

# RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>School:</b>           | St. Mary's R.C. Primary School    |
| <b>Headteacher:</b>      | Maureen Galbraith                 |
| <b>RRSA coordinator:</b> | Siobhan Carton and Katherine Watt |
| <b>Local authority:</b>  | Sunderland                        |
| <b>Assessors:</b>        | Kathy Allan and Alwyn Bathan      |
| <b>Date:</b>             | 5 <sup>th</sup> November 2018     |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The assessors would like to thank the pupils, leadership team, staff, parents and governors for their warm welcome to St. Mary's R.C. Primary School, for the opportunity to speak to the school community during the accreditation visit and for the detailed evidence provided prior to, and during, to support the process.

Children's rights are pivotal to the school's work. The Head Teacher said, '*Rights Respecting underpins everything that fits with our mission statement*' and a member of teaching staff explained, '*It's now a long term legacy which has both substance and meaning for the children.*'

Particular strengths of the school are:

- A palpable environment where it can be sensed that rights respecting is being lived and breathed.
- The network of strategies for teaching the school community about rights which has created knowledgeable and confident pupils and supportive staff and governors.
- The seamless linkage of the school's rights-based approach with their Catholic faith, strong Eco work and global citizenship.
- A strong commitment to developing the school's rights respecting work in the face of staffing and leadership changes.

Strands A, B and C have all been met.

## 2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

None required.

## 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 embed your strategies for teaching the school community about rights and share these through your current platforms, eg, school website, Twitter and newsletters.
- Maintain your spotlight on rights respecting language around school to discuss and navigate solutions to any issues which arise.
- Consider formalising and recording planned changes to occur through pupil voice by creating a pupil-led School Improvement Plan which can be monitored and tracked by pupil groups.
- Extend the ambassadorial role of pupils to reach out to other schools, including local secondary schools.

## 4. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

### 4.1. The school context

St. Mary's R.C Primary School has a roll of 422 pupils. The school serves a community of relative monoculture with only 7% pupils having EAL and 16% of pupils being eligible for Pupil Premium funding. There is a lower than average number of SEND pupils at 8% and the last OFSTED inspection in June 2018 graded the school as 'good'.

The school registered to become rights respecting in November 2015 and achieved the RRSA Level 1 Award (now Silver) in June 2017.

## 4.2. Assessment information

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| <b>Self-evaluation form received</b>                   | Yes  |
| <b>Attendees at SLT meeting</b>                        | Executive Head Teacher, Acting Headteacher, RRSA coordinator (DHT), Steering Group Lead, Lead Teachers of UKS2 and LKS2. |
| <b>Number of children and young people interviewed</b> | 53 children  |
| <b>Number of staff interviewed</b>                     | 8 teaching staff<br>1 support staff<br>5 parents<br>1 governor   |
| <b>Evidence provided</b>                               | Learning walk<br>Written evidence  |
| <b>First registered for RRSA: Nov 2015</b>             | <b>Silver achieved: June 2017</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.**

Staff leading the rights respecting journey at St. Mary's have successfully navigated the difficult circumstances of an ongoing Head Teacher appointment (since their Silver accreditation) to embed and develop their rights-based practice. Through a range of strategies, pupils have further extended their understanding of rights and their relevance to their own lives and the lives of others. Pupils' knowledge of rights is impressive. They could quickly list thirteen rights including to relax and play, to shelter, to know about their rights, to not be involved in war, to a voice and to be safe. They articulated that governments were responsible for upholding children's rights along with Duty Bearers, who they recognised as staff and parents, doctors, nurses and police officers. Pupils were unequivocal that rights were universal, unconditional and inherent. Photographs in school showed that the kitchen staff for example, were Duty Bearers for the provision of nutritious food.

Pupils at St. Mary's have learned about rights through relevant lessons, liturgies, themed events (such as Fairtrade Fortnight, Global Goals Week and Anti-Bullying events) and whole school assemblies. The school environment is a rich tapestry of relevant displays which prominently feature rights and Articles, for example, informing the school community about Five-A-Day for Wellbeing (Articles 24 and 31). This learning is celebrated and filtered out to

parents through an effective Twitter account, the school website, and many references on newsletters. Pupils could evidence the denial of rights to children locally, through poor air which could trigger asthma, encountering litter dropped on the journey into school and further afield, that children crossing into America had been separated from their parents and even held in cages. A Year 5 class had learned the story of Malala and studied gender inequality in rights during Global Goals week.

Pupils on the school Steering Group explained that it was their role to uphold rights in school, for example by reminding pupils to bring water bottles, to teach their peers about rights by leading Assemblies featuring their own PowerPoints, for example, during Global Goals Week, to focus on the eradication of poverty, and to *'spread the word about rights by telling other people, for example, when on holiday and make sure they tell others.'* One parent interviewed felt that his children were *'taking embedded values [of RR] through to their next sphere of influence [secondary school].'*

## 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

Pupils at St. Mary's recognise the many rights they enjoy at school, and recounted that they *'have quality lessons'*, after school clubs, clean water and nutritious food, have a clean environment and *'extra support in learning if you need it.'* Rights are threaded into core policies. The School Council regularly review their own child-friendly Anti-Bullying policy. Pupils are clear about how to raise concerns about issues arising in school through worry boxes, School Councillors or their regular Pastoral Support groups.

Staff, pupils, parents and governors were vociferous that the rights respecting approach has further improved the previously respectful ethos at St. Mary's. Staff believe that it has *'promoted a mindfulness and respect of one another's space,'* when pupils are together in corridors, and that RR language has provided *'the tools to allow pupils to sort issues out themselves'*. Charters, (referencing Articles 15, 19 and 31), created by staff and pupils together, for the classroom, for lunch and playtimes, are considered highly effective in positively influencing behaviour when pupils are together, and facilitating the language of negotiation and reconciliation. In regard to being treated in a dignified manner, pupils were able to identify that any 'sensitive' discussions would be conducted privately and quietly in a different room, and that separate toilet facilities for a disabled pupil ensured that they were able to access the help they needed whilst maintaining their privacy. Stickers on pupil lockers remind children that they are there to ensure privacy as well as safety.

Pupils feel safe at St. Mary's and cited high staff supervision and teachers knowing where they were at all times as ways in which adults upheld this right. They were knowledgeable about on-line safety and gave examples of not posting confidential information about

themselves, such as photos featuring their school badge as ways to maintain their right to safety.

The health and well-being of pupils is high priority at St. Mary’s as evidenced by their recent achievement of the Well Being Charter Mark. There is a school counsellor and pupils understand how to access her services. Teaching assistants are trained in ‘Fun Friends’ and ‘Friends for Life’. There has been a key focus on raising pupils’ self-awareness through the 5 A Day programme. The Deputy Head is the school’s Well Being Champion and there is supportive information for parents about children’s well-being, accessible through the school website.

St. Mary’s school community are proud of their inclusivity. One pupil shared that her disability restricted her ability to participate in physical after-school clubs, so school had provided her with a drama club instead. The PE Lead recounted school’s desire that every child would represent the school in a physical activity at some point, and has engaged ‘Sportsability’ to provide a wider range of accessible sports.

Pupils are able to contribute to their learning through the design and purpose of charters. In addition to class charters, there is a whole school charter as well as playground and lunchtime charters. Pupils are asked for opinions, e.g, a Philosophy for Children display posed the question “What makes you YOU?” Pupils enjoyed posting visible responses. They complete questionnaires about school life and tell staff what they have enjoyed most in their topic work.

**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.**

Pupil voice is well established at St. Mary’s, and there are a wide variety of ways in which pupils can express views and participate. Year Six pupils head up Pastoral Support (family) groups which meet regularly and through which concerns can be raised. School Council and the RR Steering group take forward suggestions for change. For example, they support the school’s gardening group which makes a significant contribution to school grounds, and wins a ‘Sunderland in Bloom’ prize every year. Most pupil roles in school are decided democratically using pupil nominations and votes for example, for Head Boy and Girl. Pupils can also be Buddies, join the Gardening, Eco or Fair Trade groups.

There is a comprehensive fundraising programme which is decided by the school’s Mini-Vinnies and pupil nominations. For example, following the death of a long-serving staff member last term, pupils expressed a desire to support the local hospice in which care and support were given. They created their own “Bake Off” to inspire wide participation. A very impressive Eco group promote Article 24 through monitoring energy use (including the turning off of PCs when not in use), recycling and litter picks on Seaham beach are organised regularly. They monitor modes of transport to school, promote cycling and scooting, and organise park and walk events. As a way to reduce waste, they created an ‘unwanted food’

box in the dining hall. If a sealed item or piece of fruit is chosen but not eaten by the pupil, it is placed in the box. At the end of the day, pupils and parents access the box to claim food items (usually fruit) which would otherwise go to waste. The Fairtrade Committee champion the rights of farmers overseas and use imaginative ways in which to deliver their 'pitch', for example, by creating a drama depicting "A Day in the Life of a Coffee Farmer" to engage and inform the audience of pupils and parents. They also run a FairTrade tuck shop. Pupils fill shoeboxes with appropriate gifts for children for Operation Christmas Child, collect for the local foodbank, buy sleeping bags for the local homeless and donate to Open House, a local drop-in for those in need. Pupils have been involved in the UNICEF's OutRight campaign, and worked with the school's Community Police Officer to monitor parking outside school gates. The group wrote to parents explaining about their right to be safe and are currently considering next steps for action. One parent commented that the *"real progression [with RR] is that the children see they can make a difference"*.