

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Strangford Integrated College
Headteacher:	Clare Foster
RRSA coordinator:	Jenny Cameron and Leah McBride
Local authority:	Northern Ireland Education Authority
School context:	Strangford Integrated College is an integrated co-educational secondary school with 834 pupils on roll. 30% of pupils are entitled to Free School meals, 13% of pupils have an SEN statement and 13% of pupils speak English as an additional language.
Attendees at SLT meeting:	Principal, Vice Principal/RRSA Lead, 2 Assistant Vice Principals, Campus Manager
Number of children and young people spoken with:	9 pupils from rights steering group 9 pupils from across year groups
Adults spoken with:	4 Teachers, 2 parents, 1 governor
Key RRSA accreditations:	Registered for RRSA: 18 May 2015 Bronze achieved: 21 November 2016 Silver achieved: 13 June 2018
Assessor:	Gerry McMurtrie
Date:	29 March 2022

ACCREDITATION OUTCOME

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

Strangford Integrated College has met the standard for UNICEF UK’s Rights Respecting Schools Award at Gold: Rights Respecting.

1. STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is based on a virtual accreditation visit. The assessor 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 digital evidence.

It was evident that children's rights are embedded across the school and underpin every facet of school life.

Strengths of the school include:

- Articulate pupils who demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of rights. They knew a wide range of articles and were confident in the concept of rights.
- Rights learning is embedded across all faculty areas, ensuring all students receive a rich curriculum linked to articles of the CRC.
- A strong commitment to children's rights and to RRSA from leaders at all levels tied into the vision and values of the school. Quality training and support for staff has been sustained.
- An ethos that places positive relationships based on mutual respect and trust at the heart of school life.
- A school with inclusion at its heart, where pupils feel safe and secure and are articulate about the importance of knowing about children's rights, the difference this makes to their lives and their desire and determination to help realise these rights for others.
- Very confident students who know that their views are taken seriously.

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 revisit RRSA guidance around language, wording, and vocabulary of rights. UNICEF UK's [ABCDE of Rights](#) resource will support staff.
- Continue to ensure that rights are explicitly linked to the curriculum, activities, and events throughout the school year.
- Continue to develop an ethos of inclusion and non-discrimination, providing opportunities to explore and celebrate diversity in all its forms including race, gender, belief, and different kinds of families so that all people feel valued and included.
- Continue to develop strategies to empower pupils to challenge injustice and create further opportunities for all year groups to be involved in campaigning and advocacy work on children's rights. Consider participation in UNICEF UK's annual [OutRight campaign](#).
- As a Gold Rights Respecting School, continue to develop your ambassadorial role, promoting the CRC and the benefits of a child rights-based approach.

2. VISIT HIGHLIGHTS

STRAND A	Highlights and comments
<p>1. Young people and the wider school community know about and understand the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and can describe how it impacts on their lives and on the lives of children everywhere</p>	<p>Pupils interviewed were knowledgeable about rights and understood them to be universal and unconditional. One pupil said, <i>"Rights are mandatory for children and young people...you get them at the start of life. No-one should ever be denied their rights."</i> Another pupil shared, <i>"...they are inherent...you are born with them...you don't need to earn them."</i> Pupils learn about rights throughout the curriculum in a wide range of subject areas. Focused form time activities for each Article of the Month creates a safe space for pupils to explore articles in more depth. Pupils are learning about the world around them through the introduction of the Global Goals, with relevant links to goals and articles made. The RRSA lead said, <i>"Our journey to Gold has been about 3 years now. The biggest impact has been our global citizenship work. Students are much more aware of the world they live in...local and global issues, and how they can make a difference."</i> The principal shared that the pandemic provided an opportunity for the school to revise their core values and to engage with the community on what is important to the school: resilience, kindness, and inclusivity. She said, <i>"The word embedded is very important to us...RRSA is not something we bolt on. It's something that's lived in this school...how we handle curriculum development and how young people are involved in their learning, is totally embedded in this school. It's about how we greet them every day, involving them in meetings, making sure they receive everything they need to succeed."</i></p>
STRAND B	Highlights and comments
<p>2. In school young people enjoy the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>	<p>Pupils were clear that staff are responsible to support them to access their rights. One said, <i>"All adults in the school are duty bearers, so it's not just the teachers that help us...everyone does."</i> Pupils understood the concept of fairness and equity, with a child sharing, <i>"There are different streams that cater to different learning types. If you are struggling, you are encouraged to ask for support...you never feel ashamed to ask for it."</i> Pupils were confident they are listened to and that the school acts upon any concerns brought to them, with necessary supports put in place.</p>
<p>3. Relationships are positive and founded on dignity and a mutual respect for rights</p>	<p>Pupils and staff reported that relationships across the schools are positive, with issues dealt with fairly, using a respectful, restorative approach. One said, <i>"One thing that's unique about our school is that there's a huge emphasis on the community and trying to bring us together. There's a level of respect for who we are...our personalities."</i> Pupils understood dignity to be, <i>"...having a level of respect and integrity for self and others."</i></p>
<p>4. Children and young people are safe and protected and know what to do if they need support.</p>	<p>Pupils agreed they felt safe in school and knew what to do if they needed to report a worry or concern. One said, <i>"We have a safeguarding team, and if you can't find them you ask a teacher. There are posters in class to tell you who to go to if you need help. We also have form teachers and head of years to go to...we always have someone to talk to."</i> Anti-bullying ambassadors have received training and wear blue hoodies as a visual reminder to pupils that peers are there to offer support and guidance if issues arise.</p>

<p>5. Children’s social and emotional wellbeing is a priority. They learn to develop healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>Staff interviewed spoke about the range of supports the school had put in place. One said, <i>“Student wellbeing is the heartbeat of our school. We’ve really focused on supporting mental health and wellbeing through team building days to integrate students back after long periods of isolation. We have lots of pastoral conversations about wellbeing.”</i> Pupils spoke about having access to a school counsellor, and how the school collapse timetables to provide extra revision spaces and groups during exams. One said, <i>“It helps us deal with stress. We talk about it during PD and assemblies...how we can reduce stress, relax, and build resilience in ourselves.”</i> A student from the Pure Mental group said, <i>“We took matters into our own hands and have embedded mental health training and lessons in every classroom. It’s a way of showing we care.”</i></p>
<p>6. Children and young people are included and are valued as individuals.</p>	<p>One student said, <i>“Everyone is treated as equal and respected. There is no pressure to fit into a certain type of lifestyle, you don’t need to pretend to be someone else.”</i> While talking about the importance of a culture of inclusion and non-discrimination, another said, <i>“Learning about rights teaches you we are all important. It normalises you to other religions, so when you go into the real world you understand and show respect.”</i></p>
<p>7. Children and young people value education and are involved in making decisions about their education.</p>	<p>Pupils are involved in their own learning through target setting and working with staff to track progress, identify areas to work on, and challenging themselves. They shared that classroom charters provided respectful places to learn. Every pupil has been allocated an iPad, with one commenting, <i>“They are really handy for general study...you can go and do a bit of research on a topic in class.”</i> Pupils also shared that they engage in regular school surveys, reporting back on how they feel and how they want to learn.”</p>
<p>STRAND C</p>	<p>Highlights and comments</p>
<p>8. Children and young people know that their views are taken seriously.</p>	<p>Students agreed they have a voice in school and can influence change. The Student Council recently proposed that girls should be able to wear trousers to school, leading to the school changing the uniform policy. The school have also gender neutralised policies, moving to a more inclusive language, following pupil requests. A pupil said, <i>“Student voice is very big here. We picked the 6 rights we felt were important in our school: 2, 16, 28, 12, 24, 31. The school have done a lot in terms of student voice, and that fulfils the rights-based approach we should all have.”</i></p>
<p>9. All children and young people have taken action to uphold their rights and the rights of others, locally and globally.</p>	<p>The school has a strong history of supporting a wide range of local and global charities. Pupils shared that they decide on the charities to support and come up with ideas for fundraising activities. Current activities have been around supporting mental health charities and the local foodbank. One said, <i>“It’s very important for us to help other people get rights. In RE we did ‘Blessing Bags’ for the homeless people on the streets in Belfast. We also supported the foodbank. We aimed to collect 80 bags but made 800.”</i> A member of the Pure Mental group shared, <i>“In a few weeks we are going to primary schools to talk to younger kids, so they can learn what we know and to make support more accessible.”</i> Pupils have also been invited to speak with politicians at Stormont, with one adding, <i>“We met with politicians to ask them what they planned to do to support mental health education. They spoke about plans to get it into primary school to catch it at its roots. We said there wasn’t enough being done.”</i></p>