

# RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING RE-ACCREDITATION

<b>School:</b>	St Mary's Church of England Infant and Junior School
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Jenny McGarry
<b>RRSA coordinator:</b>	Phil Trohear
<b>Local authority:</b>	Manchester
<b>Assessor:</b>	Martin Russell
<b>Date:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2018

## 1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to thank the children, the leadership team, staff, parents 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 visit, the school provided a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form.

It was clear throughout the visit that everyone really valued and contributed to the increasing impact of a rights based approach in all aspects of school life.

Particular strengths of the school are:

- Very strong leadership of RRSA and a clear commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) across the whole staff team.
- The very secure knowledge of a wide range of rights by both adults and children and the effective sharing of this as ambassadors for RRSA and for the Convention.
- The confidence and enthusiasm for the children in speaking up for their rights and speaking out for the rights of all.
- An impressive impact beyond the school with evidence of the awareness of children's rights adding to community collaboration and identity.

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

## 2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

None

## 3. 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:

- Continue to consolidate the recent Unicef focus on particular language pertaining to rights, dignity and respect (The [ABCDE of Rights](#) may help) remember to regularly revisit the origins on the Convention.
- Consider evaluating all current work around global citizenship to make it more integrated and explore the possibility of promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the ['World's Largest Lesson'](#). As a further dimension to campaigning, consider Unicef's [Outright](#).
- Build on the excellent culture of pupil engagement to ever more deeply integrate the voice of the children into all areas of strategic school improvement.

## 4. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

<p><b>School context</b></p>	<p>A larger than average sized primary school with 450 children on roll; it serves a highly diverse community in central Manchester. Both the proportion of children speaking English as an additional language (70%) and the proportion of children eligible for support through Pupil Premium (69%) are substantially above the average for England. Although providing substantial additional learning support for many pupils, only around 1% have an EHC Plan.</p>
<p><b>School evaluation: Gold form received</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>

<b>Attendees at SLT meeting</b>	Headteacher, deputy head (who is RRSA coordinator ) assistant Headteacher and 2 governors
<b>Number of children and young people interviewed</b>	45 children in 2 focus group plus two classes spoken with during the tour.
<b>Number of staff interviewed</b>	4 teaching staff 4 support staff (3 parents and 1 of these also a governor) 3 parents
<b>Evidence provided</b>	Learning walk Written evidence Videos and pupil presentations Lessons
<b>First registered for RRSA: October 2011</b>	<b>Level 2 achieved: May 2015</b>

### 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 living.

**Strand A has been achieved**

Knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is embedded at St. Mary's. The children could speak about a wide variety of rights such as: to relax and play, to be kept safe, to privacy, to reliable information, to shelter and to not be separated from their parents. Although not using all the terminology, they fully understood that rights are unconditional, universal, inherent and inalienable; as one pupil explained "*Nobody should ever take them away, but if some people are being unkind to others, they may be stopping them getting their rights.*" with another adding that "*...the rights are for every child until you are eighteen. You can't lose them.*" All the children spoken with knew that all adults in their lives "*...and the Prime Minister and government.*" have the responsibility to uphold and promote their rights. Curriculum based learning is regularly linked explicitly to rights across all phases and this has become the norm; staff and children gave numerous examples such Y6 geography exploring the impact of deforestation on the rights of indigenous communities. Many displays around the school make direct reference to various rights; the school improvement plan, for example, links various priorities to the Convention, such as safeguarding linked to articles 3 and 19.

The children were able to link many national and global issues to children's rights. Examples included "*The leaders in some countries might not treat people properly.*" They also spoke of wars and natural disasters impacting on children's rights to medical treatment, survival, safety, education, access to healthcare and to be with their family. There was an explanation of modern slavery including the explanation that "*A big problem is that it can be very secretive.*" The staff are very clear about the value added by the school promoting children's rights "*Our school really is part of the community. Many families have multiple challenges. Rights respecting is at the starting point of everything we do. We need the school to be at the heart. The rights are meaningful to the children as they impact directly on their lives.*"

Adults in the school and in the wider community of governors and parents are very well informed about and committed to the CRC and a child rights based approach. The SLT were clear that RRS supported their ethos and mission, *“It makes everything else easier and richer and it ties in with all our external accountabilities.”* The Headteacher went on to say that *“Rights Respecting helps you to embed an outstanding curriculum; it enhances what you want to do.”* The chair of governors explained that *“The rights approach permeates the whole school.”* The families spoken with clearly value their children knowing their rights, one parent shared *“We have the 42 articles up in our kitchen.”* And another commented, *“We always talk about ‘being the best you can be’ even with my older children.”*

### 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 explained how the school enabled them to access a wide range of rights and they discussed, for example, how everyone enjoys the rights to relax and play, to a good education and to medical treatment if they need it. The children have a clear understanding of fairness and equity; among other good explanations, one child said *“It’s fair if everybody gets all their rights all the time.”* Another pointed out *“It’s fair to make sure that everybody gets all the help they need. That might be different for different people.”* Asked about what they could do if it was felt that somebody was not accessing their rights, one child said *“There is no need to keep quiet and not say. You should stand up and tell somebody.”* Another pupil added *“Yes like Emeline Pankhurst.”* They went on to explain the importance of speaking to a trusted adult if there was any problem; such a person was described as *“Someone you believe in. You can rely on them and you know they will help.”* The children were very confident in asserting that the school takes effective action if issues are raised about rights not being met. Every Thursday, each class chooses a pupil for outstanding Rights Respecting behaviour and they are given a yellow RRS jumper to wear for the week.

Positive and mutually respectful relationships are a key characteristic of the school and regularly talked about, reinforced and celebrated, for example the system of Peer Mentors was described by children as *“helping when people fall out or if they are on their own.”* Another child added, however, that *“mostly everyone gets on really well. We are a very friendly school.”* The parental perspective and the school’s own data confirmed that strong positive relationships have been a characteristic of the school for a long time. The Pupil Voice team and the SLT carried out a ‘Happiness Survey which had very positive responses. The outcomes from this helped set the theme for a number of assemblies through the summer term. Asked about their understanding of ‘dignity’ the children referred to being treated well, loyalty, respect for self and others; one explained *“It makes you feel nice inside. You get good vibes and it makes you more confident.”* The children were keen to point out that if there are arguments or fall-outs the adults are fair and balanced in their response. One boy explained that *“If there is a disagreement that the teachers have to get involved in, it’s always fair because they listen to both sides.”*

All children spoken with asserted that their school is a very safe place and they were confident to approach a trusted adult if they had any concerns. All the examples discussed were linked by the children to their rights for example e-safety and learning about stranger danger. Conversations with adults made it apparent that issues pertaining to safeguarding, first aid and SRE were understood in terms of children's rights. The school's leadership points to their exceptional attendance figures as a positive indicator of children and their families perceiving school as a safe place to be; these have risen in the last 3 years and are well above the national average (2015 – 96.4%, 2016 – 97.1% and 2017 – 97.5%, including figures for Nursery). There have been no permanent exclusions for many years and the St Mary's fixed term exclusion rates have decreased steadily. The very rare incidents of bullying or discriminatory behaviour are dealt with very promptly and in a rights respecting way; the children clearly understand bullying to be *"When it happens all the time."* They feel empowered to resolve situations themselves or with their peers; but recognise the need to involve adults if necessary and trust the school to follow things up effectively.

The leadership at St. Mary's explained their commitment to ensuring the children are well equipped to make well informed choices about their lives in terms of health, wellbeing and socialisation. Long before the children start at St Mary's, strong relationships are established with families so that school and home become as seamless as possible. They have a play therapist on the staff who works with parents and children. The children were very aware of many ways in which their health and wellbeing is supported and nurtured. In conversation they mentioned programmes such as nurses coming in to talk about their health, teeth cleaning and having your height and weight checked. Support for the children's emotional health is a priority too with clear messages about the importance of expressing your emotions. A mindfulness with art programme and lessons in yoga have introduced for pupils and equivalent provision is now available for staff too as the SLT believe that the mental health of adults requires as much support as that of the children. The children are developing good knowledge in this area with one saying, *"We all have mental health."* And going on to explain that sometimes it can require support. Others spoke about special mental health assemblies and their understanding of the importance of expressing emotions.

Inclusion is a strong focus of the school and the children spoke with enthusiasm about numerous ways in which everyone has the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of school life. Reference was made to Black History Month and celebrating different faith festivals with family involvement. Among examples mentioned about the children being taught positive attitudes was a reference from member of staff who said that when the pupils *"...found out about the way in which Alan Turing had been treated, they were furious."* As part of the school's long standing collaboration with Haveley Hey and The Willows Primary Schools they last year created a rights respecting parental art exhibition at Manchester Central Library that celebrated the diversity of the contrasting communities in different parts of the city. Parental, governor and community based views included strongly expressed appreciation that *"Diversity here is great. The children are so much more aware and open than previous generations."* Wanting to build on this point, a parent spoke very passionately saying, *"We come from all over the world but by working with St Mary's on rights, we are all proud to be British and St. Mary's people."* The school's key role as a catalyst for integration and mutual respect in the local community was a recurring theme throughout the visit.

The children were very enthusiastic about their learning and the value they place on their right to an education came through strongly. They conveyed a sense of empowerment and described a number of ways in which they are active learners including discussion of their targets and peer marking, *"We give them a message about what was good and how to improve."* They also described how class charters support them, *"It shows that everyone is one family in the class."* Learners requiring additional support have an 'Article 12 target' on

their Access to Learning Plan to ensure that they have their say properly in the process. The SLT explained that they place significant emphasis on pupil voice feedback in their ongoing improvement of learning and teaching. As part of the school’s role as a Teaching School, the children have produced a video which includes a section defining a good teacher; their description included the following phrases: ‘...never gives up.’; ‘...considers all rights for all children.’ and ‘reflects on learning.’

**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**

Children’s participation is a significant feature of St. Mary’s and it is widely understood as their right. Conversations during the visit conveyed a strong sense of collaboration across the school; all adults value and respect the children’s views as being as valid as those of a colleague or parent. The democratically elected school council (UNICEF team) meets regularly and representatives take the views of their peers to the meetings; *“We take decisions about our life and learning in school.”* The children explained a number of initiatives arising from pupils’ ideas including a new system of eating lunch in classrooms to facilitate a quieter and calmer experience (of benefit to all but especially to the youngest and to children on the autistic spectrum), improved play equipment and new water fountains. More strategically, pupil voice is embedded in all school decision making from policy review to staffing appointments. An annual residential visit takes the UNICEF Team, along with children from their partner schools, for a planning weekend in the Lake District to develop new ideas for their schools and to plan further initiatives related to being rights respecting. One outcome of this planning has been the running of two highly effective ‘Hear My Voice’ conferences which have been planned and run by the children, promoting RRSA to other schools in the city and beyond.

Children at St. Mary’s are constantly engaged in actions to support the rights of others both locally and globally. The children explained a wide range of different fundraising events including Red Nose Day, supporting the Foodbank and wearing green to raise funds in support of the Grenfell tragedy. They were very quick to explain that giving happens in order to support others in accessing their rights. However, one pupil pointed out that *“Money is not always the solution, you can help in other ways too.”* This comment took the conversation towards examples of campaigning which include a response to the refugee crisis, *“we wrote letters to the Prime Minister about their [refugee children] rights.”* Some of the children have also written to Greenpeace expressing their concern about the environmental impact of plastic waste. One pupil remembered, *“We had a campaign against second hand smoke.”* Linked to their right to be safe and healthy. The school has also established itself as an ambassador for children’s rights by offering support to other schools on their RRS journey, as one parent explained *“It is so impressive to see the children presenting to other schools.”*

A long established and much valued annual event is the Children’s Commissioner’s ‘Takeover Day’ about which both adults and children speak with great enthusiasm. The reality is, however, that, to a very great extent, the rights based culture at St Mary’s CE Primary school means that every day is takeover day!

