

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Valewood Primary School
Headteacher:	Helen Tantouri
RRSA coordinator:	Danielle Parr
Local authority:	Sefton Council
Assessor(s):	Martin Russell & Jenny Price
Date:	23 rd February 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a virtual accreditation visit. The assessors would like to thank the children, 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 accreditation visit, the school completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form and provided a good collection of evidence.

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:

- Highly effective leadership at all levels underpinned by children's rights and the RRSA Outcomes.
- A passionate commitment to children's rights from all duty bearers, ensures that the Convention is evident in all aspects of school life.
- The children and staff demonstrate an extensive and secure knowledge of the articles of the Convention.
- Exemplary use of the voice of the pupils to shape key areas of school life and policy.

The 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:

- Maintain the current excellent practice, particularly the involvement of the children in school improvement and strategic development.
- Be systematic in revisiting the origins of the CRC and its place in the wider framework of Human Rights.
- Continue to be ambitious in seeking to promote awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and engagement in RRSA within the locality and through wider networks.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	<p>There are 214 children on the current school roll, with 9% eligible for support through the Pupil Premium. Approximately 14% of the children are identified as requiring additional support with their learning and 3% have an Education, Health and Care Plan.</p> <p>The most recent inspection, in 2018, judged the school to be “good”.</p>
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher and RRSA coordinator
Number of children and young people interviewed	8 children in steering group; 12 children in focus group, ‘bubble based’ discussions.
Number of adults interviewed	1 teacher, 1 member of learning support staff and a parent governor.
Evidence provided	Detailed evaluation form and a PowerPoint containing a variety of evidence including testimonials from parents written specifically for this accreditation visit.
Registered for RRSA: 19/11/2010	Silver achieved: 20/04/18

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

Adults and children of all age groups, spoke confidently about rights, citing many examples from the CRC during discussions. They demonstrated a good understanding of rights and how they apply in their life at school, at home and the wider world. Children referred to their familiarity with Unicef UK's ABCDE of Rights resource and shared knowledge of the nature of rights being unconditional, universal, inherent, indivisible and inalienable, saying: *"We have rights at birth"*; *"They can't be taken away"*; *"We don't have to do anything to have our rights"*; and, *"All rights are equally important and everyone gets the same rights"*. These comments came at different points during the discussions and were used appropriately, in the right context.

Children explained that they learn about their rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through lessons and assemblies on topics such as environment (pollution), current affairs, health and wellbeing, internet safety and history, explaining for example how their study of World War II included reflection on the impact of the war on children with one pupil explaining that, *"Rights weren't around when it was the world war two and children were kept in bad places."* They have also created information leaflets about children's rights for the wider school community. A child explained, *"We have learned about rights and things around the world."*

The children understood how local and global matters relate to children's rights. They talked about issues such as poverty causing reduced access to education and the impact of climate change and plastic pollution. A Y4 child, speaking about global warming explained, *"It affects us when the planet gets warmer... it can take away our rights because we have the right to clean water, but the earth doesn't have an endless stock of water."* A Y1 pupil pointed out that, *"driving too many cars makes the snow melt for the polar bears, because of all the gas we're using."* One group of children spoke of their discovery about their local river explaining that, *"In 2019, Greenpeace tests found that the River Mersey was the most polluted river in the world."* Another child reflected on child labour, saying, *"Some children don't get to play if they are working, but some children have to go to work to get enough money."* When discussing whether the world is a fair place, a child pointed out, *"It's not really as fair because some children have to work to get money for their families"* and another explained, *"A lot of children don't have access to clean water which is important."* There was also discussion about the fact that *"Refugees have the right to be protected by government."*

The senior leadership team and staff are highly committed and passionate about embedding a rights-based approach across their whole school community and beyond. They have ensured all staff are involved in ongoing professional development about RRSA; policies such as behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, safeguarding policy all referring to children's rights. Through this strategic work and in regular briefings from the headteacher, school governors are well informed and fully support the school's rights-based approach. Parents and the wider school community are also made aware of rights through the school's newsletters, social media platforms, leaflets, attractive informative displays and home learning tasks. A parent governor affirmed, *"RRS work is vital, basically because it underpins children's learning and understanding of themselves in their community and how they are with the world. If we get that right the rest will come."* The headteacher also stated, *"The RRS agenda is not a separate entity. It is woven into the fabric of our curriculum. It is about ensuring that the children are citizens of our future."*

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 know that they are being nurtured in a rights respecting ethos created by the adults in their school community. When discussing the importance of their rights, one child explained, *“They can’t be taken away. They’re important because we need our rights. Our rights look after us.”* Another added, *“If we didn’t have rights then the world would be a different place because children would be treated in a bad way.”* The children were very clear about the role of duty bearers, saying, *“All adults have to make sure children do have their rights.”* The display of ‘Duty Bearer Bears’ also enhances understanding throughout the school of the role played by adults in promoting and protecting rights. When talking about fairness within school, the concept of equity was addressed, with children agreeing that, *“Some people are treated differently in school – some people have different disabilities and the teacher gives extra steps to help them, which is fair.”*

Strong and mutually respectful relationships are a very positive feature of the school. Despite the virtual nature of the visit, it was clear that relationships between children and staff, between children themselves, and among staff were positive, caring and supportive, contributing to a safe, nurturing environment that is upholding everyone’s rights and dignity. The creation and use of rights-based charters supports relationships and respect, with clear actions for both children and adults in school; the RRS behaviour policy that has evolved, influenced by Zones of Regulation, the No Outsiders programme and the consistency in the use of language by staff, have all contributed to the positive ethos created for the children. Reflecting on the development of the school’s behaviour policy being influenced by Zones of Regulation principles, the headteacher explained, *“We have been very explicit with the children that even in a moment of meltdown or crisis, we give that child space and time to reflect. We treat them individually with dignity and respect.”*

The children unanimously agreed that they feel safe and protected in their school and understand this to be their right. Children acknowledged that feeling physically safe is supported by structures such as secure school gates and processes like regular fire drills. Some children also talked about their *“right to privacy”* on the internet and that school has taught them about being safe online by not sharing personal information and awareness of online bullying. Some children also spoke about their confidence in dealing with disagreements or fall outs with one describing, *“standing up for yourself by saying that you have rights.”* The SLT reported that incidents of bullying are very rare at Valewood but if any allegation is made, then the matter is investigated thoroughly and followed through to ensure all families involved are properly informed and the allegation is reported, following the school’s protocols.

The school has prioritised the health and wellbeing curriculum for many years (including through PSHCE) but particularly during the current global pandemic. Topics such as the importance of physical activity and awareness of mental health were identified and spoken about confidently by the children during discussion. They also talked about healthy food choices in their canteen; Yoga; washing hands with sanitiser; and exercise in PE. One child commented, *“yoga is good for your health because it is good for your body and you feel calmer.”* Another child talked about mental health, saying, *“If you feel anxious about something you can always talk to someone here. And to feel more positive, if you think more positively you may feel more positive.”* The school has created regular

emotion ‘check ins’ for the children with their teacher and they encourage the use of colour code systems for children to communicate their emotions and to express themselves, particularly if they are feeling overwhelmed or anxious.

The school has strong policies on inclusion such as the safeguarding and anti-bullying policies, linked explicitly to children’s rights from the CRC. The PSHCE curriculum, the learning and practice promoted through engagement in the No Outsiders programme and the school’s involvement in Votes for Schools are among numerous strategies which contribute to strong inclusive practice. The leadership and staff ensure that children know about different people from their communities and all around the world. The school enables children to have experience of books from a diverse range of cultures to help them explore diversity and a global perspective. Children talked about making people feel welcome in their school, saying, *“We treat people how we want to be treated.”* The children have a peer buddy system to *“make people feel welcome.”* Another explained that if another child spoke a different language, *“I’d ask if they want to play a game and encourage them to join in, to give them confidence.”*

A member of the staff team pointed out that the introduction of children’s rights has added significant value to teaching and learning because *“children are a lot more respectful of each other.”* The headteacher pointed out that Initial Teacher Training students, hosted by the school, comment very favourably on the extent to which children at Valewood are respectful of their learning and of each other. This was borne out in observations and discussion throughout the visit. Children are very clear that their learning is core to their right to an education and they spoke of many ways in which they can actively support the right of others to learn, for example, *“We have shoulder partners, and you help each other with your learning.”*; *“If your partner looks at your work, they can give you ideas about how to improve what you have written.”* They also described reviewing their targets and having choices in their learning. A further indicator of the value that the school’s families place on their children’s education can be seen in the school’s above average rates of attendance (pre Covid).

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 know that they have a voice in their school that is listened to, valued and taken seriously. The headteacher asserted, *“Pupil voice is so strong here. They know they have a voice, they are empowered to take action and they do it with confidence”*. During lockdown, children have continued to be part of improvement discussions with SLT via Zoom calls; children have exchanged letters with staff on some matters; and, they have been involved in decisions with the PTA on outdoor equipment to be improved for the upper stages. A Y1 child explained that there were issues around privacy in their toilets, saying, *“There were no locks in the toilets so no right to privacy. We need to put locks on the toilets, so it feels more private”*. The school’s review of their behaviour policy was heavily influenced by the children; their knowledge of their rights and their understanding of dignity and respect has resulted in a system which is widely acknowledged by children and staff to be a significant improvement on the previous ‘Good to be Green’ approach.

Children are aware of many global issues and understand how they can take action to make a positive difference as active global citizens. Children gave several examples of how they help others access their rights, such as the Reverse Advent Calendar, *“to help other people around the world.”*; Foodbank

UNITED KINGDOM

donations, “we collected food to give to the foodbank which gives food to people who don’t have much”; and the Fairtrade Fortnight tuckshop, “We sell Fairtrade food and the people who grow them get paid fairly.” Children talked about how important it is to have learned about the SDGs, particularly noting Goal 6 and 12, saying, “We need to help communities to stop pollution and have cleaner water.”

The evidence included examples of how some younger children created posters about litter and promoting the recycling of face masks, while others have written to their local MP about the pollution of their local river. Some children have also taken part in Unicef UK’s OutRight campaign which led to them writing letters to the Prime Minister on World Children’s Day. Y2 children have taken part in Votes for Schools and other examples of global citizenship have involved learning about Malala and her fight for girls’ right to education. One child explicitly referenced Article 42, saying, “I want to help children around the world who don’t know about their rights to make sure that they do know about them, because every child has the right that they should know about their rights.”