

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Armathwaite School
Headteacher:	Helen Hepworth
RRSA coordinators:	Helen Hepworth
Local authority:	Cumbria
Assessor(s):	Frances Bestley
Date:	14 June 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessor would like to thank the children, 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. Children had exceptional ownership of the school and their learning.

Particular strengths of the school include:

- Very articulate and confident children with a very good knowledge of articles
- Child initiated independent learning enabling all children to play an active role in their learning.
- The language of rights used to contextualise school practice.
- Pupil empowerment in enjoying their own rights and enabling other children to access them.

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 build on the good practice seen throughout the visit.
- Continue to develop campaigning work, perhaps using OutRight or the Advocacy Toolkit.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	Armathwaite School is a very small community village school located in Cumbria. It has a pupil roll of 62. 9.4% of children are eligible for pupil premium. Ofsted judged the school as good in February 2017.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher and chair of governors
Number of children and young people interviewed	18 children in focus group, 5 children on the learning walk
Number of adults interviewed	3 teaching staff, 2 support staff, 1 business manager, 5 parents, 1 governor
Evidence provided	Learning walk, focus groups, portfolio of evidence, class visits, start of day assembly, playground challenge.
Registered for RRSA: November 2014	Silver achieved: May 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

All children I spoke with were able to confidently cite a wide range of articles. Children also demonstrated a good understanding of how these rights were applied in practice explaining how the school enabled them to access their rights and demonstrating links to their learning throughout the learning walk. They were particularly enthusiastic about Article 42 and ensuring other people knew about rights. *“You can tell everyone else, share it on and help other people to understand – you need to know your rights”* stated a child during the focus group. Children explained the concept of rights being inalienable, indivisible, inherent and universal, *“Rights are for everyone no matter who you are or what you believe...all rights are equally important...no one can take them away.”* The headteacher explained that there had been a focus on the etymology of ‘rights concepts’ which had helped staff and children deepen their understanding. Children described the history of the development of the Convention from the world war to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to special rights for children *“because they were more vulnerable.”* They understood the role of governments in ensuring children can access their rights.

Armathwaite School had a strong focus on global learning. *“Global perspectives are important in the current context”* explained a teacher. Powerful and informative displays about child soldiers, refugees, climate change superheroes and identity enabled the children to demonstrate how local and global issues are linked to rights. Learning about the Convention has also influenced children’s wider learning, for example through looking at Article 30 children became very interested in indigenous groups and wanted to find out more about Aborigines, Maori and Inuit people. *“Children’s consciousness is raised; they are more aware of where rights are denied”* stated a teacher. *“Children are seeing outside, a wider sphere”* explained a parent.

The headteacher, all staff and the parents and governors, I spoke to, were clearly extremely committed to children’s rights and very knowledgeable about them. It was clear from discussions with adults that Armathwaite School already had a very child centred empowering approach to learning prior to embarking on the rights respecting journey yet many adults described positively the impact of understanding rights. *“It’s contextualised and deepened what we’ve done...provided us with another tool and inspires the children to think more broadly; particularly when they move beyond school they will talk about their rights”* stated the chair of governors. *“It’s a thread all the way through our work”* added the headteacher. *“The language has focused and changed; knowing rights has given them [children] a language to talk about things”* explained a parent. *“It’s given us another layer; it’s what we believe in”* said a teacher.

Everybody learned about rights through the learning assemblies and regular Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions. Staff described an initial training session that was useful; explained that rights were revisited in staff and governor meetings but added *“we’ve taken the journey with the children.”* A new member of staff described the useful information that she had been given by the headteacher to help her get up to date. Parents explained how *“they [the children] have been teaching us.”* *“My boys bring it up all the time...she’s constantly applying it to her experience.”* All children and adults spoke very enthusiastically about the open afternoon. Children had identified and investigated in depth a selection of rights which they shared with parents. *“I was blown away by how confident the children are”* stated one parent.

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

Children described enthusiastically how the school enabled them to access their rights; for example: Article 31 was linked to playtime, rest time and after school clubs; Article 15 was linked to choosing your groups and your friends; Article 3 because *“we all know that teachers do what’s best for us”*; Article 42 because *“we get to learn about our rights.”* Children understood that teachers as duty bearers were responsible for ensuring they accessed their rights. They were adamant that they would go to an adult if they thought their rights were not being met, *“I would tell a teacher, we would have an assembly to talk about it and it would get sorted out.”* A member of staff explained that over the journey of the award children had become much more confident about speaking out, *“they will say if they have a problem and ask for help.”* The focus group agreed unanimously that everyone is treated fairly. Children had learned about equality and equity and the depth of their understanding was shown as they described boxes and curtains that they had used in an assembly to demonstrate the difference.

Throughout the visit there was evidence of mutually respectful relationships between children and adults. Children are in mixed age ‘buddy groups’ – these groups are used in the morning assembly, for ‘family’ lunchtime seating and for other activities such as the Playground Challenge groups. In focus groups pupils answered questions confidently and made sure that everyone was involved; during the Playground Challenge older children helped younger ones to complete the course. *“We all help each other; we interact with all the different year groups”* explained a girl in the focus group. *“We have reciprocal respect; it’s not a one-way street”* stated the headteacher. Children had learned about dignity and the group agreed that they were always treated in that way in school. Children explained *“If there’s a problem between two children, we’ll talk about it. Issues are discussed in assemblies.”*

All children in the focus group agreed they felt safe at school and understood this as a right. *“If we’re happy we’re safe; we’ve all got someone we can go to.”* Parents corroborated this describing how their children referred to their right to be safe and healthy at home too. *“Children feel their worries are listened to...she knows she has a right to be safe and is more confident about speaking out...it helps with staying safe online”* stated several parents. Individual or sensitive issues can be shared in the issues box. Children were confident that teachers regularly look in the box, talk to whoever has put the issue there and sort out the issue.

Children described how Armathwaite School supports them to be physically and mentally healthy. All children are served a wide choice of fruit, vegetables and milk at breaktime. Teachers sit with children and children enthusiastically discussed their liking for spinach and rocket. Children sit in their buddy groups at lunchtime and serve their own food so they can choose how much to eat *“We have vegetarian and vegan choices”* stated one girl proudly. All children and staff have their own water bottles. There is a large field which children can use throughout the year and a very good range of playground activities and after school clubs which the children decide on. School meditation sessions are led by a community volunteer, the nurture lead has been trained to facilitate draw and talk sessions which have been very popular. The headteacher identified that the approach to curriculum design encouraging ownership, collaboration, creativity and self-worth is a significant factor in children’s wellbeing.

'Inclusion, equity and fairness are at the heart of everything we do' states the headteacher in the Gold Evaluation Form and this was evident throughout the visit. *"We're all respected and have the same voice; people aren't prioritised"* explained a child. The identity tree in the corridor had leaves for every person connected to the school identifying their name and what was important to them. Children and the headteacher had an impressive knowledge of children's individual interests. There was a clear focus on challenging stereotypes and prejudicial views. On the learning walk children unprompted engaged the assessor in discussions about disabilities (including a good understanding of invisible disabilities) linked to access to Article 31; and how it was important to respect other people's cultures and religions. The children described how things were the *"same but different"* for other children around the world and there were pictures on display to demonstrate this. All children discuss and update the single equality plan each year in assembly. Two girls explained that they review the displays throughout the school to look at the number of boys and girls in pictures on display and look at how active the girls are; they change the pictures where necessary.

Everyone, I spoke to, takes the right to education very seriously. Learning is extremely child led throughout the school and children are real partners for planning for learning. Children decide what questions they want to cover when doing topic work through having a *"blindfold vote."* *"Children delve into topics that interest them"* explained a teacher. Considerable amount of time during the school week is dedicated to child initiated independent learning. Children explained *"We get to make anything – sewing, woodwork, soup, plans for fund raising... We choose our own goals, who we want to work with and what the learning skill focus is; ...We review each other's work and help one another and learn from experience."* The folders that children showed and talked about to the assessor provided exceptional evidence of children playing an active role in their learning. The headteacher explained that reports are written with the child; each child is interviewed and asked what they think about their learning, how they learn and what they think their next steps are; the dialogue is recorded and this is the report that is sent home. The reports are very well received by parents.

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

It was evident throughout the visit that children's opinions were valued and had a significant impact on everything that happened within school, both on day to day activities and on school improvement. *"If you say something you're listened to"* stated a child; other children confirmed that this was true. This was corroborated by staff, *"Children are involved in every decision including the School Improvement Plan and the Self Evaluation Form."* Student voice assemblies are the mechanism for collecting views and several times during the visit children would describe how 'something' had been discussed and decided on at an assembly. A child explained that if they wanted to change something they would suggest *"I think this would be a good idea."* The idea would be discussed by all members of the school, then the action agreed or not. *"We want children to feel it is their school"* stated the headteacher. Parents described the confidence of the children and how they maintained that when they moved to secondary school citing examples of children being active school council members *"she's taken 'listening to others' to secondary school with her."*

Children have been very active in taking action to uphold their rights and the rights of others locally and globally. Through the child initiated independent learning a group of children worked together to raise awareness and funds to sponsor a guide dog puppy for a year. Children created and performed

UNITED KINGDOM

dances about women's suffrage at a Kendal festival and about pollution in Carlisle. Armathwaite School has taken part in Shoeshare and Playground Challenge. Children understood that the money raised would enable children to access their rights to education and to play. The school is also a Fairtrade school.

Children learned about refugees and child soldiers and raised awareness of both these issues with the local community. Through Geography and P4C children have been learning about environmental issues such as plastic and palm oil. They wrote to their local MP and received a good response from him. Children were much less impressed by their response from Cadburys who sent them a letter *"that wasn't easy to understand"* and sent them a £1 voucher for chocolate *"that we don't want to eat because it contains palm oil."* Children created posters about the impact of palm oil, displayed them in the village and *"were extremely influential in campaigning for the environment."*