

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Harlaw Academy
Headteacher:	David Innes
RRSA coordinator:	Ashleigh Crawford and Stephen O'Neill
Local authority:	Aberdeen City Council
Assessors:	Maxine Jolly and Matt Reid
Date:	28 th February 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank the leadership team, staff and young people for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with staff, community representatives, parents and pupils during the assessment and for the evidence detailing the work towards a Gold rights-respecting school. Prior to the assessment visit the school provided a comprehensive self-evaluation and impact form. It was clear to the assessors during the visit that everyone places a real importance on developing a rights respecting ethos. We appreciated the opportunity to speak to so many people involved in the life of the school and also the extensive electronic portfolio of evidence detailing all the work that had been undertaken.

Key strengths of the school are:-

- Very strong pupil voice which leads to genuine change in the classroom, school and beyond
- A very inclusive school built on the values of respect and the principles of the convention
- Very positive and respectful relationships between staff and pupils
- A significant range of opportunities for pupils to develop skills for life, learning and work which reflect their talents and interests
- Embedded recognition of wider achievement across the school community
- The school takes a very active ambassadorial role in the community

Strands A, B and C have all been met

2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

None

3. MAINTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

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 embed opportunities for pupils to articulate their understanding of rights
- Continue to expand links within the curriculum that link explicitly to the Convention and Global Goals.
- Implement plans to develop a transition project based on the CRC
- Further embed campaigning opportunities for all pupils

4. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

Self-evaluation and Impact form received	Yes
Attendees at SLT meeting	Head Teacher /2 RRSA coordinators/3 Depute Head Teachers/Faculty Head
Number of children and young people interviewed	73 (S1 – S6)
Number of staff interviewed	12 teaching staff 4 parents 1 School Councillor, 1 School Librarian, 1 Careers Advisor, 1 Cook in Charge 1 Pupil Support Assistant 1 Local councillor 1 Committee Officer 1 City Centre Communications and Engagement Officer 1 Active schools Co-ordinator 1 Community Centre Manager
Evidence provided	Learning walk, written evidence, displays, class visits
Registered for RRSA: June 2013	Silver achieved: September 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 living.

Strand A has been achieved

It was clear that the school has taken a number of actions to ensure that pupils have a deep understanding of rights, and this was evident to the assessors. The Head Teacher has reported that RRSA language has become the vocabulary of the school, *“Staff make explicit links and are very clear on the importance of rights”*.

An awareness of children’s rights is promoted and supported across the school and wider community in many different ways. Assemblies, activities and policies such as the school’s “Child Protection Policy” (which has also been adopted across their Associated Schools Group – ASG) make specific reference to children’s rights. Communications with parents through newsletters, the Head Teacher’s blog and social media have ensured that parents are informed of the school’s journey and supported in their understanding of the importance of children’s rights. Parents who met with the assessors felt that these were valuable and helpful. “The school is very good about keeping us informed about what is happening in the school and there is lots of information shared about children’s rights, particularly through the head teacher’s Blog”, one parent commented.

Evidence was provided of pupils being actively and extensively engaged in the review of the school’s vision, values and aims and in a range of policy reviews. The recent review of the school’s anti-bullying policy was just one example cited by staff and pupils. These policies make clear and explicit references to the CRC. The anti-bullying policy, for example, references articles 2, 12, 19 and 29 and the school’s excursion policy references articles 3, 15, 24, 28, 29 and 31.

Teaching about rights has been successfully embedded across the curriculum. One Depute Head Teacher commented that she frequently notes references to children’s rights when visiting classrooms as part of the school’s quality assurance process. She stated that, *“Links to children’s rights are being made by classroom practitioners, through cross-curricular links and within the curriculum”*. Pupils that the assessors met with discussed how comparison discussions had taken place in History about children’s rights and the slave trade. *“We talked about the rights that child slaves wouldn’t have been able to access”*, stated one senior aged pupil. Younger pupils also discussed how they had undertaken extensive children’s rights-based topics through their Wider Achievement classes. In S2 all pupils participate in an eight-week course which examines the convention and, *“How the CRC relates to them and how the school supports them to access it”*. Pupils also talked at length about learning they had undertaken about child soldiers and discussed passionately how this made children vulnerable to abuse and neglect. One pupil stated that, *“Children used as soldiers are mistreated and sometimes given drugs to make them fight. These children are unable to claim a range of rights like the right to play and rest and the right not to be exploited”*. Examples of children’s rights being embedded across the curriculum were shared by the co-ordinator and staff. In Social Subjects, pupils learn about the CRC and the Global Goals as part of their S1 course. Children’s rights are also linked closely to learning in Travel and Tourism, (article 17–right to access information).

All pupils, from S1 – S6, were able to name many articles and understood the universality and un-conditionality of rights, *“Every child under 18 has them but not every child can access them”* (S5 pupil). One S2 pupil gave an example of children who are homeless being just one group of children who may be unable to access their rights. *“Homeless children would maybe not go to school and would be unable to get their right to an education. They may also be unable to access healthy food and health care”*. Pupils are using this language at school and with parents – one parent noted that, *“They regularly talk about children’s rights (at home)”*. Pupils at the school were able to link rights to their daily lives – for example healthy meals, clean and functioning toilets and clean water to article 24.

Parents have been kept informed in a variety of ways including the school website, the Head Teacher’s blog, group texts, bulletins, an RRSA information leaflet and social media. The parents who spoke to the assessors were clearly very knowledgeable about the convention, and could describe a range of articles which enables enriching and supportive learning to take place at home. The parents who met with the assessors expressed how their children talked about rights at home, and had a strong sense of fairness and justice. Parents remarked that their children had a *“Very heightened sense of justice and are very aware of inequalities”*.

The local community is also closely involved with the RRSA journey. Pupils from Harlaw Academy participated in a training session with Aberdeen City Council’s Creative Learning Team and one of their Curriculum Development Officers before leading and facilitating creative consultation sessions with over 120 pupils from eight primary schools. The consultation centred on the theme of making Aberdeen a child friendly city and inclusive city. The discussions and activities were explicitly linked to articles of the convention (articles 23, 29, 30 and 21). Aberdeen City Council’s Communications and Engagement Officer stated that, *“Thanks to the passion and far-sightedness of Harlaw’s Head Teacher and his staff, young people are contributing to the transformation of their home city in a real and meaningful way”*. The manager of Inchgarth community centre which is situated within Harlaw Academy’s catchment area discussed the range of ways in which the community centre has been able to work closely with the school. Examples included Duke of Edinburgh, work placements, annual awards ceremonies (recognising wider achievement), the young achievers and foodbank collections. The manager remarked, *“I cannot commend the school and pupils enough for their ongoing efforts to protect, promote, enhance and action the rights of every young person, not for the pupils but with the pupils”*.

There are many opportunities through the year for learning about sustainability and Global Citizenship. It was evident to the assessors and from pupil questionnaires that pupils appreciate all children have rights and there are things they can do to support those who don’t – a pupil in S2 noted that, *“If children aren’t getting their rights we can try and support them to access them through things like our food collection”*. The school supports a number of charities both locally and globally – for example Foodbank collections, Toilet Twinning, Water Aid, sponsoring a child in Rwanda, Sangat refugee project, Fair Trade activities and their engagement in the Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative. Staff and parents understand how these all support the upholding 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

Staff understand their role as duty bearers, and pupils could clearly articulate to the assessors what fairness and equity meant, particularly in relation to school, *“The school provides opportunities so that everyone can access what they need to learn”* (S6 pupil). Pupil questionnaires highlight that almost all pupils feel listened to and treated respectfully by adults. This was a view shared by parents, *“I have found Harlaw to be an “open” school with the Senior Management keen to listen to all suggestions, ideas and problems from pupils and parents.”* Questionnaires also highlight that pupils feel confident about speaking to an adult about issues of concern and those that the assessors met with felt that staff would swiftly work to collaboratively resolve any issues that they highlighted.

Staff in the school are confident about addressing issues using restorative approaches and the language of rights. Staff commented that they want, *“To provide a way back”* for pupils, allow them to reflect on their behaviour and provide them with an opportunity which allows all parties to have their views heard. It was commonly mentioned by staff that such an approach helps to diffuse potentially confrontational situations and provide meaningful dialogue. Pupils reported to the assessors that issues are dealt with fairly and that situations are resolved with dignity and respect. The school’s behaviour policy is currently in the process of being reviewed with restorative approaches being central to it. The school’s values are articulated in terms of respect:-

*Respect for people; we will consider the health, safety and wellbeing of ourselves and others.
Respect for learning; we will be on time, on task, trying our best and achieving success
Respect for the community; we will have a positive impact in school, locally and in the community.*

It is evident within these that they align closely to the values of the CRC and place children and young people at the centre of school improvement. One member of staff commented that, *“(We) apply respect and the right to be respected in all that we do”*. Another added, *“I have found framing conversations about behaviour in terms of rights very helpful. I think it is a powerful tool in helping children and their parents understand why certain behaviours are unacceptable”*.

As a direct result of the school’s continued focus on promoting and upholding children’s rights, the school has a very inclusive and nurturing ethos. This is through the work that they have undertaken as part of their Rights Respecting Schools journey and through the use of restorative and de-escalation behaviour approaches, “Bounce Back” and Growth Mindsets. Children and young people are encouraged to take ownership of their behaviour and learning and are supported to develop their own resilience. Parents were extremely positive about the

ethos of the school with one stating, *“The ethos of Harlaw Academy is one of inclusiveness, respect for all and to ensure that all children receive a wide education leading to university, college, apprenticeship or job.”* The school has also been involved extensively in a range of poverty proofing approaches and pilots to ensure that their children and young people receive an equitable and non-discriminatory experience. Examples such as their participation in the Scottish Government’s “period poverty” pilot to provide free sanitary products and school uniform recycling initiative directly seek to reduce the financial barriers that are experienced by some children and young people.

The pupils were clear about the principle of dignity and what it looks like, *“It means that you treat, value and respect others and that you are made to know that you are also respected and valued. It gives you a sense of worth and pride in yourself”* (S2 pupil). They also felt that if they were treated in an undignified manner, they would know who to report it to and were confident that it would be addressed. Fairness also underpins school relationships, and pupils could see how this relates to rights. *“It is unfair that so many children are not able to access their rights like we can some even in Aberdeen. This is why we should do what we can to help them access their rights like support local food banks and making people aware of children’s rights”* (Senior pupil).

All children who met with the assessors said that they felt safe in school, and this was also evidenced by pupil questionnaires and through discussions with parents - pupils are encouraged to report concerns to staff, and reported that they knew what to do if they were worried or frightened. They also stated that they would seek to report incidents concerning their peers if they felt that their safety was in jeopardy.

The school has recently reviewed its anti-bullying policy which is now in place across the school and their feeder primary schools. This was developed in collaboration with pupils and explicitly states, *“We need to teach about children’s rights and also model rights and respect in all our relationships: adult-pupil, pupil-adult, adult-adult and pupil-pupil.”* The school has also worked extensively to develop their Harlaw Defenders; a pupil led anti-bullying group which incorporates LGBT+ work. The school also promotes a positive and inclusive ethos.

The school actively seeks to support the health and wellbeing of their pupils. The school also works closely in partnership with the school nurse, School Counsellor, Active Schools, youth workers and educational psychologists to ensure that universal support is available to all pupils. The School Counsellor discussed with assessors the different flexible counselling services that she is able to offer to pupils, including self-referrals. The Cook in Charge discussed the efforts of the school’s catering staff to provide a flexible but balanced range of options for pupils in the school. She also highlighted the opportunities provided by her and her team to encourage pupils to try new foods through offering pupils “tasters”. She spoke passionately about the need to provide all pupils with access to nutritious food and to give them the confidence to explore food options. Additionally, she spoke about providing pupils with explanations of the cooking process and even sharing recipes with pupils to encourage them to cook at home. Harlaw Academy works closely with colleagues as Police Scotland and the NHS to deliver programmes about issues such as road safety, healthy eating, drugs, crime, anti-bullying, sexual health and equalities. Working closely in partnership with Sport Aberdeen, Harlaw has many youngsters taking on the leadership role of Sports Leaders. These Sports Leaders not only support clubs within the school but have also led transition events for P6 pupils within the schools associated schools group.

Staff and parents asserted the view that pupils understand and value differences. One parent remarked that pupils, *“Have a much heightened sense of justice and are very aware of differences. Within the school, and outside, it is a melting pot, but they are very supportive and encouraging of one another”*. One member of staff that assessors spoke with has also provided talks to pupils about autism and ADHD to support a shared understanding by pupils of the diversity of their school community. There was a clear understanding by adults and children of the need to modify their behaviour to include everyone and make sure everyone accesses their rights. Parents, pupils, staff and partners all shared the view that the school is inclusive and celebrates its diversity.

In recent years, the school has championed non-discrimination. It has removed traditional leadership roles within the school such as “Head Boy” and “Head Girl” and replaced them with “Senior Prefect”. This enabled these posts to be obtained by merit rather than gender. They have recently taken this a stage further to expand the opportunity to a broader range of pupils to counter potential discrimination on the grounds of age. Pupils feel that this is a significant improvement to the previous process. “It is fairer, more equitable”, remarked one pupil. The selection panel for these new “Head Prefect” and “Depute Head Prefect” posts includes former post holders, parents and the Head Teacher. Pupils also produced a short film about their new pupil leadership structure to share with Head Teachers across the city.

Staff are able to clearly demonstrate pupil voice in a range of pastoral and classroom settings. Assessment is for Learning strategies and Cooperative Learning are used successfully to engage all pupils – children discuss and share their learning with their teachers and each other, and are able to make decisions about the curriculum. Pupils are regularly encouraged to reflect on their learning and, particularly through the recently changed reporting process, identify and set learning/grade/attendance targets. One-to-one discussions between Guidance staff and pupils allow pupils to identify and select curriculum course choices in some subjects. Pupils discussed the use of open ended tasks that allow pupils to apply their learning in an area that interests them – again, pupils are enabled to share their learning with each other. In addition, teachers regularly seek the views of pupil feedback regarding their learning experiences within subject areas. This, *“...is used to influence teaching strategies and approaches and has led to changes within course content”*, remarked one teacher. Another member of staff commented that, *“Their (pupils) opinions matter and shape what we do. It is an important part of our planning process and we make sure that we share with pupils how their views have led to changes in the way that we do things”*. During the assessment children and young people demonstrated respectful attitudes towards learning, and classes were settled and working hard on tasks, evidencing that pupils are respecting the rights of others to learn. A pupil explained that, *“We all have a right to an education and if people are being disruptive then they are preventing pupils from accessing their rights.”*

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

The right of children and young people to have a say in all matters that affect them is a particular strength within the school. One member of staff explained, “*Pupil voice in the school is incredible and has permeated across all parts and aspects of the school. Pupils are confident to express their views because they see concrete examples of the impact that their views have.*” Pupil and staff questionnaires supported this view. There are a range of opportunities for pupil voice to actively shape the school and the learning experience of pupils. At a whole school level, Harlaw has extensively reformed their approach to pupil voice to enact meaningful collaboration with pupils and ensure that the views of all pupils are heard. They have moved from a school management led “you said, we did” approach to a pupil led “we said, we did” model. Every pupil is a member of the “Pupil Forum” Each form class has an elected pupil representative who represents the views of their peers at meetings in their 5 house groups, called the “House of Representatives”. Their key areas of discussion are then brought to the “Pupil Senate” by the House Captain of each of these representative groups. House Captains and Head Prefects form the “Pupil Senate” which acts on behalf of the greater pupil body to represent and enact their ideas. The Senate link with other school governance groups and pupils have a devolved budget to spend on their identified priorities. Examples of improvements and changes brought about as a direct result of pupil voice include uniform changes, the introduction of a new S6 tie and the reimagining and redesign of social areas and corridors within the school in partnership with Aberdeen City Council’s “Creative Arts Team”, and linked explicitly to the convention – articles 15, 31 and 12. Pupil voice at a whole school level was also evident through the school’s meaningful consultation with pupils to share its vision, values and aims. This process is reviewed every three years and is currently underway. Pupils are also consulted during appropriate school policy reviews. There are opportunities for pupils and parents to work together in partnership with Head Prefects attending meetings of the school’s Parent Council.

Global Citizenship and Sustainability projects are planned strategically and avoid the ubiquitous fund raisers such as ‘Children in Need’. Pupil Houses are actively consulted to identify their own chosen charities for fundraising and campaigning. This ensures a constantly fresh approach to fundraising and campaigning, which engages the interest of staff, pupils and parents. The school have planned regular opportunities for pupils to support children locally and globally ensuring similarities and differences are discussed. Pupils understand their role as global citizens and have all been involved in raising awareness and funds by supporting many causes, including - local foodbanks; Toilet Twinning; Save the; Sponsorship for a Rwandan pupil; Shoebox Appeal; Fair Trade, Water Aid link with a school in Rwanda, volunteering and inter-generational activities. Pupils take an active lead in delivering assemblies on a range of related sustainability and global citizenship issues.