

RRSA REACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	St John's Academy
Headteacher:	Sean Hagney
RRSA coordinator:	Amy Downie
Local authority:	Perth & Kinross Council
Assessor(s):	Jenny Price & Jane Westall
Date:	10 th September 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

This is a reaccreditation.

The assessors would like to thank the children, 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. The Headteacher said, "*RRSA is about the culture of our school where we recognise every child has rights and as part of the respect culture, we have evolved our thinking. Rights are unconditional.*" When asked why St Johns should be a Gold RRS, children said: "*We promote rights*"; "*Our school is based on children's rights*"; "*We always look for new ways to learn our rights*" and "*We respect everyone's rights and beliefs here*".

Particular strengths of the school include:

- Good relationships between children and young people across all stages and between the children and staff, based on mutual respect, creating a positive ethos throughout the school.
- Embedded knowledge of rights of children, young people and staff.
- Parent engagement.

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 explore language and vocabulary around children’s rights to include things such as duty bearers, dignity and equity.
- Continue to develop opportunities for pupil participation, such as: Child friendly SIP; additional pupil led groups (perhaps linked to SIP).
- Continue to find creative ways to ensure rights are a prominent feature of displays eg charters, learning walls and information sharing notice boards.
- Continue to develop the campaign opportunities for children and young people across all stages, consider taking part in [OutRight](#) and/or using Unicef’s Advocacy Toolkit to support this.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	A Roman Catholic all-through school (nursery to secondary) with a current roll of 1093 pupils. 12% of pupils were registered for free school meals. 24% of pupils live in the most deprived data zones in Scotland (SIMD 1 & 2). 31% pupils have additional support needs (ASN) and approximately 33% are considered to have English as an additional language (EAL).
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher, Depute Headteacher (RRSA lead) & Depute Headteacher
Number of children and young people interviewed	28 pupils in RRS group, 10 pupils in nursery/primary group, 16 pupils in secondary focus groups, 5 pupils on the learning walk and 3 class visits
Number of adults interviewed	6 teaching staff, 2 support staff, 3 parents, 1 career coach, 1 outdoor education
Evidence provided	Learning walk, focus groups, written evidence, class visits
Registered for RRSA: 20/12/11	Silver achieved: 03/04/14 Gold Achieved: 07/11/14

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

The children and young people spoken with across both the primary and secondary stages were very knowledgeable about a variety of articles from the CRC, referencing them frequently during discussions throughout the visit. There was a good understanding that rights are unconditional and universal with many children also talking about “*..being born with rights.*” and “*...just having them*” regardless of nationality, language and religious beliefs. A member of the RRSA group said, “*Everyone has rights until they are eighteen and we need to make sure that everyone’s rights are respected.*” Some also acknowledged that rights cannot be earned or taken away, and others referred to the importance of all rights when talking about designing their class charters.

Most children and young people spoken with showed an understanding of how local and global issues and sustainable development are linked to rights, saying, “*Things like poverty around the world means that some children are not getting what they are entitled to.*” Another added, “*We are aware of other values, so as a whole we can work together to make things better, like social issues and poverty, we can help charities.*”

It was very clear that the senior leadership team (SLT) and staff are committed to embedding and sustaining a rights-based approach across their school, linked strongly with the school’s values of fairness, achievement, respect and love (FARL), with the Headteacher saying, “*Having rights embedded into our practice is fundamental to our school.*” A range of strategic approaches has ensured that teaching and learning about rights has been sustained since achieving Level 2 in 2014, such as: ‘Article of the Month’ linked to relevant current affairs or school events; daily bulletins shared in tutor groups (secondary); high profile displays throughout the school with links to articles from the CRC; class charters in every class, some linked to articles; staff training/induction on children’s rights; whole school assemblies addressing children’s rights and global matters and, regular newsletters (for families and the wider community) with relevant articles illustrated throughout. The SLT also acknowledged that “*rights language has supported challenging conversations with parents.*”

Both staff and parents talked about the positive impact the RRSA journey has had on their children. Parents spoken with agreed that their children “*are more aware of the world around them*” and that “*they talk in a more emotionally mature way.*” Staff from both the primary and secondary stages talked about their pupils being more resilient, empathetic, knowledgeable and respectful, one member of staff saying, “*the language of rights has laid the foundations for really good restorative conversations and to help modify behaviour and attitudes towards each other.*” Another explained how the use of rights language has “*become more natural.*” In the nursery, free flow play areas, child friendly rights language displayed, and a wellbeing wall illustrated how they incorporate rights into the life of 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

Children and young people spoken with in focus groups and class visits referred to many ways their school facilitates access to rights, such as pupil voice through house councils, participatory budget and Talented Fundraisers; feeling safe and protected; learning about physical & mental health; and most agreed they enjoy quality education in their school. It was clear that both children and adults understand the role that adults play (as duty bearers) in promoting and protecting children’s rights and most children were able to identify at least one adult who they trust and would go to should they feel that their rights were being infringed upon in or out of school. Some of the primary children talked about fairness and equity in the context of their classroom, acknowledging *“personalised support”* saying that if some need more help, *“the teacher will help whoever needs it most”*. Some also reflected on fairness and equality around the world, linking to rights and justice, saying, *“Some children don’t get any food, clean water or a home to live in, because of wars, floods, tsunamis or lots of rain, which isn’t fair”*.

It was very clear that relationships between children, and between children and adults across the whole school are based on mutual respect and are a key strength of the whole school. Children and young people talked about staff being approachable, caring and helpful and that children and young people trust that any situations are dealt with fairly and promptly. Parents also echoed this view and a newly revised Relationships Policy also supports this. Both staff and pupils acknowledged how charters being regularly updated and referenced supports positive relationships and helps *“to remind us of our rights”*. The Headteacher said, *“Charters are a gift. They are an opportunity to build relationships and ethos within the class”*. Many children and young people explained how seldom bullying or fall outs occur and that they realise how lucky they are to have such a small, *“safe community feel”* where they are respected. Staff talked about how the *“common language of rights”* built up over several years has supported many discussions regarding behaviour, conflict as well as global matters that arise. When discussing relationships and resolving conflict, a secondary pupil said, *“We know how we should be treated and how to treat others – learning about rights has helped with this”*. Another stated, *“If you have been in an argument you get to share your side of the story. We hear each other’s side of the story and this helps pupils and teachers to sort things out.”* The use of playground tickets, restorative conversations and explicit teaching of rights has ensured *“better understanding of each other,”* as explained by a member of staff and, *“prevents escalation of any problems.”*

The children and young people in the focus groups unanimously agreed that they feel safe and protected in their school and understand this to be a right. Some talked about friends and staff keeping them safe, while others talked about security of the building. Safety related lessons feature throughout the Health and Wellbeing curriculum in both primary and secondary as well as in tutor groups (organised vertically from S1-6). Children in primary talked about first aid trained staff while secondary pupils talked about *“improving the infrastructure in our community, outside school, to be safer, by speaking to bus drivers and councillors, which has been supported by school”*. A secondary pupil explained the importance of everyone knowing about their rights, saying, *“If you know your rights then you know when your own rights are maybe not being respected, which helps to keep us safe”*.

During the tour, a child said, *“Health is more than physical health, mental health is important too”*. Many children and young people agreed that there are support systems in place to access information

that they need to be healthy, with regards to food and emotional health. Tutor groups in secondary have clear curriculum plans in place to cover topics such as: substance abuse; body image; young carers; stereotyping and prejudice; relationships; safer internet and poverty, among many others. The school also delivers ‘Roots of Empathy’ to all, which was explained by a primary child as, *“relating to each other’s feelings”* which clearly links in with the restorative approaches adopted by the school. A range of additional activities in place support health and wellbeing: Mind Space for all; Bounce Back; relaxation sessions; enhanced transitions; exam resilience; and an annual health week where children explore physical and mental health issues, such as healthy snacks, dealing with “feelings being hurt” as well as lots of sport activities, all of which have been linked to respecting children’s rights and Catholic teaching. A teacher explained that through outdoor education, children and young people are *“...building confidence to learn new skills, building resilience and building an awareness of their wider community, appreciating nature and their environmental impact.”*

Children and young people all reported feeling included and valued as individuals. When talking about feeling valued during the tour, a child pointed out the name writing area in the nursery and said, *“Everyone’s names mean something”*. Many examples of how ideas have been taken forward were provided and many talked about the diverse nature of their school and how they respect differences throughout. Many children spoke about having their right to express their opinions in school and how teachers have helped them to listen to each other’s opinions better through restorative conversations. In addition to this, the school is creative in how they allocate their Pupil Equity Funds with financial support for uniform, bus vouchers for children to be able to attend after school clubs, “A taste of St John’s” to support families over summer holidays, equipment loans, additional staffing for a family learning hub and a library intervention project.

It was evident that children and young people respect the right to education for themselves and others. Some acknowledged how they are involved in their learning, setting targets during “target time” with their teacher and sharing learning. Staff talked about regular learning conversations with their pupils and acknowledged that finding natural links to rights in everyday learning sometimes comes from the children. The consistent use of rights language has enabled conversations about rights to happen naturally in addition to planned learning about rights, showing that children and young people are understanding and applying their knowledge to their world around them. Learning about rights has happened through interdisciplinary learning (IDL) on class topics such as: Scotland history, comparing children’s rights in the past, child labour, war and conflict, Fairtrade; country studies of rights, recycling, production of toys and the history of floods.

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 from both primary and secondary spoke with confidence about feeling empowered to respect the rights of others locally and globally and how they uphold their own rights. A child said, *“I feel that our ideas are listened to and taken forward”*. Some of the primary children talked about supporting charities, speaking to the government or local councillors to help others who may not be getting their rights met. Those spoken with all agreed that their opinions are listened to and taken seriously regarding school improvement. Secondary pupils also talked about the ‘participatory budget’ allocated to a pupil led group saying, *“we get to help to decide how money is spent,”* on things such as supporting sports teams, new bins, improved seating for break times and buddy benches, outdoor and playground equipment. There are several pupil groups set up facilitating leadership opportunities with connections to children’s rights, such as: RRSA, Eco, Fairtrade and Sports Committees as well as a House Council.

Children and young people also discussed action they have taken to uphold and promote rights of children locally and globally, with a strong understanding around poverty related issues being demonstrated. Some pupils described how they have been actively involved in campaigning about local road safety, supported by using the Sustrans 'Hands Up' survey and creating banners for public display and interviews with local bus drivers. Additionally, the pupils spoke about campaigning to make the entire area around their campus a smoke free zone which they linked to their right to safety and a clean environment as well as supporting their local foodbank. Pupils explained that initiatives that are run in school naturally encourage them to be global citizens, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award which enables young people to contribute to their local community. Senior pupils also referred to their involvement in the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) which has enabled them to identify relevant local charities addressing social issues, in particular they learned about disability access and respite. One pupil explained that, *"This [YPI] is a great opportunity as you get 'free rein' in terms of what charity you choose and everyone becomes educated on a range of issues."* Primary 7 children have taken the lead through the Scotland Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) "Talented Fundraisers" enterprise project to raise money for developing countries. Children talked about how this project enables SCIAF to be able to tackle issues such as poverty faced by children and families in affected countries. Children also spoke about the 'Romania Mercy Project' which raises money for the Marie Curie Children's Hospital in Bucharest, as well as sharing their involvement in the intergenerational project with a local care home.

Members of the RRS steering group were very clear in their purpose to, *"Make sure that in school everyone's rights are respected."* An older pupil added that, *"We act as ambassadors and coordinators in school to organise and promote events (linked to rights) that the whole school community can access and contribute to."* When asked what it meant to them to be a global citizen one pupil explained, *"It means you feel valued and you value everyone else's values. As a whole team, we can work together to make things around the world better, such as poverty."*