

# RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING (RE-ACCREDITATION)

<b>School:</b>	Northridge High School
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Bernice Kostick
<b>RRSA coordinator:</b>	Chloe Flanagan
<b>Local authority:</b>	Manchester
<b>Assessors:</b>	Martin Russell
<b>Date:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2018

## 1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to thank the young people, the leadership team, staff and governors for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with adults and young people during the assessment and for the detailed evidence provided to support the process. Prior to the assessment visit, the school provided a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form.

It was evident throughout the visit that young people and adults at Northridge place a great importance on young people's rights and that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is clearly shaping all aspects of school life.

Particular strengths of the school are:

- Although the school's re-accreditation was overdue, it was impressive to note the extent to which a strong rights based approach has been sustained and revised guidance from Unicef incorporated.
- The passion and commitment of the SLT in bringing the Convention to life across the school and in the wider community.
- The high level of empowerment among the young people inspired by their rights.

Outcomes for Strands A, B and C have all been met.

## 2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

None

## 3. 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:

- Maintain efforts to engage with parents and carers, building their understanding of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and their role as duty bearers for the rights of their daughters and sons.
- Continue to seek ever more creative ways of ensuring that the young people are able to engage in promotion of the CRC and in campaigning for rights both locally and globally. Consider participating in Unicef’s annual [Outright](#) campaign.
- Further develop your commitment to learning about global citizenship and sustainable development. Consider sustained use of the [World’s Largest Lesson](#) materials to connect with the UN Global Goals.

## 4. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

<p><b>School context</b></p>	<p>One of three secondary special needs schools in Manchester, there are 163 students on roll. They have a wide range of learning and physical disabilities and many have very limited or no verbal communication. The schools serves an increasingly diverse local community and the proportion of students with English as a second language is 40%, this is much higher than the average for England. Likewise, over 70% of students are eligible for Pupil Premium support. All young people at Northridge have an EHC Plan.</p>
<p><b>School evaluation: Gold form received</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>

<b>Attendees at SLT meeting</b>	Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and RRSA lead.
<b>Number of young people and young people interviewed</b>	15 young people in focus group plus four spoken with during the tour.
<b>Number of staff interviewed</b>	2 teaching staff 2 support staff Governor
<b>Evidence provided</b>	Learning walk and classroom visits Written evidence Focus groups and discussions
<b>First registered for RRSA: June 2010</b>	<b>Level 2 achieved:</b> November 2012

### STRAND A: TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT RIGHTS

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is made known to young people, 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**

The young people at Northridge have a good knowledge of a range of articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). They could speak about a range of rights such as: to join different groups, to be safe, to relax and play, to have an education, to have somewhere to live, to your name and to have medical treatment. They clearly understood that rights are unconditional and inalienable; as one pupil explained *"Nobody should be able to take your rights away."* Another said *"they belong to me."* They understood the concept of duty bearers and were able to name a range of people who fit this description from parents to teachers and the government. As well as assemblies and 'Super Learning Days' which often focus on rights, many articles are highly visible around the school site and the school's curriculum has articles systematically embedded into planning, ensuring frequent connection to the Convention throughout many aspects of learning. A staff member explained *"Pupils understand how to take things to the next level of enquiry"* and went on to share an example from RE which began as an exploration about honesty, led on through a dialogue about opinions and choices, and ended up in a discussion about forced marriage.

The students were well aware that rights are for all children and young people, everywhere, and they were able to link many national and global issues to rights. They spoke about different reasons, both in the UK context and in less wealthy countries, why rights can't always be accessed. One student explained *"Not everyone gets looked after properly."* Another added, *"In some places there might not be enough food to go around or clean water."* The school is building a commitment to learning for global citizenship; *"We want them to be able to understand the wider world and to put things properly in context."* The Headteacher explained how she made clear to their Ofsted inspector that Northridge goes *"beyond British values...it's about human values. The CRC is global."*

The strong commitment of the whole school community to the Convention and to rights respecting is very evident. This has been sustained over a number of years and is clearly making a difference to the school. In their last Ofsted report (2017 – Short inspection - Outstanding) RRSA was specifically mentioned as being an endorsement of the school’s effectiveness. The governor spoken with pointed out that *“The language of rights used by both the students and staff is key. Everyone is always so positive; there is no punitive element to this school.”*

**STRAND B: TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH RIGHTS – ETHOS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Actions and decisions affecting young people are rooted in, reviewed and resolved through rights. Young people, 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**

The young people spoken with explained a wide variety of ways in which the adults in school enable them to enjoy their rights referring to receiving a good education, being listened to, having healthy food and using their talents and abilities. The Headteacher is determined that *“This most vulnerable group of young people really do need to know what their rights are. It’s about their life now as well as in the future.”* The students spoken with could articulate their own role in speaking up if they felt that a right was not being accessed and they said that staff at school could be trusted; they all knew lots of people they would turn to. A discussion about fairness and equality brought out a good level of understanding and various apt examples including *“Some people don’t like to be hugged.”* with the implication that treating people differently can be the right thing. It was clear that the young people understood and trusted the school’s systems for responding to issues when they do arise.

Mutual respect, which is a key phrase in the school’s mission statement, was clearly evident in all relationships and interactions seen during the visit. As a result of ongoing training of staff and consistent messaging to the pupils, rights have permeated and become embedded in the culture of the school. The school has established a structured, restorative approach to conflict resolution and relationship building including the use of a symbols board for those unable to communicate verbally. One of the staff explained that *“It really helps them to see the impact of their action on others. In our culture of them knowing their rights they really know they need to respect others too”* Whilst not using the term ‘dignity’ the young people were able to explain that the way in which adults treated them, especially at times when there was a problem, was respectful, gentle and recognised their individuality. The importance of how staff are with the students and the imperative of dignity was summed up by the Headteacher who, in explaining her philosophy for the way Northridge is, said *“If it’s not good enough for your own child, then it’s not good enough.”*

All young people spoken with agreed that Northridge is a very safe school and they listed a number of ways in which their safety is ensured such as, *“If you go into crisis, people help you keep calm.”* One young person pointed out the importance of *“Ignoring silly behaviour.”* The Keeping Safe booklet and learning about ‘safe hugs’ were also talked about. Observations from staff suggest that the young people’s knowledge of their right to be safe and protected from harm has empowered them *“The rights have given them much more of a voice and they can have a meaningful choice.”* Bullying and discriminatory behaviour is rare and the young

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people trust that, if it happens, it would be responded to effectively. They spoke of actions they could take to resolve confrontation which included ignoring, stepping away and *“Saying sorry if you have hurt somebody’s feelings.”* This prompted the comment from another student *“It is important to forgive.”*

The young people explained that they learn a lot about being healthy, getting exercise and eating the right types of food. *“We learn about eating more vegetables and having snacks as a treat.”* The taught curriculum has significant content around many aspects of health and wellbeing. For older students, there is access to a purpose built facility ‘The Bungalow’ which is a fully functional flat to support the development of independent living skills. Extensive learning takes place around relationships and sex education with a particular focus on consent. For the most vulnerable groups there is additional work using ‘social stories’ and specific use is made of the NSPCC ‘PANTS’ materials. The school places significant emphasis on the young people’s social and emotional wellbeing with a range of provision for emotional health including targeted nurture and outreach groups. The young people quickly shared a range of strategies when asked about supporting people’s emotions and feelings these included talking to people and asking for time out. One pupil commented *“If there is somebody upset or angry they need some time to themselves.”*

Northridge has a strongly inclusive ethos which was palpable in all areas of the school throughout the visit. A parental comment on the website includes the phrase *“The school is happy and lovely.”* Children spoke repeatedly about friendships, being happy and feeling calm. Young people’s attitude and contribution to this are celebrated regularly with schemes such as Rights Respector of the week and star of the week. In the end of year assembly, children unable to be in school that day were able to access the event, and be seen by their peers, through use of webcams. One of the Super Learning Days remembered by the pupils had a focus on Stonewall to promote awareness and positivity about LGBTQI people. A member of staff pointed out that *“The rights fit naturally with who we are as a school and support how we are with each other.”*

The young people spoke very positively about their learning and were keen to explain a series of strategies they use to help them. These included targets and self-assessment, helping each other and a system of circling happy or sad faces in their books *“to show if you understand.”* They talked about lots of different types of learning including growing vegetables and then cooking with them and the participation of large numbers of pupils in the recent production of the musical Hairspray. Staff commented on their desire to *“Make rights come alive in the classroom. We do everything to promote the pupils’ choices.”* The pupils expressed a desire for more opportunities to experience sensory learning so the curriculum has been reshaped to make this possible. Students’ appreciation of their right to learn has been enhanced through their awareness of education for some children in Kenya with whom Northridge is partnered through the Memusi foundation.

### STRAND C: TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR RIGHTS – PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT AND ACTION

Young people 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 young people experience their rights.

**Strand C has been achieved**

Young people’s participation is fundamental to life at Northridge. As well as the Rights Respecting School Council, which is democratically elected, the young people can also

participate in various leadership and support roles. The Headteacher and all staff and governors see the voice of the students as a key element in influencing and shaping all the school does. The school improvement process is centred on an annual event called 'the Big Tea Party.' This highly inclusive gathering is structured to allow all pupils, families and staff to have a say about the strengths of the school and to share opinions and ideas about further development and improvement. The school council are involved in all staff recruitment and they are encouraged to attend parents' evenings in order to have their say about their life in school and their achievements. One example of pupils' opinions bringing about change has been the introduction of a leavers' 'Prom' which proved extremely popular. They are currently working on improvements to the playground equipment and have requested a netting cover for the MUGA to stop footballs escaping. Part of the school's provision includes the 'Cup Cake Café', a fully functional facility open to the public, and a long established relationship with North Manchester Hospital. Through these, young people have extensive opportunities to develop work based skills, which empower them to prepare for life after Northridge.

Young people at Northridge are engaged in actions to support the rights of others both locally and globally. The young people spoke with pride about their work for the Memusi Foundation "*Which helps them to get their education.*" This has included awareness raising as well as fundraising support. They have also fundraised for Cancer Research and, through their links at the hospital they have supported Macmillan. The students displayed an understanding of the challenges facing homeless people and described how their collection of food and toiletries at harvest time went to a local shelter.

The students gave various reasons why knowing their rights and being able to claim them is important. Among their comments were references to being safe and protected, helping you to learn and being respectful to other people. They also mentioned knowing about rights when you grow up so that you can tell others. It is clear that Northridge school empowers its young people to be rights respecting global citizens.