

RRSA REACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Highlands Primary
Headteacher:	Kulvarn Atwal
RRSA coordinator:	Sandeep Kaur (Associate Headteacher)
Local authority:	Redbridge
Assessor(s):	Anita Haigh and Wendy Watts
Date:	24 th May 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessor would like to thank the children, the headteacher, 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 assessment visit, the school completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form.

It was clear throughout the visit that everyone shares a strong commitment to the school’s rights respecting work. The headteacher commented that “RRS runs through everything” and is “the spine of the school”. This is a reaccréditation assessment.

Particular strengths of the school include:

- A systematic approach to ensuring the whole school community understands how rights relate to all aspects of life in school and beyond.
- A strong focus on understanding and using rights-respecting language.
- Pupil voice and empowerment are valued and actively promoted.
- Mutually respectful and supportive relationships.
- A proactive stance to engage parents/carers by going beyond the school gates.

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:

- Continue the excellent efforts to equip the less confident children to find their voice and contribute to decision-making.
- Continue to extend the children’s understanding of global citizenship and their role as global citizens.
- Consider how to develop an advocacy role with the local secondary schools; for example, through transition projects.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	Highlands Primary School is a community primary school with 696 pupils on roll (aged 3 to 11 years). The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is 12%. 79.9% of pupils have English as an additional language and 2.8 % of pupils have an EHC Plan. The school was graded ‘outstanding’ in all areas by Ofsted in March 2019.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher, associate headteacher (RRSA coordinator) and 3 teachers with lead learning roles and part of the RRS team.
Number of children and young people interviewed	20 children in the focus group, 15 children from the RRS Steering group, and 3 class visits.
Number of adults interviewed	4 teaching staff, 2 support staff, 4 parents and 3 governors.
Evidence provided	Learning walk, written evidence and class visits.
Registered for RRSA: January 2012	Silver achieved: July 2013 Level 2/Gold achieved: June 2014

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 are familiar with a broad range of articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), including the rights to life, relax and play, education, have a voice, be informed about their rights, not to be separated from parents unless in their best interests, “*move to join your family*”, “*be protected from sexual abuse*”, “*equal rights for children with disabilities*” and “*be treated with dignity*” in the youth justice system. They understand that these rights apply to everyone up to the age of 18, “*from birth*”, and cannot be taken away or earned. Children are also familiar with the appropriate vocabulary for these principles such as ‘inalienable’ and ‘duty bearer’ through explicit teaching and creative displays. They can discuss why specific rights for children are necessary, such as children’s vulnerability. They recognise that not all children enjoy their rights, and cited instances where children’s rights are not met in the UK and beyond, such as “*being sexually abused*”, “*not appreciated*”, “*living in war zones*”, “*not having proper health care*” and “*not being able to go to school*”. Children are also able to link rights to their learning. For example, a year 2 pupil described how her class topic on Paddington Bear explored the importance of the rights to a name and identity. Pupils discussed learning about rights through literature such as ‘The Boy in Striped Pyjamas’. In addition, each class has selected a particular right to explore in depth and share with the wider school. Lesson plans and the assembly programme are referenced to articles of the CRC.

To support children’s understanding of global issues and sustainable development, each year group is exploring a different Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and considering what specific practical actions they can take as global citizens to make a difference. For example, through learning about SDG2, Zero Hunger, one child’s response was to buy a sandwich for a homeless person. Children are also more careful to avoid food waste in school. Others have opted to walk or scoot to school to reduce car use and pollution. Pupil voice groups have also initiated campaigns linked to the SDGs, such as a whole school plastic awareness programme, led by the Eco Committee, which has resulted in the banning of disposable plastic bottles in school and the introduction of a refillable water bottle. An eye-catching SDG display is visible in a main corridor. In addition, children stay abreast of current affairs by watching ‘Newsround’. They can discuss topical issues in terms of rights, such as cases of children separated from their parents under US immigration policy.

A shared commitment to the CRC is evident and is an expectation when recruiting staff. The headteacher commented “*we believe we can make a difference. It’s more than a role – it’s a passion.*” Strategic documents make reference to values and actions that promote a rights-based approach. For example, the school development plan includes as a priority to ‘embed and refresh an RRS ethos’ and the governing body strategic plan highlights ‘ensuring safeguarding and children’s rights are at the heart of the school.’ A governor explained how decisions are always made with reference to the CRC to ensure that the child remains at the centre. All policies refer to articles of the CRC; for example, the RRS learning behaviour policy which makes clear the link between expectations and specific rights (Articles 3, 28, 29 and 31).

The CRC is highly visible around the school. Many displays and work areas are referenced to articles, for example, the medical room (Article 24), a school clubs display (Article 31), and a display of different pupil voice groups (Article 12). Unique and eye-catching class charters make explicit references to the CRC, and the whole school charter is creatively displayed in the central foyer alongside a ‘rights

UNITED KINGDOM

respecting tree', which bears core principles and values using rights-based vocabulary. Communication with parents via the website and newsletters reinforces the school's commitment to the CRC, and workshops provide a supportive forum in which to discuss how children's learning, health and well-being relate to rights. Parents spoke of the positive impact of the school's rights-respecting ethos on their children's self-confidence, engagement and critical thinking. One parent explained how it had "*pushed the boundaries*" of her own perspectives and "*opened up dialogue*" with her child.

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

Children understand that adults have the prime responsibility for informing them of their rights and ensuring access to them. Duty bearer displays include images of different adult roles and how they support children's rights. One child noted that the office staff have an important role in "*making sure that if we don't turn up to school, we're safe.*" A distributed leadership structure serves to model rights respecting relationships: "*There is no hierarchy. While we have different responsibilities, we are all on the same level.*" Staff teams, teaching and non-teaching, are fully briefed on RRS and some staff received training from a Unicef RRS Professional Adviser last November. Adult stakeholders were agreed that they felt empowered by a rights-based approach and are more confident in their roles. One staff member commented, "*Other strategies have come and gone ... this is the most powerful thing I've been trained in.*"

The concepts of fairness and equity have been explored in vertical tutor group assemblies, helping children to understand that fair treatment takes account of an individual's need. In discussing a playground scenario, children could identify differing needs and related rights to be considered. Children could explain how misinformation ('fake news') could lead to stereotyping and unfair treatment of particular groups.

The school engenders a strong sense of belonging, founded on mutual respect and appreciation. In focus groups, children and adults listened to each other's views. During the school tour, one child spoke proudly of his teacher's passion for children's rights, and a member of office staff described how a shared language with parents had clarified expectations and improved communication. Staff commented on the supportive relationships between different age groups, and children could explain what it means to treat others with dignity: "*don't make fun of*", "*don't judge*", "*respect privacy*", "*treat others as you want to be treated.*" The headteacher added, "*we judge the impact of what we do on the newest person, the least happy person ... to ensure all feel heard.*"

Children are supported and encouraged to use the school and class charters, and the language of rights to sort out disagreements. Trained pupil play leaders can assist with resolving disagreements respectfully. The RRS behaviour policy sets out clear expectations for children and adults, with the principle of 'learning from mistakes', allowing pupils the opportunity for self-reflection and reparation where the rights of others have not been respected. The headteacher added, "*RRS is not a behaviour strategy; it is a philosophy with fantastic outcomes. A strategy relies on policy; a philosophy is based*

on values.” Half-termly ‘RRS Citizen’ awards and a ‘Walk of Fame’ display celebrate the efforts of pupils to be excellent rights respecting role models.

All children interviewed said that they felt safe at school. Examples cited by children to uphold their right to safety include, road safety, online safety, fire drills, and visiting speakers from the NSPCC. Children identified a range of “*trusted adults*” they could approach with any worries or concerns and expressed confidence in their teachers to “*take our worries seriously*”. Play leaders, circle time sessions, a centrally placed ‘worry monster’ and class worry boxes were cited as other means of raising issues. Incidents of bullying, violent and discriminatory behaviour are “*very rare*” and there has only been one fixed term exclusion in the last six years. The school is part of a Lambeth Council research study looking at exclusions and has been invited to City Hall to share best practice on how to reduce them. In addition, staff members share a strong understanding of attachment theory and the importance of secure, safe relationships to children’s capacity to thrive.

The school is proactive in promoting health and well-being. All teachers have participated in ‘Achieving Well-being’ professional development sessions and ‘emotion coaching’, exploring different stress responses in children. Regular ‘Mindfulness’ sessions support children’s emotional and mental well-being and family ‘chill out’ workshops are planned following the success of taster sessions during Mental Health Awareness week. A range of initiatives encourages healthier lifestyles, including the school parliament’s ‘Healthy Highlands’ break-time café which offers healthy snacks, and the Junior Travel Ambassadors’ pedometer challenge which aims to encourage more children and their families to walk to school.

The school is a ‘Level 2 Achievement for All’ school, with a multi-disciplinary inclusion team, to ensure every child can achieve to their full potential. A parent described how her child, who has specific learning needs, has been supported to speak and read. A nurture group offers support for the needs of children identified as vulnerable to help them develop secure attachments and thrive at school. The school has recently achieved the Mayor of London’s ‘Schools for Success Award’ for the second successive year in recognition of the progress made by the most vulnerable learners. Children’s differing talents are encouraged and celebrated through a variety of clubs and a ‘Highlands’ Got Talent’ event.

A focus on rights respecting language has empowered children to identify exclusive or prejudicial attitudes. For example, a year 6 pupil spoke passionately about gender equality and the importance of challenging discriminatory language such as “*throw like a girl*”. The school has engaged with faith leaders on the local Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE) to encourage greater understanding of, and dialogue between, different religious traditions.

Central to the school’s vision is to be a ‘community of empowered learners’, in which the children are “co-constructors of their own learning.” A creative curriculum and a dialogic teaching approach actively encourage children to become directors and not simply receivers of their education. A teacher commented, “*We believe in teaching in a way they want to learn, not in the way we want to teach.*” When explaining this approach to a visiting headteacher, a pupil said, “*It’s not always teachers that teach children; sometimes children can teach adults and have an impact on their lives.*” Children described the dialogue they have with teachers about their learning to “*encourage what you’re good at*”, “*get feedback and advice*” and “*understand your mistakes.*”

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

A range of pupil voice systems and leadership roles exist to empower children's participation. Every child belongs to a house group which meets weekly to discuss whole school matters and share ideas. Specific pupil voice bodies include an elected School Parliament, Junior Travel Ambassadors, an Eco Committee, Sports Ambassadors and Play Leaders. Children are encouraged to make speeches to articulate their ideas and reflect on how they can contribute to different aspects of school life. The RRS Steering group includes children who have been specifically invited to boost their confidence in making their voices heard. They recently visited Unicef House to find out about its work and share their ideas. Pupils are included in the recruitment process for new staff, and in contributing to strategic priorities. For example, the School Parliament is working with the governing body to raise attendance.

Children learn about local and global concerns and are encouraged to engage in and initiate actions to address them. For example, older pupils are part of the Child-Friendly City consultation with Redbridge local authority to identify areas for improvement. The School Parliament has explored what the local council are doing to support the homeless. They initiated a 'Gifts of Joy' project to provide support and resources for the local homeless shelter, and personally delivered the gifts contributed as a result of their campaign. Other campaigns and fundraising activities include Children in Need, Comic Relief, World Down Syndrome day, Autism Awareness Day campaign and local litter picks. The school regularly hosts visits for educators from within the UK and other countries to showcase their rights respecting work, and are currently supporting a local school with its RRS journey. The school has established a link with another RRS accredited school in Bedfordshire and there are plans for the steering groups to meet and share ideas.

Adults commented on children's sense of empowerment to discuss global issues such as climate change and immigration policies at a deeper level, and how their capacity for critical thinking has developed through an understanding of rights: *"They are not just products of their society. They can stand up and challenge... they can agree or disagree."*