

# RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

## GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

<b>School:</b>	St John's Primary School
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Alison Hope
<b>RRSA coordinator:</b>	Claire Young
<b>Local authority:</b>	South Lanarkshire
<b>Assessor(s):</b>	Steven Kidd
<b>Date:</b>	14 March 2019

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The assessor would like to thank the children, the Senior Leadership Team and staff 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:

- Children had an excellent knowledge of individual articles and understanding of key rights concepts.
- A particularly impressive example in the Gym Hall Charter.
- Commitment of the SLT and the way that they have facilitated rights connections to so many aspects of school life.
- Excellent global dimension built into learning and carried over into superb campaigning work – there is a real sense of children as activists for social justice.

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:

- When revising policies, explore how the Convention and the language of rights can be used to ensure all school systems come from a common root.
- Continue to pursue opportunities for significant pupil involvement in whole school improvement, perhaps linked to use of How Good is OUR School; ensure pupils are able to make the connections between their input and the changes which occur.
- As exploration of the Global Goals is so embedded, take care to avoid confusion and ensure children (and adults) make the explicit connections to children’s rights.

## 3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

<b>School context</b>	St John’s Primary School is a co-educational non-denominational state school covering stages P1 to P7, located in and serving the town of Hamilton. It has mainstream and ASN classes across the stages, with a total pupil roll of 314. 21% of P4-P7s are registered for Free School Meals, slightly higher than the national average. The school is part of the Hamilton Grammar learning community.
<b>Attendees at SLT meeting</b>	Headteacher / DHT / RRSA coordinator
<b>Number of children and young people interviewed</b>	40 children in focus/steering groups, 4 children on the learning walk and 74 children in class visits
<b>Number of adults interviewed</b>	4 teaching staff, 3 parents, local Minister
<b>Evidence provided</b>	Learning walk, focus groups, portfolio of evidence, class visits.
<b>Registered for RRSA: 04 January 2013</b>	<b>Silver achieved: 13 March 2018</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 development.

**Strand A has been achieved**

Across the board, children’s knowledge of individual articles was very good, with focus group participants happily sharing example after example, ranging from *“the right to education”* through to those less commonly shared, such as protection from exploitative work. Pupils in classes could share just as certainly, indeed this was something SLT had already mentioned as a development since their Silver accreditation: *“Previously we might have chosen particular classes and avoided others. Not now. We’re confident that all classes are doing great rights learning.”* The ABCDE of Rights resource had been used to good effect, too, children assuredly explaining key rights concepts and familiar with rights holder/duty bearer terminology. They shared instances of learning about rights in class, through assemblies and a Right of the Month Initiative, shaped by the active Steering Group. Even the assessor’s visit had been used as a context, with one class creating imagined newspaper front pages celebrating their successes, reflecting a comment from the RRSA lead: *“There’s an excitement to show off what we’ve been doing.”* Evidence showed how this is far from isolated, with the school finding opportunities for rights learning across the curriculum, by building into forward planning processes and an annual assembly calendar linking rights with topical events.

Throughout the school, rights were visible in a range of vibrant displays in corridors and classrooms, The Global Goals featured as a strong recurring theme, alongside charters, discrete rights displays and ‘article cards’ added where relevant, some by teachers themselves others by the Steering Group. An enthusiastic team, the Steering Group was one of several in the school children were able to join, through a preference system. They explained that it was their job to make sure “rights were everywhere”; their primary ongoing role is to identify the Right of the Month and then audit how classes have covered this in learning – ‘winning’ classes are rewarded with a prize. They have also been heavily involved in the development of specialist charters for the playground and the gym hall. The Senior Leadership Team explained how the range of rights covered in the school has widened considerably since achieving Silver, highlighting the part the Steering Group plays: *“Sometimes we explore rights differently [with the older and younger children] ...the Steering Group decide on the suitability of articles and differentiate.”*

Several staff have participated in Unicef UK training and have cascaded this to colleagues on their return; staff meetings regularly feature rights-related items, including a recent session run by the Steering Group exploring the ABCDE of rights. Rights are woven through the school’s policies, including the School Improvement Plan, and feature prominently in the School Handbook and a standalone section on the website. The school is also particularly active in promoting its rights journey via Twitter, regularly sharing examples of its work with the wider world. As well as the traditional newsletters, RRS specific mailings and assemblies, the Headteacher explained how they utilised every digital tool at their disposal – *“we have 137 parents registered for our school app, 400 followers on Twitter and an updated website”* – with parents then sharing things further on their own Facebook page/group. Family homework tasks had also been used. Probably as a result of the above, parents felt *“clued up”* on what was going on in the school and were able to see the connections in everything the school was doing – they were extremely positive about the whole process.

Despite the visibility of rights as a thread running through the school, the Headteacher was clear that *“it doesn’t stop today”*, before going on to list a range of future actions they were planning to keep the school moving forward on its journey.

**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**

Discussion with children revealed them to have a clear understanding of the differing roles of rights holders and duty bearers, perhaps aided by the appearance of this terminology in some charters. *“It’s the teachers’ job to make sure you get rights”* was how one focus group member described it, whilst another pupil noted that *“all adults are really caring, they teach about rights, but they also listen to what you say.”* Children valued the approachability of staff and were definite that there were many people in the school they could speak to if they were concerned about any of their rights not being realised. Ambassadors on the learning walk were able to connect many aspects of the school environment to rights, from the Talking Team display at the school entrance (Art 12) to the Buddy Bench in the playground (Art 15). Rights were woven through the School Improvement Plan and incorporated into several policies, as are the concepts of fairness and equity. Children themselves had a good understanding of these concepts, happy to share with the assessor how important it is for some children to receive extra support or to do things differently and convinced that this was the only truly fair way to ensure everyone had a chance to succeed.

During the visit, relationships were noticeably positive, between children themselves and with adults. Pupils on the learning walk were confident and knowledgeable, listening carefully to any questions and replying informatively. In focus groups, students were polite and respectful, happy to offer their views and keen to hear those of others. All were familiar with charters and confirmed that each class had created their own, at the beginning of the year and led by the pupils; these were then ‘signed’ in a range of creative ways. They had a solid understanding of the purpose of the charters, as things which helped everyone to respect rights and improve relationships. Charters had also been developed for the playground and gym hall, the latter being a particularly impressive example where the Steering Group had developed accompanying illustrations *“to make it easier for the little ones to understand.”* The school’s restorative approach, of which the charters are a part, is complemented by the introduction of self-regulation approaches to the children, led by a trained class teacher; this encourages children to consider their actions and promote ‘right choices’. Evidence shows how the school is currently considering how they develop further consistency of approach.

All pupils in the focus group agreed they felt safe at school and understood this as a right. They offered a range of different ways in which the school helped facilitate this right, from the separate playgrounds and secure entry system, through to the valuable role of staff. An interesting example was the *“new way of leaving”*, which pupils raised and the Headteacher further explained: *“When we surveyed pupils, some of them didn’t feel particularly safe when they were leaving the building, so we changed how they left. All it took was one class to say and we were able to act.”* Pupils also mentioned the *“worry box”* which allowed them to raise any concerns anonymously. A resilience focus during the early part of this year had seen children discuss who they can turn to for support and create displays to remind them, whilst the Community Police Officer had been invited in to deliver age appropriate workshops on ‘stranger danger’ and online safety.

A large volume of evidence demonstrated the school’s active consideration of pupils’ physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing. Staff use a recently reviewed Health and Wellbeing planner to ensure that relevant issues are being covered across stages. All have benefitted from nurture training and now utilise these approaches in class, as well as the existence of a dedicated nurture room (Rainbow Room) and sensory space; Ambassadors explained that these spaces were used by many children

to ensure they received the support they needed. Children spoke of a wide range of supports available and of a varied selection of extra-curricular clubs and sports in which they could participate, in addition to their two sessions of Physical Education each week. The Sports Committee is actively involved in promoting opportunities and P7 pupils have been trained as sports leaders and will lead younger children in activities.

The assessor heard of numerous examples of inclusion in practice during the visit to the school, not least joint learning across mainstream and ASN classes. The school's Support for Learning Programme is comprehensive and ensures that interventions are tailored to the individual child. During the learning walk, Ambassadors explained how the school encourages children to share wider achievement, understanding how this helped to celebrate everyone's talents and abilities, no matter what they be. A Buddy Bench was also highlighted on the tour and this was raised by pupils in the focus group, too, as something which could be used *"by anyone who needed a friend"*; alongside the Play Pals and a Chill Out Zone, this had been an initiative of the Pupil Council's focus on the theme of Friendship. Evidence showed further projects to promote inclusion, including participation in activities around Anti-bullying week.

The school makes considerable effort in engaging pupils in shaping their learning, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Staff spoke of *"target setting for learning"* and of *"choosing areas to explore in topics"*, and parents picked up on their involvement in that process, too: *"targets come home and are reviewed."* Assessors were provided with much evidence, demonstrating that responsive planning is used to ensure the participation of learners, supported by weekly learning conversations, with small groups of pupils involved on a rotational basis. *"There are so many forums for them to share,"* noted one teacher, whilst a colleague spoke of their effectiveness: *"the small groups help with focus, they're very happy to share ideas."* As one parent put it: *"I can't believe how empowered the children are."*

**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 were definite that their voices were listened to and they immediately pointed to the school's Talking Teams, which meet every six weeks and in which every pupil plays a part. These pupil voice groups had been introduced at the beginning of the school year, which the SLT had highlighted as one of the biggest changes to have come from their RRS journey: *"pupil voice, the Talking Teams, making sure the children are at the centre... we've really made an effort to make sure they can see the impact their input has."* That effort had borne fruit, with the children happy to talk about what they'd been doing in their groups and a large display at the entrance to the school which Ambassadors explained, *"helps us to know what other groups are doing."* One example, shared by a P5 pupil in a class visit, was of how they'd changed the homework system to better suit them. The local Minister described being *"blown away"* by the impact of the talking teams, *"they are coming up with ideas and the school's not paying lip-service, it's being shaped."* 'Suggestion boxes' were mentioned, too, with one pupil sharing an experience of a suggestion taken on board: football training had been arranged for those who had missed out on a place in the school team. A number of committees (e.g. Eco, Fairtrade, RRS) also operate in the school, as well as House Captains and Vice Captains who are elected by their fellow house members. Paperwork demonstrated how this consultative approach was carried over into many aspects of school life, with children's views feeding into things as diverse as equipment purchases and the creation of a new school motto.

Activism is a real strength of the school, and there is a pervading sense of children as agents of change, indeed, as one parent put it, *“They’re crusaders now.”* Pupils and staff from the school have been sharing their practice with their local secondary and with several other schools, as well as in the community – indeed they have recently ‘adopted’ the local railway station as part of a Scotrail community programme. Whilst evidence showed countless examples of fundraising for causes such as Children in Need and the Poppy Appeal, arguably the most impressive examples came from the children themselves; mature responses linking fundraising to rights were typical, ranging from the very local (*“we did a reverse advent calendar for the foodbank”*) to the international (*“we put things into backpacks for Mary’s Meals... we were helping them to get their right to education”*). *“We can make a difference”*, was how one Steering Group member explained it, before moving on to share information about the school’s work to tackle plastic. Since the early days of the school’s journey, the Global Goals have featured prominently and plastic has been an especially hot topic. In a textbook example of demonstrating how a global issue can be a local issue, the children have approached their anti-plastic ‘crusade’ from every angle: they spoke of personal actions to reduce their own plastic consumption, raised awareness in the community with a ‘plastic free day’, have persuaded the local church café to switch away from single-use plastic and have even written to a multi-national dairy brand to seek change in their practice – in the latter action, they have so far not been successful, but were definite in their assertion that they are not finished yet. Given their passion for the subject, the assessor would have to agree. Examples of campaigning action were woven throughout the visit, in the words of children, parents and staff and in the portfolio of evidence – it was readily apparent that the pupils of St John’s Primary School are committed advocates for the rights of children at home and abroad and are ably supported by the whole school community in realising their ambitions.