universality of rights and that rights should be accessed by all children and do not have to be earned. Comments made by the children included: 'We have our rights from when we are born until the age of 18.. then you have human rights.' ; 'All children around the world should have the same rights no matter what you believe in.'. When we mentioned that not all schools learn about rights one pupil was outraged and said that 'rights are so important everybody needs to know about them!' The children and adults have become ambassadors for the UNCRC; in addition to links with other schools, they have spoken at conferences and events and planning to incorporate the promotion of rights as a learning module for trainee teachers. One adult explained that the children share their knowledge of rights with their peers beyond school and described conversations she heard about rights in a local adventure playground.

Parents, governors and the wider school community have developed a good awareness about rights through letters home, leaflets prepared by the children, the website and in special Tuesday assemblies. Some of the parents spoken with have become passionate about the school's promotion of the CRC and directly contribute to the work both in school and by speaking at events and conferences. Governors and parents described how the school really thinks about and involves the children and that the focus on rights has strengthened this. Those spoken with really valued 'such an enrichment in their lives at an



early age.’ ; ‘they talk about “being the best they can be”...’ ; ‘there is a real sense of aspiration at this school.’

Displays promoting the Convention as a whole as well as individual relevant Articles are prominent around the school including a mixture of published materials such as the Unicef poster set as well as the children’s own pictures and writing about their rights and the challenges around rights globally. Planning, pupil work and teaching resources were seen or talked about from a wide range of subjects and children described lessons across the school in which rights were prominent, these included a Y5 project exploring the rights of children in Victorian Britain, a project about water and ‘toilets around the world’, needs and wants activities in KS1 and a topic on life in Nigeria..

The children at have a growing sense of global citizenship and they are good at seeing the wider world from the perspective of children’s rights. They mentioned the recent earthquake in Nepal as an example of rights being put at risk through a natural disaster. Pupils also mentioned how wars like the current conflict in Syria may stop people from accessing their rights. Pupils were able to make the connections between fair trade and the access of others to their rights. Staff commented that learning about global issues ‘goes deeper because of their rights knowledge.’

Standard C:
The school has a rights-respecting ethos

Standard C has been achieved

The ethos of the school promotes and facilitates strong and respectful relationships in all directions; this is because respect for the rights of others is central to the whole community.

Charters have become established practice at St Mary’s and the children were able to describe both the discussion around the rights to be included in their charters and the ways in which the charters are used as a focus for reflection and dialogue when rights have not been respected. One pupil explained that ‘before we make our charters we all have to understand about rights first.’ Adults commented that ‘children in class are quite likely to say, for example, that somebody is stopping my right to learn.’ The charters make accurate use of articles from the convention and are ‘signed’ in a variety of different ways. Although the school’s charters are totally underpinned by a consistent understanding that rights are unconditional, a more consistent implementation of the RRSA charter guidance would strengthen them further. The SLT have made a commitment to securing this.

The children were very clear that ‘learning about rights helps us to respect each other.’ Parents commented that their children learning about rights is making life better for everyone ‘it’s a win-win situation’. Staff commented that the children now have a greater understanding of how their actions impact on others. The staff reported children appear more considerate when using and sharing materials and games in class and in the playground.



Discussions during the assessment visit made very clear that respect for the right to learn is a strong feature of the school. This confirmed the evidence of pupil surveys undertaken by the school in which the children said that they support each other in their learning and that they have a say in the way they learn. The children talked about ways in which they engaged with their learning and have an active role in evaluating their progress. They value the regular target setting and reviews of progress with their teachers and see this as an important way of ensuring their progress. The line from Article 29 referring to 'being the best you can be' has become something of a mantra mentioned frequently by children of all ages and appreciated by parents as being consistent with what they want for their children, as well as for themselves! Staff across the school are in no doubt that rights respecting approaches have enhanced teaching, learning and progress.

Pupil safety is given significant status in the school and the children are very good at articulating numerous ways in which this is secured for them by adults and also how they can help keep themselves and each other safe. Conversations took place about e-safety and cyberbullying as well as conflict resolution and the importance of fire drills, adult supervision and security. The senior leadership explicitly promote the school as a 'safe place' both for the children and for their families and it would be fair to say that numerous families see the school as a haven. This message is important in the context of complex and unsettled home circumstances for significant numbers of the children. Many adults commented on the way in which they feel really valued and included describing how the school celebrates all festivals in a really participatory manner which enables everyone to feel proud of their own culture and beliefs and respectful towards others. Parents continually emphasised how the school makes them feel really respected and included.

Positive behaviour and the resolution of conflicts has been a focus for the school and is now a skill practiced by the majority of the children. Adults and children both described that this has been made easier because of rights based ways of looking at and talking about situations. In a recent school survey a large majority of the children believed that behaviour was good. Relationships matter greatly to the children and they are keen to support each other 'we want to be fair to each other...' ; 'we try to help people when they have fallen out.'. The school has tried different models of peer mentoring in the recent past and because this has proved successful it is to be re-launched this summer. The school provides a 'Safe Haven' facility for the children and all see this as a support 'if you get too angry' or you just need somewhere to go.' Bullying is addressed openly and positively at St Mary's and children are clear about the types of situation that can be described as such.

The children at St Mary's are able to talk about numerous situations locally and globally where rights are not respected and they can articulate the injustice of such situations. For example they described how their work on street children in Brazil helped them to understand the unfair and dangerous living conditions on so many children. The children spoke respectfully about the experiences of children around the world whose access to their rights is not always good or fair. Awareness raising has not just involved the children but has engaged parents in projects relevant to some of the local community including addressing issues around loan sharks. One adult comment that 'the children are now so much more aware and to get involved in what's going on in the world.'

Standard D:



Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners

Standard D has been achieved

The children at St Mary's are empowered to have real influence on their own lives and to take action for the realisation of rights; this is because the adults in the community believe in and facilitate authentic participation.

All the children spoken with were very confident that their views are listened to and acted upon in their school. They have a strong sense of their ability to shape and influence their school and everything that happens to them. There is a democratically elected school council, membership of which is taken very seriously by the children. Because the adults at St Mary's instinctively involve the pupils in all outward facing events and presentations there is a natural feeling of empowerment and participation which led one adult to comment that the children 'feel that they are part of society.' There is a system of Action Teams which involve mixed age groups of children working on various projects and developments including assembly planning and consultation about the school improvement plan. Developments mentioned by the children resulting from pupil empowerment have included the lunchtime charter, improved play equipment and a new 'willow walk', In the classroom children help to shape their topic based learning with teachers commenting that they often come up with things we would not have thought of. An annual highlight at the school is 'Takeover Day' which engages large numbers of pupils in taking on or directly shadowing adult roles- feedback on this is universally positive and the outcomes valued as much by adults as the young people themselves. The Y5 assembly seen during the visit was a pupil led presentation of different 'manifestos' for improving the school which will be the focus of a mock election. The presentation was linked to Article 12 and the winning party will meet the SLT to explore how some of their ideas for improvement can be realised. This project, under the banner of 'Let your voice be heard', like much of the school's work is celebrated on their website.

The pupil's health and wellbeing is an important aspect of the support and learning provided at the school and it is centred on the principle of ensuring that the children have excellent access to information in order for them to make effective choices about all aspects of their lives. The children have initiated and participated in consultations about school meals and a number have helped to produce food in the kitchen. The school is very pro-active with regard to e-safety ensuring that the right to information can be upheld without compromising other rights. Some children commented that adults at the school always help them to make good choices but 'they always respect your opinions.'

Pupils at St Mary's are wholeheartedly committed to taking action for the benefit of others locally, nationally and globally. The children described, for example that 'we wanted to do something for Syria' so they put ideas to the head teacher and totally organised the fundraising effort with the proceeds going to Unicef. Numerous other fundraising events, including Day For Change and Support for their growing partnership with the Concerns Foundation Unit in India. The pupils are becoming increasingly proactive as campaigners and advocates for rights. They have worked with local police in their campaign to improve road safety around the school; they have initiated a community clean-up which engaged families and local business partners- linked to their right to a clean environment, this has become an annual event; they have written to share their concerns to the Secretary of State for Education and engaged in both fundraising and campaigning for Water Aid.