

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Kirkcaldy High School
Headteacher:	Derek Allan
RRSA coordinator:	Jacqueline Young
Local authority:	Fife Council
Assessor(s):	Jenny Price & Clare Westwood
Date:	20 th November 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessors would like to thank the children and young people, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), staff and parents for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with adults, children and young people 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.

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:

- A variety of opportunities for all children and young people, for meaningful participation throughout the school, influencing improvement and affecting change
- Children and young people feeling valued, included and empowered in their school.
- The health and wellbeing of all children is a priority of the school.

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 to develop awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Global Goals) to inspire responsible, active, global citizenship through advocacy and campaigning for children’s rights.
- Continue to develop the language of rights to ensure consistency, adapting to the evolving capacity of both young people and adults. [ABCDE of Rights](#) will help with this.
- Continue to strive for creative ways to ensure young people’s voices are heard on all matters relating to school life and its wider community (including parents), e.g. informal ad-hoc sessions with random selection of pupils to address specific needs/issues that arise.
- Further develop an ambassadorial role of both young people and adults of the school across the wider community, including other schools.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	A non-denominational secondary school with a roll of 1223 pupils. 21.3% are registered for Free School Meals (FSM). According to INSIGHT data, 17% have specific learning difficulties and 9% with SEBD. 4% are considered to have English as their additional language (EAL).
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher, 3 Depute Headteachers (DHT), LGBT coordinator (Science teacher), RRSA Lead (Modern Studies teacher) and previous RRSA Lead (now based in a different school)
Number of children and young people interviewed	27 pupils across 2 focus groups, 6 children on the learning walk and 3 class visits (S1 English, S1 Science, S4 Modern Studies)
Number of adults interviewed	15 adults: 5 teaching staff, 1 support staff, 1 ex-parent, 1 Chair of parent council, 1 School Liaison Officer (Police), 2 Youth Workers, 1 Community Education Worker, 1 Active Schools Coordinator, 1 Rotary Youth Support, 1 Counsellor (DAPL)
Evidence provided	School tour, focus groups, speech at assembly, written evidence, class visits
Registered for RRSA: 03/03/14	Silver achieved: 27/03/18

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

All young people spoken with demonstrated an extensive knowledge and understanding of their rights, citing many examples of articles from the CRC during discussions, in classes and the school tour. They clearly understand the role of duty bearers as those who “*promote and protect our rights*”. Adults and young people, although not explicitly referenced, demonstrated some understanding of the nature of rights being unconditional, universal, inalienable, inherent and indivisible explaining that all children have rights regardless of religion or nationality and that no rights should be earned or taken away. An S1 pupil explained, “*Rights are for all children under 18, all around the world*”. Some pupils also explained how governments should help “*poorer countries, with no education, clean water, food or in war zones*”. It was clear that everyone understands the impact knowing about rights can have on children and young people to feel safer and more empowered. When asked what the role of the RRSA group was, one member explained, “*to make sure everyone is aware of their rights and they feel valued in their school*”. Another member added, “*to protect our rights and focus on important ones to improve and make a happy school*”.

The SLT are extremely dedicated to embedding a rights-based approach thoroughly across the school, facilitating this through: a wide range of pupil led groups; regular house assemblies addressing rights and the sustainable development goals (SDG); review of the Relationships Policy to align with the CRC; daily bulletins which highlight rights of the week, word of the week and global goals; the creation of a whole school “Learning Charter” with a focus on respecting the right to learn; and comprehensive termly newsletters outlining the variety of opportunities for young people and how this enhances their lives and access to rights. The Headteacher pointed out that “*we are not trying to reach a specific standard; this is just the right thing to do*”. As a Pupil Support Assistant claimed, “*This school goes to town on children’s rights*”.

Learning about rights is linked to and responds to local and global events but is now also explicitly referenced across most of the curricular areas, particularly BGE (broad general education), delivered throughout the school with many examples offered by staff and pupils: Modern Studies (crime/protection rights and juvenile justice, Global Goals, Global Terrorism, fake news); RME (moral dilemmas, stereotypes), Science (clean water experiment, digestive system/healthy food); and, English (child labour, child soldiers, Charlie & Chocolate Factory). Staff talked about the positive impact of learning about rights on the children and young people, saying, “*Students are more aware of their world outside school and how they can impact their community whether this is positive or negative*”.

In addition, staff talked about how their own continued learning about children’s rights and the principles of the convention has altered their way of thinking, for example, how questions in maths are phrased to acknowledge diversity and equality, “*normalising different family situations*”. Time has been made for staff to ensure they are able to make explicit links to rights in their everyday practice: in-service and staff collegiate time has been dedicated to understanding the CRC, RRSA and other approaches which align with RRSA such as ACE awareness, restorative approaches and mental health first aid. Staff have also acknowledged that they have learned through the young people at assemblies. All of which has led to “*innovative lessons which have evolved in an organic way, cultivating a cohesive, shared vision*” as explained by the Headteacher.

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 and young people were very clear that their school is a place where they get to enjoy a wide range of their rights, saying, *“all our rights are respected”*. One pupil talked about how learning is happening *“in an environment where our rights are met and there are positive outcomes for everyone”*. Pupils talked about how their school makes them feel safe, valued and empowered and some showed awareness of how the school addresses poverty related issues in their own school, acknowledging that *“some children in our school are suffering and we know the school supports everyone the best they can”*. Examples of access to support given were, subsidised breakfast club; LGBT group; and, guidance teachers. It was clear that all children and young people spoken with feel confident that the school will address any concerns where rights are not being met.

Positive relationships based on mutual respect, between pupils and staff and between pupils was observed throughout the visit. Members of the SLT described their pupils as confident, sociable, engaging, welcoming and generally happy, with the Headteacher pointing out that, *“RRS has pervaded our ethos here”*. A DHT continued, *“children know its ok to be themselves here, we’ll support their journey. They support each other and respect for each other is huge”*. A pupil affirmed, *“rights have helped to bring children and teachers together. We are all working together”*. An Active Schools’ representative said, *“I get a lot of respect from staff and pupils here”*. Aligning restorative practice and “Pivotal” (behaviour specialist) staff training with RRS approaches to respect dignity has been *“a kick start to changing our mindsets”* explained a teacher. A Pupil Support Assistant explained how he had taken up the post because as a parent he was so impressed at the *“genuine community”* of the school.

All children and young people agreed they feel safe in school, largely due to the positive relationships fostered with staff, particularly guidance teachers. Several articles were cited relating to safety and protection and examples were given of how the school promotes and ensures safety: No Bystanders anti-bullying campaign; School Liaison Officer (Police) sessions in school; and youth groups (in and out of school). The School Liaison Officer (Police) explained that every Friday afternoon the school facilitates an open session with the Police to support pupils regarding issues relating to peer relationships, drugs, alcohol and gangs in the community and said, *“this is the best school in terms of pupil response. We have a great relationship with them”*. The Youth Workers highlighted their involvement with children and young people in and out of school, supporting youth clubs, groups, assemblies, litter picking, and fundraising events to help the homeless, *“all from children’s ideas”*. The Youth Workers are also supporting young people to contribute to their NDP (Neighbourhood Development Plan) to ensure a safer community, involving for example, an anti-drink campaign.

The health and wellbeing of children and young people is of paramount importance across the school. Several “nurture” groups have been established to support emotional and social wellbeing: Friendship Group; Meditation Group; Walk & Talk; and Mental Health Ambassadors (MHA). Pupils explained that the MHA plan to, *“create a safe place for all to address stress and anxiety”*. Members of the nurture groups are currently creating a small ‘Serenity Garden’ through the woodlands around the edge of the school grounds, with a memorial area (in response to recent incidents for the school community). Some pupils talked about “Our Minds Matter” framework for Fife Council to support children and young people’s emotional wellbeing and how some were involved in the development of the Fife “five ways

to wellbeing” which also acknowledges Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as explained by some of the pupils. A pupil who attended the Young Scot (SYP) conference in Edinburgh said, “*we want to combat the stigma of mental health*”. One pupil, new to the school, explained how in English she had been able to research and write about mental health to express herself and said, “*this school has such an accepting, friendly environment it has changed my life around*”. Pupils are encouraged to have a physically active lifestyle evidenced through the close relationships with Active Schools and having recently achieved SportScotland Silver Award. The Active Schools representative said, “*we collectively help towards positive destinations for young people*”. A pupil stated, “*We have the right to be nourished and to live a healthy life*”. And a PSA/parent added, “*I am taken aback by how much activity there is about rights and by how the welfare of children is being taken into consideration*”.

The school was described by one pupil as “*super inclusive*”. Others agreed and explained how knowing about their rights to a voice, to share ideas and opinions and to be involved in decisions that affect them has undoubtedly ensured they feel valued as individuals. A pupil said, “*we are encouraged to stand up for what we believe in*”. Another said, “*the school takes on board our differences and what we may face outside school*”. When talking about sport opportunities and school trips, one pupil pointed out that “*there are no finance barriers here, it’s really inclusive*”. The school is creative in the opportunities they create to support children and young people in a variety of ways: DAPL (Drugs, Alcohol & Psychotherapy) have their own room in school for 2 days; Art therapy; the school nurse provides free contraception and sanitary products; a numeracy group addresses the poverty related attainment gap; breakfast club; and, free soup for all at lunch times. The LGBT group is very active, promoting the rights to non-discrimination and they are currently working towards the Gold LGBT Scotland Youth Charter. It was also pointed out that although the titles have remained as Head Boy/Girl, this is subject to change if required and that “*becoming a Head Boy or Girl is based on credibility not gender identity*”. A pupil said, “*No one is more important, teachers and pupils are equal*”.

Children and young people evidently understand their right to good quality education for all. Extensive work on a whole school Learning Charter outlines how everyone can show respect for learning. One pupil explained, “*teachers and children worked together to create this*”. Particularly active Junior and Senior Learning Councils link in with the pupil forum groups to “*talk about how classes can be improved*”. All pupils have regular learning conversations to discuss strengths and areas of development, using their e-portfolios for self-evaluation. Displays in each class visited say, ‘Change your words, change your mindset’ supporting the development of a ‘Growth Mindset’. A Learning Hub in the school was described as a quiet space used mostly by senior pupils during free periods, but open to all. The Community Education Worker talked about engaging with the school on partnership projects to improve attendance, employment opportunities and personal development for young people (such as Ocean Youth Trust voyage and LGBT charter Gold).

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 and young people all spoke positively about opportunities to be involved in decisions that have improved their school community. Learning Council members apply to be involved; Forum Groups are based on representatives from each tutor group who are voted in; similarly, the Pupil Senior Leadership Team (PSLT) are elected by pupils. The Forum Group has tackled issues relating to curriculum, uniform, homework and road safety. There are also a variety of pupil led groups who

meet at lunchtimes which are open to all, such as LGBT, RRSA, and the Equalities Group. A RRSA group member said, *“there is a lot of pupil voice here”*. A Guidance teacher said, *“Pupil voice is massive here”* and explained how children attend their own LAC meetings and children’s hearings, supported by the school and CLD advocacy. The guidance teacher also said, *“children are involved in big decisions driven by the ethos of the school, based on the UNCRC”*. Another member of staff said, *“children’s own views shine through since working on this RRSA approach”*. When talking about pupil voice and how it impacts on relationships and participation, one pupil stated, *“We are always listened to here”*. Another explained, *“We plan to talk through procedures with our Headteacher in the policies”*. A member of the Parent Council said, *“pupil groups come to our parent council meetings and don’t just quote articles, they explain it as language of the CRC without it being tokenistic – they believe in what they are doing and the principles about it, it is really embedded”*.

There are a wide variety of opportunities for children and young people to engage in action to campaign or advocate for children’s rights locally and globally. Pupils have been involved in environmental campaigns: Dunnikier tree planting project, coastal path clean up, litter picks, climate change challenges and reusable containers in HE. When addressing fairness around some children not always accessing their rights, some pupils referred to poorer countries with no education or clean water and food, saying they felt “guilty” or “annoyed” because, *“it isn’t fair that people are being denied their rights. It is risking lives not having enough food”*. Others went on to say, *“children’s rights matter”* and, *“we need to make sure all countries know about and live by the UNCRC”*. The school has supported children and young people to be involved with donating/fundraising for: McMillan coffee morning; local foodbank; ShoeBox appeal; Children in Need; Comic Relief; Motor Neurone Disease; Air Ambulance; Send a friend to school. The Charities Committee has promoted and supported the Cottage Family Centre appeal through assemblies, to provide food, clothes and toys to local children. A pupil explained that, *“we are trying to end poverty. We see poverty in our community as a big issue”*. Pupils also acknowledged that, *“our school is making us aware that it starts with us and that we can make the change”*. The Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), led by the RME department supports pupils to participate in a charity competition; Involvement with the Rotary Youth Speaks initiative has empowered several young people to express their views and campaign for rights; staff and pupils have visited their partner school in Rwanda (summer 2019) seeing first hand some of the inequalities that exist globally.