

# RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

## GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

<b>School:</b>	Grange Academy
<b>Head of School</b>	Catherine Assink
<b>RRSA coordinator:</b>	Phillipa Coles
<b>Local authority:</b>	Bedford
<b>Assessor(s):</b>	Hilary Alcock and Jenny Price
<b>Date:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> July 2020

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Gold report is based on a virtual accreditation visit. The assessors would like to thank the children, the Senior Leadership Team, and staff 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 accreditation visit, the school completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form and provided a good collection of evidence to support the process.

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 clear strategic approach from leadership which has created a shared vision and language for staff and children to apply across the whole school.
- Passionate and driven staff who clearly see the value of embedding a rights-based approach.
- Articulate and knowledgeable students who understand why knowing about their rights is so important.

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 knowledge and understanding of the CRC, its origins, values and principles and its place within the wider framework of Human Rights.
- Continue to support students and adults to develop their understanding of sustainable development. Consider exploring the UN Sustainable Development Goals through The World's Largest Lesson.
- Support students to engage in a range of advocacy, campaigning and fundraising activities that promote children's rights locally and globally perhaps linking with Unicef UK's Outright Campaign and using Unicef's Youth Advocacy Toolkit.

## 3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

<b>School context</b>	There are currently 126 pupils on roll age 5 to 18. 48% are eligible for FSM/ Pupil Premium. 17% speak English as an additional language. All students have an EHCP. The school's most recent Ofsted inspection was in July 2017 and assessed as Good with Outstanding leadership.
<b>Attendees at SLT meeting</b>	Headteacher, RRSA coordinator, deputy headteacher of primary phase and school SENDco and deputy headteacher of secondary phase.
<b>Number of children and young people interviewed</b>	6 students in focus groups.
<b>Number of adults interviewed</b>	8 including teachers, support staff and parents.
<b>Evidence provided</b>	Portfolio of digital evidence, school website, Gold evaluation form, discussions.
<b>Registered for RRSA: May 2016</b>	<b>Silver achieved: July 2018</b>

**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 students spoken with knew a range of articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They understand that these rights are universal, unconditional and inherent. Through conversations with students, they implied that they also had an understanding that rights are indivisible and inalienable. Students explained that they learn about rights through a well-established article of the week focus, assemblies, through lessons and from the many ways that rights are visually presented around the school. One commented that, *“The teachers are always doing lessons to teach us about rights.”* The Steering Group explained how they now help to develop the rota for the article of the week and that different classes as well as staff lead them. One student commented that, *“Rights are always there and being followed in this school.”* Students are aware that not all children access their rights. One student gave a clear explanation about why countries might have wealth but, *“In some places, particularly rural areas, there is poverty and there are no schools, hospitals or water which means that children are not getting their rights.”* Another commented that, *“Children living in shanty towns have to walk miles and miles to get water and even then, it’s dirty water.”* Learning about the CRC within a global context has enabled students to better understand how they enjoy their rights.

All adults interviewed were clearly passionate, enthusiastic and energised to work together to teach students about the CRC. *“It’s live, it’s organic and part of the life and breath of the school,”* commented the RRSA coordinator. The head of school stressed the importance of staff developing, over time, their own knowledge and a shared language for using the CRC resulting in increased staff confidence. One member of the SLT explained how, *“All teachers are now intrinsically involved with planning for incorporating the CRC in their teaching. We’ve used the CRC so much now that it was easy to add the rights into our longer-term schemes of work across the curriculum.”* The RRSA coordinator explained that since the school gained the Silver award, *“Teaching and learning about rights is now at the forefront of what we do day to day, it’s a way of life at the school.”* The head of school explained how the CRC had been used to, *“Lead us through all our discussions when reviewing our curriculum as well as policy development.”* She also commented that RRS had helped to develop a stronger world view for staff and that, *“Because the staff have changed their outlook it has enabled them to change the children’s understanding of their place in the world.”*

The school’s Chair of the Local Advisory Board (LAB) commented within a written testimonial that, ‘Rights-respecting values underpin leadership and management and this is evident through LAB meetings where the Head of School and other SLT regularly inform the LAB about events or initiatives that support rights respecting areas.’ The school’s weekly newsletter informs families as to how children have been learning about their rights. It also involves them by identifying the following week’s article focus and asks adults at home to discuss ideas about the article over the weekend. These ideas are then shared back in school. Staff stated that feedback from parents is very positive about this approach explaining that it was enabling children to lead the discussion about rights at home. Parents had commented that they had noticed their children interacting with news media in a different way, often referring to children’s rights within the context of what they are watching.

**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**

Students have a well-developed sense of the role of adults in and out of school as duty bearers for their rights. They described teachers as, *“Duty Bearers who help us to learn.”* Students explained the connection between the law of the CRC, the government and the adults in school who have a responsibility to look after them. They consider that the school is fair in the way it treats everyone. Students trust that adults would listen to them and take their views seriously if they reported that their rights were not being met. One explained this by saying, *“There are laws and rights that mean that we have a voice and must be listened to.”*

Relationships are a strength at Grange Academy. The headteacher explained how behaviour at the school has significantly improved over time commenting that, *“A holistic child rights approach and the use of rights respecting language has been instrumental in behaviour becoming better and better and better.”* One student emphasised that, *“This school is different to other schools because the students and teachers respect each other.”* Students explained how they use their class charters and skills they have learnt to try and resolve issues themselves, *“We talk things through and try to find solutions.”* They also explained how teachers will always help to sort out things that they cannot do by themselves and spoke about the respectful way this is always done implying that it is undertaken in a dignified way. *“They will ask us to stand outside and calm down and then they can talk with us.”* The school’s behaviour management policy clearly references articles from the CRC and how these apply within the context of the school.

Students spoken with all stated that they felt safe at the school. They gave examples of wearing school uniform on visits out of school, *“So that we don’t get lost or mixed up with other children,”* that the school has fences and gates, visitors have to be let in to the school, and teachers will help you if you get hurt. They spoke about an example of a bench in the playground becoming unsafe and how once they had reported it a member of staff cordoned the bench off, and it was fixed within a short period of time. Students know what to do to keep themselves safe online and how to report anything they consider is unsafe. They are also confident that they could speak to a member of staff about any concerns they might have. They also commented that, *“Friends can help to keep us safe too.”*

Students spoke enthusiastically about a wide range of activities that they can engage with to support their health and wellbeing for example, running, football, tennis, using the fitness room, music, yoga, and mindfulness. They explained how quieter activities can, *“Calm our minds.”* The school runs before and after school clubs and has regular support from the school nursing service. Within its RRSA Gold evaluation form the school explained that, ‘during Covid-19 some students are unable to come to school due to shielding, medical reasons and anxiety. These students are being supported by weekly phone calls home by their form tutors and many are receiving wellbeing doorstep visits to talk through how they are feeling and offer them ways of coping with their current situation.’ The school has recently received the Gold Artsmark Award and a Food for Life Award as a result of improvements made to school lunches. Currently the kitchen manager is devising a new menu based on the suggestions made by students in the school. The school evaluation form describes how, ‘Learning outside the classroom happens on a daily basis whether it be in the school grounds, the local community and further afield. This is important because we know our students learn better from multi-sensory experiences.’

Grange Academy’s inclusive ethos comes across very clearly from students, staff, parents and the LAB. When asked why the school should be awarded RRSA Gold status one pupil commented that, “*Because it is made of Gold,*” referring to how much the school means to him and others. Another student emphasised that, “*All are part of the school and included.*” Students described how they have learnt phrases from different languages and how the school has made physical adaptations like ramps to ensure that everyone feels welcome as well as physically able to participate. Written testimonials from parents passionately describe how the school’s inclusive ethos underpinned by a child rights based approach has impacted positively on the children as well as provided support for parents. One parent commented that, ‘The Grange Academy offers a nurturing atmosphere, we as parents, can say that we have noticed an improvement in his general wellbeing. We strongly believe that this is down to the way in which the school concentrates on the overall wellbeing and self-esteem of their students.’ Another explained how ‘The day my child started at Grange he came home with a massive smile on his face and joyfully exclaimed “I love my school, it feels like I exist for the first time.”’

Students consistently spoke about how they felt able to ask for help with their learning. They explained, “*The teachers find out about us and get to know us so they can give us work that we can do. It might be easy, medium or hard.*” Students spoke about how they had undertaken their own research about rights issues as an extension to their learning in school. Staff explained that all class charters emphasise students’ right to learn. The Grange Values, devised by the whole school through the school parliament, are also displayed in every classroom and used to remind everyone of their right to belong, believe and achieve. Students consistently referred to the school parliament as a means for them having a voice about their learning.

**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 school has a number of systems in place to ensure that students can express their views and share ideas: an active Student Parliament group; a ‘You Said, We Did’ board to share improvements to the school; a child friendly anti-bullying policy; Speech Bubbles to capture students’ thoughts on various matters; and, student contributions to weekly newsletters and assemblies. The school ensures that communication is simple and visual, particularly in displays, to cater for the varying needs of students across the whole school. For example, pictorial displays, visual timetables, everyone learning some sign language (BSL) and the use of PECS supports all students to understand what is going on in their school community. The students spoken with explained very clearly that they have a voice in their school, one student saying, “*Our views are listened to and taken seriously.*” The students explained that they gather suggestions from classes, they vote and are involved in decisions in their school through the Student Parliament. Members of the RRS steering group also eloquently explained that their role is to make sure that everyone knows about their rights because, “*We all need to know we have a voice so that we feel more secure and that precautions are in place to make sure we are looked after.*” Examples of improvements to the school community were outlined: library books have been graded by colour to support student choices; a more comfortable seating area in the library has

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been arranged; an audit of whether the outside space was safe resulted in a bench and other things being fixed and more healthy choices at lunchtime have been introduced.

Students have had the opportunity to be involved in several fundraising activities such as cake sales and dressing in yellow for charities such as Children in Need. Students explained that this was, *“To help children get the medical care that they need”*. They also talked about donating food to the local foodbank and how this helps people locally to enjoy their *“right to healthy food”*, particularly those who may be homeless. Students explained how they speak about children’s rights at home. One commented that, *“My mum is always saying that she didn’t know about rights until I told her.”* One parent wrote that their child was developing *“A really strong sense of justice. He can quote children’s rights and loves to apply it to situations he sees that are in breach of it from the news.”*