

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
Headteacher:	Tom Johnson
RRSA coordinator:	Anthony Hughes
Local authority:	Trafford MBC
Assessors:	Martin Russell and Pat Peaker
Date:	2 nd July 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank the children, the leadership team, staff, parents and governors 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 provided a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form.

It was clear throughout the visit that everyone really valued and contributed to the increasing impact of a rights based approach on all aspects of school life.

Particular strengths of the school are:

- Very strong leadership and a clear commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) across the team
- The high level of confidence among the children to speak about their rights and to make connections to rights from their learning and in their wider lives.
- High levels of parental engagement with the school's rights respecting work and a growing appreciation that their children are learning about their rights.
- Highly effective promotion of rights locally and the establishment of a campaigning culture through which the children are inspired and empowered to speak out for their rights and the rights of others.

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

2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

None

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 seek creative ways of being outstanding ambassadors for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in your locality and beyond.
- Consider evaluating all current work around emotional wellbeing and mental health to ensure a higher profile and greater coherence in this important area.
- Further develop your commitment to learning about global citizenship and sustainable development. Consider sustained use of the [World's Largest Lesson](#) materials to engage with the UN Global Goals.

4. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	A slightly smaller than average primary school with 233 children on roll; it serves an increasingly diverse community both in terms of heritage and socio-economic factors. The proportion of children speaking English as a second language is 32% and the proportion eligible for Pupil Premium is 37% - both figures are higher than the average for England. The school provides additional learning support for a significant number of children but the proportion with a formal EHC Plan is in line with the national figure.
School evaluation: Gold form received	Yes
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher, deputy Headteacher and the RRSA coordinator (also an SLT member)

Number of children and young people interviewed	25 children in focus group plus two classes spoken with during the tour.
Number of staff interviewed	2 teaching staff 2 support staff 3 parents 2 governors
Evidence provided	Learning walk Written evidence Focus groups and classroom discussions
First registered for RRSA: February 2016	Silver achieved: July 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 living.

Strand A has been achieved

Knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is embedded at St Matthew's. The children could speak about a range of rights such as to privacy, to relax and play, to be kept safe, to reliable information, to your name and identity and follow your own religion. They clearly understood that rights are unconditional and inalienable; as one pupil explained "*Even if people are naughty, they still have their rights*" with another adding that you "*...should have all of your rights until you are 18!*" They understood the concept of the CRC as the source of all the different articles. The children knew that "*All adults in and out of school*" are the Duty Bearers for their rights and they also mentioned sports coaches, wider family and the Government having this role. Curriculum based learning is regularly linked explicitly to rights across all phases and this has become the norm; staff and children gave numerous examples such as Y4 relating the actions of Malfoy in 'Harry Potter' to their anti-bullying work around articles 19 and 37, and Y6 work on World War II exploring propaganda in the context of article 17.

The children were able to link many national and global issues to children's rights. They spoke about children living from scavenging in countries such as Cambodia and how this was unsafe, may separate them from their families, denied them an education and was an unhealthy way to live, forcing them to work with no time to relax and play. With equally varied articles in mind, they also spoke of the impact of war and natural disasters. Recognising limited access to rights of some children in the UK they commented on the impact of homelessness and if "*Your parents aren't treating you properly.*" The Headteacher and SLT place strong focus on learning for global citizenship; "*We have always promoted compassion and caring but the CRC helps the children to understand their lives and the world. It's a prism through which they can see everything.*"

The commitment of staff, governors and a growing number of parents to the CRC and to rights respecting is extensive and highly impactful. Classroom staff explained that rights "*...have become part of the children's day to day conversation. They spot links to rights everywhere.*"

The senior leaders have interwoven the CRC with the school’s Christian vision and mission; the school improvement plan, to which the children contribute, is introduced with an explanation of how articles 12 and 29 are directly related to the school’s motto, ‘Let Your Light Shine.’ One of the SLT summed up their commitment, *“For children whose parental voice is not strong, the school takes up the banner of being the duty bearer, advocating for those children.”* The CRC is explicitly referred to in any meeting about individual children and external professionals have commented on the power of the language of rights.

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

The children explained a wide variety of ways in which the adults in school enable them to enjoy a wide range of rights including the rights to relax and play, to learn, to join groups, to medical treatment and to have clean water and healthy food. They were very clear about their role in speaking up if they felt that a right was not being accessed and gave examples such as *“You should speak to a safeguarding leader.”* They went on to explain the role of trusted adults and spoke about *“Someone you can rely on...they will tell the right person.”* The children spoken with knew that fair treatment does not mean treating everyone exactly the same, *“You get fair opportunities but some people might need extra help with different things.”* Another pupil added, *“We are all still equal though.”* Parents and staff have noticed increased confidence in the children and a willingness to *“Speak up appropriately, if something wasn’t right.”* The Headteacher said that the children will make it known if they feel an injustice and spoke about a letter complaining about the provision of additional intervention time adversely affecting a child’s time for PE – the situation was rectified.

Mutual respect was apparent in all relationships seen during the visit and is one of the key principles of the school alongside ‘peace’ and ‘compassion’. One way in which positive relationships are promoted and valued is through the ‘Rights Respector of the Term’ award with nominations from children and adults. The school has begun to introduce the concept of ‘dignity’ to the children and their understanding of this is developing well. One pupil said *“Dignity is about the respect you have for yourself.”* Another added, *“It’s partly to do with your privacy.”* School data and conversations with the pupils showed that conflict and significant disagreements have reduced significantly at St Matthew’s. They explained that knowing about rights can help when there are fall-outs, *“You can talk about the right to play and choose about joining in groups.”* The children were keen to point out that if there are arguments, adults are fair and balanced in their response *“They talk to you individually and always look at the two sides.”* The children expressed high levels of trust that adult intervention has positive outcomes when there are disagreements and that all involved respect the dignity of others, *“You wouldn’t go around spreading what’s happened.”*

All children spoken with agreed that they felt safe at school and were confident to approach a trusted adult if they had any concerns. Examples of things that they said help them to enjoy their right to be safe included locked doors with ‘fobs’ for adults, fire drills, fences round school and *“The Headteacher welcomes everyone outside in the morning.”* The school’s own survey

returns show the vast majority feel safe at school and, in discussion, it was apparent that issues around online safety, safeguarding, first aid and SRE were all understood in terms of children's rights. The school makes use of external links, such as, with the PCSO and Greater Manchester's 'Crucial Crew' to further promote safety in and out of school. The very rare incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour are dealt with very promptly and in a rights respecting way; the children feel empowered to resolve situations themselves or, if necessary, to seek adult help. One parent commented that *"Even with fall-outs at home the children are more respectful of each other's rights."* and went on to speak about their child showing respect for the right to privacy of an older sibling.

The children consider themselves to be very well informed about their physical health and wellbeing, sharing examples about healthy eating, balanced diet, food types and hydration. They spoke about a number of school clubs adding to their opportunities for fitness and exercise already provided in PE. Health and personal hygiene are embedded in the curriculum inculcating clear messages such as *"Wash your hands with soap before lunch."* shared by a Y2 pupil. A lesson about personal hygiene was visited (unplanned) during the tour and the children were readily able to connect their learning with a number of articles. The school promotes children's social and emotional wellbeing in a number of ways; the children valued, for example, the 'worry box' system which they said works well and is always checked and followed up. This is complemented by a 'worry monster' system for the youngest children. When asked about mental health, pupils commented *"How you feel is really important, you should talk about feelings and how to solve things."* Building positive self-esteem is greatly valued at the school and it was pointed out that *"Because children respect each others' rights, they celebrate and congratulate each other on being successful."*

Inclusion is a long established priority at St Matthew's and the children spoke with enthusiasm about numerous ways in which everyone has the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of school life. One boy pointed out, *"people don't judge each other. There is hardly any bullying."* Exploring the ideas of inclusion and non-discrimination with them elicited the following remarks: *"people with all different religions and skin colours are treated well."* and *"If there is a trip and somebody is unable to go the teachers make sure they have fun stuff to do back at school."* A governor, commenting on the overall impact on the school since engaging with RRSA, observed, *"The whole school atmosphere has improved even more.... There is a real sense of being one happy family."* Staff, too have noticed a difference among and between the children, *"with older ones now much more willing to look out for and help the youngest."* The school has clear evidence of a significant reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions since their engagement with RRSA.

The children were very enthusiastic about their learning and valued their right to an education. They conveyed a sense of empowerment and described a number of ways in which they are involved in setting their own targets and understanding what they need to do in order to progress in their learning and *"Sometimes we look at each other's books and make comments to help people to improve their work."* One boy explained *"Sometimes you choose who you work with. The teachers always listen if you say you can't work well in a certain group."* Asked about shaping their learning, comments included *"Sometimes we get to choose what we do in a topic. In things like art you can chose between painting and drawing."* The Headteacher spoke about the contribution of the children's understanding of rights to the school's ongoing improvements in standards. *"Our observations show the children to be more engaged in their learning. They see the link between their right to an education and our motto 'Let Your Light Shine'.* During Year 6, each member of the cohort receives a 'coach': a member of staff to support them academically and pastorally through the year and to help them deal with the added pressure of SATs and transition to secondary school.

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’s participation is a significant feature of the school and it is widely understood that this is their entitlement. The Headteacher sees the voice of the pupil as fundamental to all aspects of school improvement. *“The children are involved in every decision.”* The democratically elected school council meets regularly and is valued as being effective by children of all ages. One council member spoke convincingly of their status in school *“Before they [SLT and staff] make decisions, they always ask us.”* The school is clear that all children are asked for their views and opinions when changes are being made, for example during a full consultation on changes to the school day, the head and governors made clear to parents that the views of the children would be given full consideration in reaching a decision. The SENCO, with the help of the children, has incorporated children’s views into SEN provision and target setting for individuals; this is now being viewed as a significant SIP success for the current year. They are also involved in the monitoring carried out by leaders such as learning environment walks and pupil voice activities. As well as this, children are consulted during recruitment processes in a number of ways including giving feedback on lessons. Questionnaires filled out by children show 79% of children feel they can influence decisions made by teachers and leaders. Changes, mentioned by the children, as a result of pupil voice include a new water fountain, improved equipment in the playground, ‘Team Lunchtimes’ and the RRSA ambassadors selecting the Rights Respector of the Term from all the nominations.

Children at St Matthew’s are constantly engaged in actions to support the rights of others both locally and globally. The whole school community was very proud of their recent support for Soccer Aid, hosting a visit by Yaya Toure and providing pupils to be ‘mascots’ at the match (in addition to raising over £400 for Unicef). The children spoke of their campaigning activities including organising a march in support of refugees (in partnership with a nearby RRS infant school.) *“We made banners and we marched through the streets to the town hall. We wanted the government to let refugee children come to their families.”* This event, supported by their MP, Kate Green, resulted in some children being invited to parliament. In recent weeks they have jointly run an RRSA conference in their Borough encouraging other schools to learn about and take action for rights. A parent commented on the value of this work and how it links to rights, *“It empowers them to believe ‘I do count’ and to understand that they can make a difference.”*

So many strong features encapsulate the rights respecting ethos at St Matthew’s, such as the names chosen for the four ‘Teams’ (houses): Malala, Turing, Mandela and Pankhurst, but the final word in this report goes to a parent who commented, *“When you hear them talking about their rights and what’s going on in the world, you realise that this generation is going to make such a difference – it gives you hope for the future.”*