

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Green Gates Academy
Headteacher:	Melanie Lyons
RRSA coordinator:	Bryony Scoffin
Local authority:	Stockton-on-Tees
Assessor(s):	Isobel Mitchell and Steven Kidd
Date:	10 November 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

This accreditation report is based on a virtual visit.

The assessors would like to thank the students, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and governors for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with adults and pupils 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 and provided an extensive portfolio of evidence.

It was evident that children’s rights are embedded across the school and are present in every facet of school life.

Particular strengths of the school include:

- An excellent level of rights knowledge shown by pupils, including key rights concepts.
- A passionate and driven senior leadership team committed to using a rights-based approach in order to give pupils the best chance of success.
- The emphasis placed on listening to the views of children, appreciating the benefits for both the child and the school.

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:

- Consider how you can build on and extend parental engagement, perhaps through shared learning experiences.
- Explore opportunities to make diversity and global awareness more real for pupils through links to children/schools in other parts of the UK and the world.
- Continue to undertake ambassadorial activity within the trust and more widely.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	Green Gates Academy is a primary school for pupils ranging from Year 1 to Year 6. All 48 pupils have an Education Health and Care Plan due to their social, emotional and mental health difficulties. 77% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding or Free School Meals and there are no children who speak English as an additional language. The school was rated Good by Ofsted in October 2019.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher / RRSA coordinator
Number of children and young people interviewed	7 children in virtual focus groups.
Number of adults interviewed	2 teaching staff, 1 teaching assistant, 1 governor
Evidence provided	Focus groups, digital portfolio of evidence
Registered for RRSA: 14 November 2016	Silver achieved: 13 November 2018

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 in focus groups were confident in sharing their knowledge of a good selection of rights, covering areas from clean water to privacy, including some rights which are not as well-known such as the rights of children who can't be looked after by their family. They were equally comfortable in discussing the nature of rights as inherent, inalienable, indivisible, universal and unconditional, noting things like *"you get them by being born"*, that rights are *"for all children in the world"* and definite that enjoyment of rights was not dependent on good behaviour. They had learnt these core principles using the ABCDE of Rights resource and were able to explain the significance of each letter. Conversations revealed that pupils had a firm grasp of their status as rights holders and of adults as duty bearers. Overall, a highly impressive degree of rights knowledge was demonstrated.

Though pupils understood rights to be universal, they were also aware that not all children in the world are able to access their rights all of the time and, for them, this was made most real through connections to charitable activity they had undertaken. Children shared that some exploration of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development had been undertaken – *"Yes! We did that... the environment... There's one about poverty"* – and evidence expanded on that, detailing how pupils made personal pledges designed to contribute to efforts to address climate change, such as *'turning the lights off at home, encouraging recycling and using more renewable energy'*.

Staff explained that *"rights respecting is just embedded... it's not an add-on to the curriculum"*, continuing that *"it's what we do every day"*. Evidence backed up their assertion that consideration of rights was part of curriculum planning and examples were given of connections, including in Science, English and Maths. They were quick, too, to point out that this planned coverage of rights was supplemented by a reactive approach, sometimes prompted by the suggestions of children raising a rights dimension to a topic being explored. The school's RRSA lead had attended Unicef UK training at Bronze, Silver and Gold and brought that back to school: *"The week after attending training, I would then disseminate that to staff"*; the training and support was praised as being *"really useful to get ideas and talk to other people"* and had complemented efforts to connect with other schools, though this had been hampered by Covid-19. According to the Headteacher, RRS is part of ongoing discussion at regular staff meetings, though there have also been specific meetings to improve awareness and understanding, with all school staff attending.

Beyond standard methods such as newsletters and social media, the staff have sought to include discussion of rights in as many touchpoints with parents as they could, such as in one-to-one phone calls and EHCP reviews: *"We try to drip feed it into the conversations we have with parents... it's an opportunity to talk about the right to education"*. An attachment training session with parents, 'Fizzy Brains', had been a particular highlight: *"The engagement there was fantastic... [we talked about] the right to this healthcare, to that support..."*

The Headteacher explained her belief that children's rights had to be integral to the work of Green Gates Academy, given the starting point of many of the children and the school's role in helping them to overcome those challenges; she summed it up simply: *"It's what we do as a 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

Students were clear that it was the job of teachers and other professionals to ensure their access to rights, and the terminology of ‘duty bearers’ and ‘rights holders’ had been explored through learning for both staff and pupils, as one staff member noted: *“One of the big things is about duty bearers.”* Pupils in the focus group felt everyone is included and understood that meeting the individual needs of each pupil meant different approaches for different children, happy that such an equity-based approach was fair. Staff echoed this, speaking of the diverse needs in classes and the resultant use of bespoke interventions – *“a few years ago they couldn’t understand why some were getting things and they weren’t, but that’s much better now.”* Pupils were equally sure that they could raise any concerns about rights not being met and these would be addressed. The Headteacher noted, too, that the school’s policies and procedures are underpinned by children’s rights: *“All of our policies, when we come to renewing them, everything we’re doing, we put it in there.”*

In focus groups students were polite and respectful, happy to offer their views and excited to answer questions about their school experience. They felt they were treated fairly in school and were able to explain how incidents were managed in a way that was respectful of their rights, a typical response being to *“take them out of class and into a little room... have a conversation to help them calm down”*. They felt the approach was dignified, which they understood as *“being treated with kindness”*, and were keen to shift the conversation to the ways in which positive interaction is encouraged, most notably the ‘LOLA stars’ they accrue which can be spent in the LOLA shop at the end of term. The Headteacher explained how the different systems were all linked together and underpinned by dignity; positively, the evidence backed up the narrative, with stats showing reductions in serious incidents partly, as the school’s governor pointed out, because *“the children are learning to self-regulate a lot more”*.

The majority of pupils reported feeling safe (94%) in the school’s pre-visit questionnaires and this was echoed by the children in the focus groups. The school’s paperwork also explained that the one pupil who had not felt safe related this to Covid-19, which was again a theme which emerged in discussion. As well as the pandemic response measures the school had introduced, the pupils pointed to the role of teachers as the primary reason for their safety, whether that was in swiftly handling a behavioural incident, *“a blip”*, or in performing first aid. The school also provides a Worry Box and a Sorry Box and uses the Incredible 5 Point Scale for daily check-ins. Recent data had not identified any bullying problem, and this was noted in the 2019 Ofsted report: *‘Bullying is rare and if it occurs, it is dealt with well by staff.’*

It was clear that the school considers wellbeing a priority, with a range of measures outlined in evidence. Aside from pastoral and learning support, pupils participate in weekly mental health and wellbeing sessions which include mindfulness, reflection and relaxation. All children also access support from professionals including Future Steps (occupational therapy). During lockdown the school checked on families at least weekly and, when asked about how they were supported, children in the focus group talked of the *“care packages”* they and their families received, like *“a little packed lunch in a bag”*; a teaching assistant explained that the school had been working with Morrisons and local foodbanks to provide families with a weekly food package and monthly toiletries. It had obviously made an impression on the pupils. Pupils spoke of physical fitness and health, mentioning things like

cross country, salad bars at lunch and free fruit at break times, whilst the school's evidence brought in Forest School, horse-riding and bee-keeping, noting that all resources and equipment are provided to ensure equality of access.

Whilst the pupils of Green Gates Academy do not come from a culturally diverse range of backgrounds, the school is working hard to ensure they develop an inclusive approach which understands and appreciates diversity, even where this means challenging pre-existing attitudes. The approach has both universal and targeted strands, with a refreshed curriculum and celebration days supplemented by intervention where language or behaviour requires. The RRSA lead was clear: *"When we look at different cultures, we don't want to just talk about it in PSHE, we want to see it in other places, in our Art lessons...it's not just one lesson."* The Headteacher explained that exploring diversity runs through assemblies and celebrations, whilst individual teachers have explored updates to different subject areas. Examples were given of where the History and English curricula have facilitated such discussions, including learning of the Cinderella story from different cultural perspectives. Importantly, staff have seen the impact, not only in terms of race but wider non-discrimination: *"The more we're covering LGBTQ, the more they're knowing what words are acceptable and aren't acceptable... it's also helping them to not be embarrassed about their own circumstances [where they have family members who identify as LGBTQ]."*

When asked about the best thing about being back at school after lockdown, one focus group participant said: *"We have a right to an education...now we're having our rights met."* The pupils generally were very positive about their school experience, rating it highly in comparison to previous experiences. Evidence showed how KWL grids are used in classes and children feed in their views in planning and monitoring progress. Staff echoed this, speaking of how children are asked what they already know and the questions they'd like answered before undertaking any topic, and how they then return at the end to evaluate, as well as noting that they are *"making a conscious effort to include pupil voice in curriculum review."*

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

Adults were especially vocal about pupil involvement and credited exploration of rights as having had an impact in this area, a school governor noting her view that it's *"particularly important for a school like Green Gates for children to be empowered... teach them what rights they have and look at the community and the wider world... [foster a] sense that they can achieve things"*. Pupils themselves believed strongly that they were listened to – *"Yes, of course"* – and could share not only channels which facilitated their voice being heard, but could point to a myriad of things which they perceived to have changed as a result of their input. One pupil spoke with passion of a pupil suggestion to add outdoor gym equipment to their playground, which had happened after work by the school council, whilst another talked about incorporation of forest school activity. Taken in isolation, the examples shared were generally low-medium impact, however the range of examples and ease with which they were recalled is indicative of an environment in which pupil voice is woven through, with great care and consideration given to how best to accommodate those views and opinions, recognising the impact on self-esteem as much as children's rights. *"They know that what they are saying will be"*

UNITED KINGDOM

taken seriously,” explained one teacher, “...the ethos of the school is that anybody can have an opinion – go through the school council or go straight to the principal.”

Pupils are fully involved in the school’s fundraising and charitable work and spoke of engagement with Children in Need and Macmillan coffee mornings as well as fundraising for the school itself. For them, these were actions they could take to help improve the lives of others, at home and abroad. They spoke about writing to the Prime Minister, to encourage him to “*help children in the UK who haven’t got food or shelter*” and of other activities to directly impact on children’s rights, such as litter picks and enhanced hygiene measures to prevent the spread of disease. They linked this to learning about current issues around the world, from Australian bush fires to the contribution methane from cattle farming makes to global warming; as well as regular discussion of Newsround, it appeared that this learning took many forms, with much excitement amongst the children about their current exploration of food sustainability – next step is to sample insects for themselves. Evidence showed that the school had participated in a recent OutRight campaign and children had also been involved in advocating for rights closer to home, by working with another school in the trust to help them on their RRS journey. Supported by passionate and committed adults, it is clear that the pupils of Green Gates Academy are ready and willing to make an impact on the world around them and, as the RRSA coordinator put it, “*We feel very strongly that the RRS framework can help them communicate to higher powers.*”