



RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

SILVER: RIGHTS AWARE

ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School	Mountjoy School
Local Authority	Dorset
Number of pupils on roll	93
Headteacher	Jackie Shanks
RRSA Coordinator	Antonia East
RRSA Assessor	Peter Radford & Mel Lane
Date of visit	11/07/19
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher & RRSA Lead
Number of pupils interviewed	8
Number of adults interviewed	8
Evidence provided	Written evidence/ Learning walk/ student focus group/staff focus group
Date registered for RRSA	22nd June 2017
Bronze achieved	13th June 2018

ACCREDITATION OUTCOME

Mountjoy School has met the standard for Unicef UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award at Silver: Rights Aware.



EVIDENCE FROM THE ACCREDITATION VISIT

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.

- Mountjoy School is a small school for children with a range of complex needs including ASD, SLD and MLD. Many can only communicate non-verbally. Children interviewed were able to name over 16 rights including the right to be listened to, learn and relax. Most clearly knew that rights are unconditional and do not change between home and school. Students said they feel safe at school because the school supports them when feeling angry, sad or nervous and they knew to tell a teacher or adult if their rights were not being met. Students could talk about a recent study on Africa and the rights that children there were unable to enjoy such as food, equipment and hospital care. They understood through 'Water for Miles' that some students cannot easily access clean water. Children knew that it was adults' responsibility to ensure their rights are met. Sixth Form students have done detailed work on 'wants and needs.' Others have made a video about article 17 and internet safety linked to rights.
- Staff have all received training on the RRSA and use the language of rights explicitly in their day to day teaching. Governors have also had training and undertaken a learning walk to find out from each class about rights. Rights have been introduced to students through assemblies, special days such as Pants Day and Divali Day. Each class has a charter and every display clearly links to the CRC. One parent governor said, 'I believe the school believes in this' and 'The primary way of teaching about rights, given the variety of needs of students, has been to model rights. They have been really passionate about supporting children who are disadvantaged.'
- The RRSA is part of the School Improvement Plan and part of the School SEF. The website clearly shows the school's ethos as a Rights Respecting School. The headteacher described RRSA as a 'framework for everything we do.' Parents and wider staff have all received information about the CRC and it features in every newsletter. The Family Liaison staff member visits each new parent in their home and explains the CRC and finds out about the attitude towards rights in the home. This has led to some families realising the importance of each child's right to have a say, communicating that "A voice is really important." Each school policy is prefaced by reference to the appropriate articles.

The following recommendations were discussed during the visit to help the school to progress to Gold.

- Consider reframing the SIP around the rights/articles of the CRC rather than as an action point within the SIP. This will ensure that rights increasingly underpin all school improvement and form the rationale for it.
- To increase parental understanding of the CRC consider using your new 'Mountjoy TV' to teach parents and the whole school community about rights
- Consider incorporating explicit information/ introduction to the CRC as part of induction for new staff and governors



- Provide opportunities for staff to brainstorm ideas on how to make explicit links in the curriculum or come up with original ideas to champion 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.

- Children clearly enjoy their rights and understand that they have the same rights as anyone. All children have regular access to the poly tunnel with a designated horticulturalist. Raised beds have been introduced to make this more accessible. Children can choose their own activity and the food produced is cooked and eaten in the canteen. This is explicitly linked to rights.
- All children enjoy the hydrotherapy pool every week and those with severe physical difficulties use it every day. Staff expressed that the children identify least with Article 23 re disability because they 'do not see disability, only ability'. Children are completely accepting of all difference, including race and sexuality, and therefore are able to fully enjoy their rights and respect the rights of others.
- Very high attendance rates indicate that children enjoy school. 'It is a very happy place for both children and adults,' reported a staff member. Children feel safe and this is emphasised by the fact that 'children do not fall out' (staff member). Children are respectful, they understand that sometimes it is not 'my turn'. One child who was struggling was able to spend one-to-one time in the polytunnel -emphasising the ethos of responding to every child's needs.
- The commitment to children's social and emotional wellbeing is explicit and strong. One parent said that as well as helping her child access the curriculum he had showed increased understanding of boundaries, increased understanding of others, improved ability to communicate and an understanding of the right to have choices. The school is seen as an extension of his family where he feels 'happy, secure and safe'. Children know that they are 'owed the same as anybody else.'
- Teachers integrate rights into their everyday teaching and links to rights are explicit in the classroom and in language. The school has achieved the Arts Award and explicitly linked this to rights. 'Teachers have taken this and run with it' said the RRS Lead. 'Rights are part of the interview process & students are involved in interviews.'

The following recommendations were discussed during the visit to help the school to progress to Gold.

- Consider creating further iPad /PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display) book resources for students to learn and talk about rights non-verbally.
- Consider developing a whole school charter in order to embed knowledge of key rights and use the language of rights for this. Individual class charters can then focus on the actions that each class will take to ensure these rights are respected.



- Consider amending your staff appraisal framework to link to rights and devise teacher targets linked to developing rights education.

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.

- Particularly impressive was the school's dedication to emphasising the voice of every child. They have introduced a range of methods to ensure that every child has a voice even those who struggle to communicate verbally. Through Dorset Steps they explicitly adopt the idea that 'all behaviour is communication'. Dorset Steps is a therapeutic approach that teaches internal rather than external discipline. Students are encouraged to identify where they want to go to calm down and what they would like to take with them. One student had been using violent behaviour and was enabled to see that this was because he felt unsafe. Through giving voice to this he was able to manage his behaviour and situations have been de-escalated.
- PODD books have been introduced which enable students to communicate non-verbally. Also iPads, switches and PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). Through these, one student was able to communicate that he was about to have a seizure even though there were no obvious signs. One parent expressed that their son had been able to use this to say 'I love you' for the first time.
- All students complete a student questionnaire clearly linked to rights and have the chance to express their views. They take part in School Council, KAT groups, Eco club and through these have asked for and received new playground equipment. Students said, 'we have choices – you ask an adult first and they will sort it out or arrange it.' One girl said that she had asked to spend more time with girls since she is the only girl in the class; this now occurs every week.
- Children have been involved in Soccer Aid, Comic Relief. The activities for Soccer Aid were devised by one of the students. The school has also formed a Solar Panel group to purchase solar panels in order to improve the school's energy performance grade. This was linked to rights and a special 'solar' day is planned for next year. The Head explained that students feel like they are not only valued but 'of value' to others. Students hosted a 'Walk in Wednesday' social club for the local community. They organised music, tea, coffee and craft activities all requested by students.
- The Eco group has been proactive in telling teachers to 'turn lights off' and have built bird houses and participated in work placements with Careymoor and Magdalene Farm so they have hands on environmental education. Students are also involved in testing fire alarms and putting out rubbish for people in the community.

The following recommendations were discussed during the visit to help the school to progress to Gold.

- Increase your ambassadorial role in the community and beyond: eg with the Children's Centre, Town Council and other schools
- Look to develop a specific project that enables advocacy on issues that students care about – activism possibly linked to the global goals.



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