

RRSA RE-ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	St Margaret's Primary School
Headteacher:	Helen Snedden
RRSA coordinator:	Laura McCafferty
Local authority:	Falkirk
Assessor(s):	Steven Kidd
Date:	10 May 2019

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:

- Children had a strong understanding of rights and readily linked this to the difference they could make in advocating for the rights of others.
- Clear consideration of how rights can be made real through the design of school systems, such as the Pupil Parliament and emerging positive relationships policies.
- Embeddedness of rights across the school, supported by a committed SLT and staff team who understand the positive impact a holistic approach to children's rights can realise.

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 school moves forward, ensure that the Convention and its principles continue to be made explicit, especially for those who may join along the way.
- Continue to welcome the impact of pupil voice, considering how best to realise the value of children's engagement in the school improvement agenda.
- Capitalise on the energy of campaigning by supporting children to identify causes which resonate with them, perhaps through further exploration of the UN Global Goals.
- Undertake further ambassadorial activity to help other schools on their rights journey.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	St Margaret's Primary School is a non-denominational, co-educational state school located in and serving the town of Polmont. It has a roll of 383 pupils in stages P1 to P7 and an attached early learning and childcare facility has substantial provision for children from birth to age 5. Just 4.3% of P4-P7 pupils qualify for free school meals, significantly lower than the national average.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher / RRSA coordinator / DHT / PT
Number of children and young people interviewed	32 children in focus groups, 2 children on the learning walk and 45 children in class visits
Number of adults interviewed	7 teaching staff, 1 classroom assistant, 3 parents.
Evidence provided	Learning walk, class visits, focus groups, rights song performance, portfolio of evidence.
Registered for RRSA: 10 January 2014	Gold achieved: 19 May 2016

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

Children across the school were confident in naming a wide range of articles, with a P1 class providing a particularly memorable selection, ranging from the right to play through to privacy, readily linking to their learning. They were strong, too, on key concepts, clear that rights were inherent (*"you just have to be born"*) and inalienable (*"they can't be taken away"*) amongst others. Pupils were aware that some children face barriers to accessing their rights, at home and abroad, and were quick to link this to their charitable activities which they felt could help to address this. As to where they'd learned about rights, children pointed to assemblies and classwork, focusing particularly on the Right of the Month initiative; an article of the CRC is introduced at a monthly assembly and classes are expected to explore the right, with pupils completing a special jotter, before a selection of the work is included on a display at the school entrance. Such assemblies often include a rendition of the school's own rights song, with bespoke lyrics accompanying a well-known pop melody – the assessor was treated to a lively performance by the whole school during the visit. Children also build a global perspective of rights through learning about the Sustainable Development Goals, with each class focusing on a chosen goal.

Staff felt confident in talking about rights and credited an environment in which *"everybody sings from the same hymn sheet"*. They were positive about the support they'd received, whether new to the school or having taught there for a number of years – specific attention was paid to induction, but refreshers at the start of the session were important for all: *"Right from the get-go we're reminded."* Five years into the journey, confidence is such that the children often promote the learning about rights: *"The children were great at explaining to me what it was all about."* One recently qualified member of staff spoke of children's rights having been part of her training and expressed her pleasure to see them lived in practice in the school, in both curriculum and ethos. It was evident from the discussion with staff that they had a good knowledge of how children's rights impact upon most, if not all, aspects of school life and they quickly made the connections. Parents had been kept informed along the way, explaining that their children had been a great source of information for them, encouraged by rights homework exercises: *"It really generates conversations."* They identified a shift in children's understanding, illustrating how their children connected their rights learning to real life situations in school and out – to them, global awareness and empathy had increased.

The Senior Leadership Team spoke passionately about rights and their importance in underpinning school life. The headteacher has been in the school less than a year, but explained that she saw it as her role to *"build on what was here"*, noting that the Rights Respecting co-ordinator had met with her in the first week to talk about children's rights and the role they played in school life. It was clear that recent training on 'Pivotal Approaches' had been particularly impactful, with active consideration being given to how adults could best model the relationships they wanted to encourage within the school, and they saw an obvious link to rights: *"It's all about dignity... about high quality relationships"*. All were conscious that RRS remained a journey for the school, rather than a destination, as exemplified by the headteacher's words: *"It's about creating a consistent experience" and recognising, too, that although they "...may have been doing it for years, the children are always different."*

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 their rights and spoke of numerous examples of how this worked in practice, from access to nutritious food and water in the dining hall (Art 24), access to information (Art 17) through to the provision of a range of clubs to help develop their abilities (Art 29). The school's own rights song helped to make these connections, with the lyrics reflecting the relevance of rights in their environment. Children were clear that adults would address any concerns they had and they found them approachable and keen to help, specifically mentioning a 'My Five' initiative where they had been encouraged to identify five adults they could talk to. Focus group participants were very strong on the concept of equity, believing that it was not only fair, but vital that children had access to the extra supports they may need to help them to succeed.

Rights-based charters were visible in every classroom and children confidently explained that these had been co-operatively created by children and teachers, and that they all contributed ideas to this process. Teachers explained how they were a live part of classroom practice, to which both teachers and children refer; they also explained that the creation of charters at the beginning of the year also meant that the importance of rights was continually re-emphasised at the start of each session. The school's positive behaviour management system has been updated to include rights respecting language and is based on a restorative model, however the school is keen to review once more, in light of advancing thinking around modelling relationships; the headteacher explained: "...at the moment, we're 90% there." The children had already been involved in this process and one member of the SLT recounted a memorable anecdote from that engagement, where one pupil had called for 'bigger punishments', only to be rebuked by a peer: "No, it's about dignity, it needs to fit with our rights." The school is also thinking ahead to transitions, and ensuring children are able to integrate well at secondary, with evidence demonstrating how P7 pupils join others from local primaries on a residential trip where they start to build relationships through group work and team-building activities.

Focus group participants were unanimous that they felt safe at school and understood this as a right. Physical factors such as school gates, "high security" and children in after-school clubs wearing coloured vests were mentioned, but pupils mainly focused on the "good, supportive staff" who helped them to stay safe and "make sure they're okay". Evidence showed how children had learned about a range of topics such as internet safety, Feel, Think, Do and the NSPCC 'Pants' campaign, and were aware of key adults they could speak to about concerns.

A large volume of evidence demonstrated the priority given to the physical, mental, social and emotional well-being of pupils, beginning with the integration of the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators into school life, which are often explored with children. During the learning walk, the assessor accompanied an infant class on their 'Daily Mile' walk around the playground, which Ambassadors explained was undertaken by many classes in the school, in addition to the scheduled two hours of PE per week, with one of those sessions delivered by a specialist. They were positive, too, about the range of clubs on offer, sporting and otherwise, and noted that some were led by children themselves following 'Young Leaders' training. Mental health is also considered, with some staff recently completing training to help them better support children in this area; pupils identified a range of supports for mental wellbeing, but generally focused on the chance to talk through their issues with caring adults.

All stakeholders spoke of the warm ethos of the school and of a desire to ensure that everyone is valued, manifesting itself in everything from the celebration of wider achievements to individualised support programmes. Individuality is celebrated through learning such as 'People are Awesome' and 'Respect Me' lessons, and through showcase occasions such as learning events and concerts where all can demonstrate their talents. During the learning walk, the Ambassadors pointed out a Friendship Tree which epitomised the school's approach: All children in a class were encouraged to write a compliment about a chosen classmate and place it on the tree display, with each child scheduled to be the centre of attention in turn throughout the session.

Pupils were positive about their learning with 'the right to an education' the most commonly mentioned article throughout the visit. In line with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, evidence showed how children are involved in target setting and evaluation, as well as informing future learning activity. Children explained how they often undertake a KWL process ahead of new topics or lessons and record progress in Learning Journals. The SLT highlighted the children's ownership of their learning as a real strength of the rights journey, noting that, *"There's so much choice in it."* The headteacher spoke about tackling a problem with lateness, which had seen them successfully reduce instances by more than 90%; it was not approached in a punitive way, but done by explaining to children and parents the impact this was having on the pupils concerned, considering how everyone could work together to address any relevant factors and improve.

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

Focus group participants felt strongly that they were listened to in school and, having begun by discussing the approachability of teachers, turned their attention to the learning teams, one pupil enthusiastically listing all those available, assisted by their peers as they struggled to identify the last few. Groups ranged from *"Spanish"*, through *"Library"* to *"Digital Leaders"*, with children explaining that everyone was in a group, based on preferences expressed at the start of the year. They pointed to examples of how the groups had *"made the school better"*, such as the efforts of the Outdoor Learning group to create a learning space – children were keen to stress that ideas came from children across the school: *"we went to classes and asked."* This approach was mirrored in the school's recently established Pupil Parliament; the format sees all children meet to discuss issues in a 'Class Council' before a small number of representatives are chosen to take forward those ideas to the Parliament. Children had an excellent understanding of the process and were positive about the fairness of the system: *"It's not the same person. That's important."* The Senior Leadership Team identified pupil voice as an area where there had been greatest progress, driven by a desire to *"hear every child's voice"*, through formal processes such as the Pupil Parliament, but also in the general approach to school life: *"We're seeing children determining resources used and the style of rooms."* Two pupils and a teacher from the school also attended Unicef's Glasgow Youth Panel event to showcase their experiences as a Gold school and help the RRSA team to shape the future of the programme.

All children spoken with across the visit naturally linked their work on rights to charitable and campaigning activities, which supported the view expressed by parents that the rights journey had contributed to a greater awareness of social justice. Locally, the school runs an annual collection for the local foodbank, coupled with lessons designed to ensure children understand what their contributions mean; pupils have also fundraised for causes such as Jeans for Genes and Children in Need, as well as for Unicef, through the Playground Challenge and ShoeShare. The latter was something the RRS Steering Group were keen to talk about it, having been responsible for leading it in school – after a fantastic effort, pupils collected 347 pairs of shoes to donate to their local Clarks. Campaigning had also been a feature, especially in the last year, where the OutRight campaign's focus on air pollution had really engaged pupils. The Steering Group taught lessons about air pollution across the school and children were involved in writing letters to the local MP, car garages, INEOS and Tesla. A representative from Tesla visited the school as a result, as did a parent who works for the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency. Buoyed by their successes, the school is keen to further move on with its campaigning, having seen how tackling an issue of interest has motivated and inspired the pupils.