

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	St Joseph's RC Primary School
Headteacher:	Mandy Whorlow
RRSA coordinator:	Natalie Lisi
Local authority:	Dumfries & Galloway Council
School context:	A small school with 28 pupils on the school roll. 50% of children are eligible for PEF and 18% have an IEP.
Attendees at SLT meeting:	Headteacher & RRSA lead
Number of children and young people spoken with:	14 across 2 groups
Adults spoken with:	1 class teacher, 1 principle teacher & 3 parents
Key RRSA accreditations:	Registered for RRSA: October 2021 Bronze achieved: March 2024 Silver achieved: June 2024
Assessor:	Jenny Price
Date:	2 December 2025

ACCREDITATION OUTCOME

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

St Joseph's RC Primary School has met the standard for UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award at Gold: Rights Respecting.

1. STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is based on a virtual accreditation visit. 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 accreditation visit, the school completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form and provided a good collection of digital evidence.

It was evident that children's rights are embedded across the school and underpin every facet of school life.

Strengths of the school include:

- Pupils who value child rights education and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of rights and are confident in the concept of rights.
- The extent to which rights and rights respecting language are embedded in the day-to-day life of the school.
- Committed staff who have engaged in a wide range of child rights education CPD, which has positively impacted teaching and learning about rights across the school.
- Strong relationships with parents/carers and families, including a high level of engagement with the Rights Respecting work and the overall life of the school.
- Children who are active participants in reviewing the school's improvement plan as well as shaping and leading their own learning.
- Pupil participation that is valued highly with a range of pupil participation groups giving opportunities for all children to put their suggestions forward and for these to be acted upon.

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 strengthen the use of rights respecting language so that relationships are seen as mutually respectful. Support the RRS steering group to ensure consistency across charters, ensuring the role of duty bearers and rights holders is explicit. The RRSA [Charter Guidance](#) can support with this work.
- Continue to develop an ethos of inclusion and non-discrimination, providing further opportunities to engage children in celebrating the diversity of the local and global community in all its forms, including race, gender, ability, beliefs, sexuality and different kinds of families so that all people feel valued and included. You might find the [Global Dimension calendar](#) a helpful resource.
- Continue to explore with children and staff, the meaning of key concepts underpinning a child rights approach, for example dignity and equity and how these are enacted in school practice. Consider using the [RRSA and Relationships guidance](#) and [RRSA Spotlight](#) CPD resource to support this work.
- Continue to develop strategies to empower pupils to challenge injustice. Encourage all pupils to be involved in campaigning and advocacy work from the perspective of rights, justice and equity so all children are seen as rights holders rather than just recipients of charity. Consider using the UNICEF UK's [Youth Advocacy Toolkit](#) and the [UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development](#) as a framework for this with your pupil leadership groups, who may lead on a campaign for change connected to your existing right of the month calendar.

2. VISIT HIGHLIGHTS

STRAND A	Highlights and comments
<p>1. Children, young people and the wider school community know about and understand the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and can describe how it impacts on their lives and on the lives of children everywhere.</p>	<p>Children shared good knowledge of their rights from the CRC with an understanding of the nature of rights saying, <i>"Rights are for all children all over the world, up to eighteen... but some people don't have their rights [met] sometimes,"</i> and, <i>"Rights can't be taken away."</i> Children discussed ways in which children's rights can be impacted, mentioning wars, poverty, and natural disasters. One shared, <i>"If a country is at war, then children might not have their rights to safety, food or clothing."</i> Teaching about rights and relevant discussions happen through assemblies, class lessons, class novels, events and watching Newsround regularly. The RRS steering group explained, <i>"We do assemblies every week... we learn about rights and link to our SHANARRI wheel."</i> Other children explained, <i>"We normally do rights lessons in class,"</i> <i>"In our Space topic, we are exploring different environments,"</i> and, <i>"We did World War II and compared rights now and then."</i> The RRS lead explained, <i>"We look at the calendar throughout the year at what's topical, we naturally identify rights and adapt into our plans,"</i> and, <i>"We have a Rights Book Bag that goes home with children, and a PDF version to make it accessible for parents."</i> Teaching staff added, <i>"The children connect rights to their learning themselves."</i> The headteacher identified parent engagement as, <i>"...a particular strength of the school... we have an excellent Parent Council chair who very much drives everything forward."</i> Parents added, <i>"Children have good knowledge of rights... their homework is based on rights... school goes above and beyond to let everyone know about rights and what's going on,"</i> and, <i>"I have noticed a huge growth in confidence."</i></p>
STRAND B	Highlights and comments
<p>2. In school children enjoy the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>	<p>Children understand the role of adults saying, <i>"All adults are duty bearers and they make sure we all have our rights [met]."</i> The RRS Lead explained, <i>"We're all using the same rights language."</i> Children understand the concept of fairness and equity, in the context of learning and emotional support with some explaining, <i>"People need more help than others,"</i> <i>"It's fair because they might be different and need different support,"</i> and, <i>"We're not all treated the same all the time because some people don't need as much help... some people might have a disability and need more help."</i></p>
<p>3. Relationships are positive and founded on dignity and a mutual respect for rights.</p>	<p>Relationships are regarded as positive in school between children and between children and adults. Children talked about resolving disagreements, explaining, <i>"The teacher would talk to you in private and hear both sides."</i> Some children described respecting dignity as: <i>"Being kind... inclusive... respectful."</i> The headteacher referred to restorative approaches working well in school, explaining, <i>"We focus on having dialogue with children, building trust that we will listen to them."</i> The RRS lead added, <i>"They use rights language to resolve any problems."</i></p>
<p>4. Children are safe and protected and know what to do if they need support.</p>	<p>Children agreed that school is a safe environment, and that having rights, <i>"...keeps you safe."</i> Children referred to locked doors and lockdown practice, adding, <i>"It makes me feel safer knowing that adults and teachers look after us."</i> Children also pointed out that pupil groups help to teach about safety. The Digital Leaders explained, <i>"We teach online safety to everyone in the school, not revealing personal information... we've written blog posts about it too."</i></p>

<p>5. Children’s social and emotional wellbeing is a priority. They learn to develop healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>Children acknowledged that school prioritises their health and wellbeing, e.g., <i>“We have after school clubs and activities to be healthy.”</i> For emotion check-ins, children explained, <i>“We have Plickers to select ABCD... teachers can see how you feel and it’s private,”</i> and <i>“A teacher would come and talk about how you feel... we have strategies on the wall to help us too.”</i> A parent added, <i>“They speak more openly about any problems or their feelings... they’re not scared of being judged.”</i> The Parent Council talked about opportunities for children and staff to learn Qi-gong, meditation, yoga, mindfulness and a sound bath, <i>“...to model how to look after yourself and each other.”</i></p>
<p>6. Children and young people are included and are valued as individuals.</p>	<p>Children are valued as individuals, with the school investing time and resource into staff development to address a range of needs and to develop a more diverse curriculum. Staff talked about training in neurodiversity and trauma informed practice, to, <i>“...support children that may be dysregulated,”</i> as explained by the RRS lead. Staff added, <i>“We want to empower children to feel more understood.”</i></p>
<p>7. Children and young people value education and are involved in making decisions about their education.</p>	<p>Children value their education and staff value children’s participation in decisions related to their learning. The RRS lead explained, <i>“Children pick the context of learning... they choose the direction of their learning... they have taken their learning in different directions than planned... so we try to have flexibility.”</i> Staff talked about the use of a KWL grid to establish what children know and want to learn before a topic, adding, <i>“A lot of learning is play-based, and they use their voice to design their classroom.”</i> The headteacher pointed out, <i>“Our self-evaluation process makes sure we consult children, parents and staff.”</i></p>
<p>STRAND C</p>	<p>Highlights and comments</p>
<p>8. Children and young people know that their views are taken seriously.</p>	<p>All staff clearly value the participation of pupils, contributing and shaping the life of the school. The headteacher said, <i>“We are all in agreement about the empowerment of our children. We have worked hard to improve the pupil voice groups, and they have expanded.”</i> All children are in a group: Pupil Council; RRS Steering Group; Eco Group; Digital Leaders; STEM Leaders; Enterprise Group; Library/Reading Champions; or House Captains. The headteacher explained that children go through an interview process and, <i>“Each group has its own remit and action plan... the children are very active in making their action plans.”</i> The RRS lead explained, <i>“Every term the Pupil Council give out consultation sheets to involve all children and gather their ideas... they then share these with the staff and the parent council.”</i> Children in the RRS Steering Group explained, <i>“The point in our group is to make school way better than it is,”</i> and, <i>“Because we know about our rights, there’s so many things we can do to improve our school, and we try our best.”</i> Others shared, <i>“If we want things to be improved in the playground or our learning, the duty bearers take our ideas seriously,”</i> and, <i>“On the last improvement sheet, people wanted more play equipment, we had a vote and so we raised money for this.”</i></p>
<p>9. All children and young people have taken action to uphold their rights and the rights of others, locally and globally.</p>	<p>The school facilitates children to advocate for the rights of other children local and globally. Some children shared, <i>“We have coffee mornings to raise money for Macmillan... this helps with the right to health care.”</i> Children shared their passion to look after their school community and how this helps the wellbeing of the planet, saying, <i>“We do litter picking and beach cleans, which links to the rights to have a safe and clean environment,”</i> <i>“The Eco Group planted trees around the school,”</i> and, <i>“We build bird houses, so they have food.”</i> Parents added, <i>“They are recognising that other people across the world might not have rights met... they’re aware of the wider world.”</i></p>