

RRSA RE-ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Carolside Primary School
Headteacher:	Bryan McLachlan
RRSA coordinator:	Lindsey Gillian
Local authority:	East Renfrewshire
Assessor(s):	Steven Kidd
Date:	03 March 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

This is a re-accreditation report.

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

- The ownership and agency demonstrated by the children in shaping their school.
- A passionate and driven senior leadership team striving to continuously improve the experience for each and every child, underpinned by a rights-based approach.
- A warm and positive ethos, where relationships are based on mutual respect.
- Children’s engagement in their learning.

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:

- As the journey progresses, ensure that explicit coverage of rights is not lost, perhaps aided by annual 'refresher' sessions for staff and pupils.
- Enhance your ambassadorial role by reaching out to schools beyond the local area.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	Carolside Primary School is a co-educational non-denominational school covering stages P1 to P7, with attached early years provision. It has a current roll of 796 pupils. 2.4% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals, 5.2% have an Individualised Educational Programme and 4% speak English as an additional language.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher (separate meeting) / 2 x DHT / 2 x PT / RRSA coordinator
Number of children and young people interviewed	31 children in focus groups, 4 on learning walk and 59 children in class visits
Number of adults interviewed	8 teaching staff, 3 parents, chaplain, police officer, early years staff, pupil support assistant
Evidence provided	Learning walk, focus groups, class visits, portfolio of evidence
Registered for RRSA: 28 August 2012	Gold first achieved: 23 March 2017

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

Focus group participants were able to name a wide range of the most well-known articles alongside some less common, such as protection from abduction and parental responsibilities. They were equally comfortable in discussing the nature of rights as inherent, inalienable, indivisible, universal and unconditional. Pupils could talk at length about the contrast between every child’s entitlement to rights, and the reality of the lived experience of many children who were denied access. It was explained that learning about the lives of children in different circumstances had been part of their rights journey, featuring in whole school activities, topic work and assemblies. Rights were visible across the school and were obvious across the school’s online presence, too – mascot ‘Ricky’, the Rights Rhino, featured prominently on the homepage proclaiming the school’s Rights Respecting Status, whilst a standalone “Our Rights” section on the site gave excellent information to visitors. Parents and community representatives confirmed that rights were part of the language of the school, noting their appearance “almost everywhere”, as well as being something about which children often spoke.

Members of the steering group were keen to explain how they had helped to promote rights in their school and in the community, which had taken on a different shape as a result of the many years where rights had been part of the fabric of Carolside Primary. Generally, the activities they described had moved to more implicit manifestations of rights, though they did talk about sharing progress at assemblies and of putting up rights posters around the Clarkston area. They clearly understood the connection of rights to their many and varied charitable activities and it was readily apparent that the pupils had a genuine agency in acting when they felt situations were unfair. Exploration of the Sustainable Development Goals had helped to give this activity a global flavour, though the resulting actions such as the “uniform recycling bank” and “gender equality competition” the group had overseen were very local in delivery.

The Headteacher explained that for Carolside Primary this journey was “more than talking about it at assembly or creating charters, it’s about a lived experience”, reflecting an approach where connections were drawn to every aspect of school life rather than being seen as standalone. Recent years had seen the school focus on relationships, child-led pedagogy and differentiation, but always with rights as that underpinning consideration. Teachers described rights as “one of the cornerstones of what we do”, sharing how they have been encouraged to consider rights in all aspects of their learning and teaching practice, something which they are confident “now comes naturally”. Staff spoke of finding opportunities to discuss rights in many aspects of teaching, including in the nursery where children explored basic rights such as the right to a name and to safety, as well as, for example, using rights as a lens to consider life for children in the wake of natural disasters.

The school had acted upon all of the maintaining recommendations contained in the school’s last report and recognised that there were still some areas where more could be achieved. This typified a desire to continually improve, not for the sake of improvement itself but to “move away from a conveyor belt”, instead seeking to put children, their needs and their rights “at the heart of our improvement agenda.”

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 believed that adults in the school facilitated their access to rights and spoke of numerous examples of how this worked in practice, from first aid provision in the Rainbow Room (Article 24) to access to technology in the DIGIHub (Article 17). The handy article cards dotted around the school ensured that the rights respecting features could be identified at a glance. One place where rights could be seen to have had a clear influence was in the school’s values: Respect, Honesty and Friendship (revised in the last few years following consultation with the whole school community). Embedded across policy and practice alike, the values are well understood and were often mentioned during the visit by adults and children alike. Children were confident in their understanding of equity, appreciating that *“sometimes it’s fairer for things to be different, because if everything was exactly the same, some people wouldn’t be able to do it.”* Charters underpin interaction across classrooms and other spaces in the school.

Relationships had been a key focus area for the school in recent years and the Headteacher talked of a shift away from a behavioural approach: *“We’re using rights to help shape a less punitive approach, where we’re more interested in developing relationships.”* Other SLT colleagues explained that the school now operated a restorative approach based on nurture principles and explicitly linked to rights through the restorative conversations: *“Respect is at the centre... everyone nurtures each other.”* Charters were an important part of the approach, with children and teachers identifying them as a critical starting point each year in deciding how they would approach classroom life – they were cooperatively created and referred to on a regular basis throughout the year. It was clear throughout the visit that relationships were positive and based on mutual respect, something supported by the school’s Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships policy. Children themselves believed the approach to be fair and designed to help them succeed rather than punish, whilst teachers spoke of how children *“instinctively apply the principles in real life... they understand the impact of their behaviour on others”*.

Focus group participants were unanimous that they felt safe at school and understood this as a right. Physical factors were given only passing mention, with pupils turning instead to how *“teachers can help”* and *“people look out for you”*. They were clear that they could approach a teacher or other adult if they had a problem and recognised that safety meant more than the absence of physical harm. They talked of wider support available and mentioned internet safety and road safety initiatives. The local community police officer talked of her involvement educating around those issues, as well as a desire to *“get in that pre-criminal space”*, building trust and empowering children to report if safety is threatened.

Evidence demonstrated the clear priority given to the physical, mental, social and emotional well-being of pupils. Benefitting from a PE specialist, the school ensures children have regular and varied opportunities for physical activity, alongside consideration of mental health through activities such as an Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience Programme. Ongoing exploration of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum area is supplemented by a dedicated week each month which provides a focus for the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included).

“For a school the size that we are, there’s a real community feel,” opined one parent, when talking about their experience. Another spoke of how their son is *“unbelievably supported – the resources he has, I wouldn’t have enough time to list them”*, noting also how the supportive attitudes of classmates has built his confidence. Clearly positive about her child’s experience, she went on to explain that *“as a parent of a child with additional support needs, you often question if it’s the right place for them, but none of this would be possible if the school didn’t give that full education.”* There is a sense that the school is a place where inclusion is the default approach and the needs of children are brought to the fore, indeed the Headteacher described as much: *“We’ve broken down the uniformity. We’re trying to build a deeper understanding of children as individuals. We’re much more responsive now.”*

A recent whole school priority had been the development of child-led pedagogy and the involvement of pupils in shaping their learning is now extensive and impressive. Pupils spoke at length about their ability to choose how and what they learn, describing ideas gathering and shortlisting before voting on which topic to study for example. *“The planning is now done by children”*, explained one teacher, whilst a colleague described how pupils were *“literally shaping the environment”* in discussing classroom layout. Evidence showed much more than the usual target setting and evaluation of progress by children, extending to every aspect of learning, leading to a much more individualised approach.

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

“[Pupils] are consulted on everything... there’s always a pupil survey,” shared one teacher when discussing children’s engagement in decision-making; a colleague followed this up by explaining that such an approach was part of *“the whole ethos of the school – everyone works together.”* Children agreed, believing strongly that their voice was important in influencing the life of the school. Aside from the extensive role in shaping learning, they pointed to the work of the many committees, discussing how they *“have a say in different parts of the school”*. The Headteacher picked up where they left off: *“Children’s voice is embedded, it’s authentic and we act on what they’re saying.”* Evidence backed up the claim, showing how pupils are involved in the creation of the School’s Improvement Plan and the ongoing evaluation of progress, utilising the principles of ‘How Good is OUR School?’ A range of leadership positions are available for pupils, including the committees – during the focus group and on the learning walk pupils pointed out the impact of these roles, in everything from buddying younger children to encouraging participation in STEAM subjects; a current initiative which seemed to have grabbed pupils’ attention was the competition to redesign ‘The Pod’ (a breakout/chillout space for senior pupils).

The school has an impressive record on charitable fundraising and other activity, in which the pupils are fully involved. Conscious of the school’s profile, part of this work has been to look at the experience of children locally who may not have their rights respected all of the time; a particularly productive initiative has been learning about ‘The Cost of the School Day’ which has helped bring

UNITED KINGDOM

home some of those challenges and has complemented a donation drive for the local foodbank and the creation of a School Uniform Recycling Bank, cleverly focussing on its sustainability credentials.

Conversations with pupils during the visit left little doubt as to their agency, with a pervasive sense that they had the power to make a difference. Rather than a single standout campaign, focus group participants provided a flood of examples, which they seemed to consider natural: *“we just picked up the litter”*, *“we wrote to Marks and Spencer about a unisex section”*, *“we spoke to the dinner ladies about eco-friendly packaging”*, *“now the soup cups are different”* etc. Although the examples were many and varied, the environment was a recurring theme, perhaps reflective of their learning about the Global Goals, so it was fitting that one pupil summed it up thus: *“We want to stop global warming. We’re damaging the planet. We only have one planet, so we have to take care of it.”* Parents could see the impact of this learning – *“They’re very worldly wise”* – as could one of the school’s chaplains – *“They don’t always talk about rights, they talk about fairness, values, global awareness...”* Whatever language they use, it was clear that the children of Carolside Primary School are confident, empowered citizens who are more than ready to change their world.