

# RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

## GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

<b>Schools:</b>	Four Elms Primary and Seal CE Primary (The Inspire Federation)
<b>Executive Headteacher:</b>	Liz Mitchell
<b>RRSA coordinator:</b>	Jess Fermor
<b>Local authority:</b>	Kent County Council
<b>Assessor(s):</b>	Helen Trivers and Steven Kidd
<b>Date:</b>	23 June 2021

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a Gold virtual accreditation report. The assessor would like to thank the children, the Senior Leadership Team, Governors and staff for their warm welcome to the Inspire Federation, 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 Federation completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form and a portfolio of pre-visit evidence.

It was evident that children's rights are woven throughout both schools and impact upon every facet of school life.

Particular strengths include:

- Excellent rights knowledge displayed by children, maturely linking the theory with the practice of their daily lives.
- Still a strong focus on the importance of regular training and solid support for staff.
- The degree to which pupil voice is embedded in learning, delivering a truly child-led curriculum.
- A sense of 'action' is woven into the school, supporting pupils to develop the skills and confidence to affect the world around them.
- The Federation's Senior Leadership Team had an obvious passion and commitment to children's rights and were clear in the impact it was delivering for both schools.

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 to include systematic opportunities for pupil voice to impact upon the most significant aspects of school life e.g. school improvement planning.
- Explore how existing work on empathy and diversity might be enhanced through a connection with another school, either within the RRSA network in the UK or with an international school through the British Council's Connecting Classrooms programme.
- Act as an ambassador for a child rights-based approach, helping other schools along on their journey.

## 3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

<b>School context</b>	Seal CE Primary School has a current pupil roll of 370, 26% of whom are eligible for pupil premium; 11% have SEN support and 9% speak English as an additional language. Four Elms Primary School is smaller, with a roll of 110, 10% of whom are eligible for pupil premium; 12% have SEN support and just 3% EAL.
<b>Attendees at SLT meeting</b>	Executive Headteacher / 2 x Heads of School / RRSA coordinator (AHT)
<b>Number of children and young people interviewed</b>	17 children across two virtual focus groups.
<b>Number of adults interviewed</b>	3 teachers, TA, Inclusion Manager, Family Liaison Officer, Chair of Governors.
<b>Evidence provided</b>	Focus groups, portfolio of digital evidence.
<b><u>Seal CE Primary</u> Registered for RRSA: 25 February 2014 Gold achieved: 22 June 2018</b>	<b><u>Four Elms Primary</u> Registered for RRSA: 06 November 2017 Silver achieved: 08 July 2020</b>
Having begun their journeys separately, and achieved Gold and Silver respectively, the schools are now working together as a single Federation.	

## 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 spoken with during the visit, from the youngest children in Reception through to Year 6, demonstrated an excellent knowledge of rights. Though they were able to share a wide range of articles, it was the depth of their understanding and their ability to connect theory with practice which set them apart. One Year 2 pupil offered an example: *"Sometimes we can do different rights for different subjects; in maths, you're enjoying your right to learn, to your talents and abilities and the right to be safe, but we were doing an experience where you had to see how much equipment you could buy for a £50 budget and then seeing what the whole class wants – that's the right to be heard."* Familiarity with the nature of rights as being inherent, inalienable, indivisible, universal and unconditional was also readily apparent, e.g. *"You don't need to do anything, you're born with them, they can't be taken away", "none of the rights are more important than the other rights", "they're for all children under 18, every single child in the world".*

Pre-visit submissions provided a wealth of evidence of coverage across the curriculum and at all ages and stages, with the innovative 'rights capes' used in reception to draw attention to actions respectful of rights. The RRSA lead explained the difference since the last visit: *"We stopped doing Rights Days because it was so embedded in our experience. Now it's just within everything that we're doing, that's definitely had an impact... It's the change in the children's understanding. Before they weren't always seeing the link in their learning, now they're just talking about it in their daily life."* Exploration of topical, global issues is brought in through assemblies and regular use of sources such as Newsround and First News, with pupils increasingly confident in making links to rights and, often, coming up with ideas of how they could get involved. The school has filmed their own stories as prompts for discussion with younger pupils, also linking to the Global Goals. A teacher shared an example of work looking at plastic pollution and of pupils readily connecting it to children's rights: *"They're so literate and fluent in this language."*

*"We've had quite a changeover of staff, so one of the big things is making sure we're maintaining the training,"* explained the RRSA lead, *"...it's had a big impact, new teachers have been saying 'Why aren't all schools doing this?'"* Evidence included a number of excellent videos and the medium has played an important role in ensuring adults have the necessary confidence and skills to play their part in realising rights, especially used in induction processes and in building consistency across both schools. Staff were quick to credit the role of the coordinator and the value of *"lots of training"*, explaining how it helped them see *"how RRS was embedded in everything and it underpins everything we do on a daily basis."* Whilst rights were woven through, a colleague noted discrete rights teaching was also part of the mix: *"We do lessons that are just focussed on the rights as well. We've got a lot of focus on metacognition as part of reflection and evaluation. Have we made a difference? What do we need to do?"* A member of the SLT explained that they follow-up to see whether the focus is impacting on practice: *"We monitor the curriculum coverage. When we do a book scrutiny, we're looking for evidence. Is it talked about? Is it evident around the classroom?"*

## 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

The Executive Head spoke of harmonising the vision for both schools, helping Four Elms to see the same benefit already realised at Seal: *“We wanted to see how RRS could be a vehicle to bring that compassion, developing well-rounded citizens... equality and equity across the federation... we wanted that same mindset: to help children all around the world.”* The Chair of the Board of Governors stressed the value they’d seen, too, noting how RRSA is *“central to that vision... it’s here to stay... we’re very proud of it and the work that’s happened so far.”* Pupils were confident in explaining the difference between equality and equity, one Y4 girl sharing what it meant for their schools: *“We give children the education they need instead of giving them the same.”* They were similarly assured in identifying rights in action in their school, pointing to numerous ways in which the school facilitates this, led by *“the duty bearers... the adults, the teachers, the TAs.”*

Every class uses a charter, cooperatively created at the start of the year, which forms the basis for interaction in the space. Children and adults alike agree that this plays an important part in shaping mutually respectful relationships, one staff member noting: *“It’s not just adult-led, it’s not just a behaviour thing, it’s a whole ethos – they see it as part of what they do... I think it makes us feel like a community. As soon as I walked through the gate I could feel that.”* Restorative justice is used to deal with conflict, something which a group of children are supporting in the playground: the ‘Justice League’; a parent reported, *“Both of my children are really quiet, but they’re part of the Justice League. It seems to make such a difference and they’re really proud of that.”* Evidence revealed that the school has explored the concept of dignity in class and through work with local care homes; behaviour logs have shown that there has been a decline in the number of incidents over time. The important role of rights language was especially valued: *“It really gave the children a vocabulary to discuss things. They are respecting each other’s viewpoints. Behaviourally our outcome at Ofsted was amazing and I think that was very much about being rights respecting.”*

Children expressed that they felt safe at school and pre-visit surveys highlighted that almost all children at both schools were confident in talking to an adult should they feel unsafe. This is backed up by reports from safeguarding leads of an increase in the number of disclosures, which they have attributed to their work on rights: *‘We have seen this as a huge positive as we have been able to reassure pupils that we will support them.’*

It was clear that the physical, mental, social and emotional needs of children were central themes at Seal and Four Elms, with much evidence provided to demonstrate how these needs are considered. The schools track wellbeing, monitor individuals’ responses as well as trends, and take actions as a result. Lockdown was obviously a big concern, as one staff member highlighted: *“[Wellbeing] had to be such a priority. They’re not ready to learn. We have a counsellor who comes and works with the children and the staff. They ran sessions... opened up a parent forum... ran workshops and did videos. We changed the way that we were delivering our learning as well.”* Children could talk of ways in which the school kept them healthy, both physically – *“we have a daily mile”, “water in the classrooms”* – and mentally – *“we do meditation to feel calm”, “we have wellness lessons once a week”*. A teacher explained how they’d increased the latter in response to Covid: *“We’ve built in more circle time, with worry monsters, mediation, yoga etc. Helping them build that resilience back up”,*

whilst the Chair of Governors noted that, *“part of the catch-up premium was allocated to extra sessions from the counsellor for child (and staff) wellbeing.”*

*“It’s something they’ve all got in common – it doesn’t matter who they are, they know they all have the same rights,”* stated the Executive Head, discussing how the journey had supported the desire to bring people together and value everyone’s contribution. Evidence showed how this was reflected in provision, both targeted and universal, to help pupils make the most of their educational experience; it also offered an insight into the approach, highlighting how the school actively considered equality and diversity with an example of action taken to improve representation within pupil leadership roles. During home learning the school had check-ins with children and families and tailored provision based on feedback: *“There were lots of phone calls to parents to support home learning... we were supporting with that dialogue, of how they explain things to children, even things like Black Lives Matter... making sure they were happy to reach out and ask.”* One staff member explained how the pursuit of inclusion was coming through from the students, too: *“I’ve seen a real development in empathy... the children were looking at playgrounds and suddenly saw that some children can’t access them, so they were thinking ‘it’s our job to do something about that’, having never really thought about that before.”*

‘We have a real passion for learning and aspire to be the best we can be’, proclaims the Inspire Federation website, before outlining the schools’ innovative approach to the curriculum, based around ‘learning experiences’. Children actively shape things from the very beginning, helping to identify the direction of learning, setting goals, and evaluating and reflecting on the results. Outcomes are child-led and examples from evidence ranged from ‘hosting a book signing to creating and running an exhibition for schools and the local community to see’. The schools’ approach to learning may well explain pupils and staff continually connecting learning to *“doing something”*, creating a genuine sense of engaged learners who are also empowered young citizens.

## 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**

Throughout the visit it was immediately obvious that the children of both schools see themselves as agents of change, all groups neatly linking discussion of rights to actions they could take to advocate for them. *“What I love,”* said the Executive Head, *“is that if any child from any of the schools feels passionate about something, they write to me. When that happens, I think ‘my work here is done’.”* Children were definite in their belief that they were listened to, pointing to the suggestion boxes and pupil voice groups as ways of sharing their big ideas. Examples reflected an organic reaction to the wishes of pupils, with examples of impact coming up naturally in conversations with all groups, ranging from school trips to changes to policies. Over and above the elected pupil groups, writing a letter to the school’s senior leadership seems to be a well-used method of making a request, with evidence providing several examples of where this has happened, of the serious consideration given to the issue and subsequent impact. The RRSA Coordinator highlighted the benefit of their responsive approach: *“You can see it in their confidence. We give them the tools and they realise they can have a voice. The children are so sparky... They go for it and they’re so engaged and enthused.”*



*“Rights Respecting runs through everything we do, but the campaigns are where we’ve seen the real impact,” explained a member of the senior leadership team, noting how work in this area had helped build compassion, “It’s not the most diverse area, so sometimes there can be a lack of empathy... the campaigns have made a difference... their faces lit up when they saw that people were donating to the charity because of their video. It was like a light bulb moment for them.” Empathy was an important theme in the school’s evidence of their activism, resonating strongly with a rights-based approach to charitable and campaigning endeavours, whether in donating goods to local foodbanks or persuading children’s authors to consider greater diversity in their characters. The schools had taken part in ‘Empathy Week’, at the end of which, ‘the children made empathy resolutions which allowed them the opportunity to consider how being empathetic could help them to be a good global citizen.’ A group of children has been involved in Amnesty International research work alongside other schools, talking about their views and experiences, with the output informing the creation of a publication. Focus group participants in our visit were in no doubt about their ability to affect change, clear that they’d “done lots of things to stop bad things that’s happening in the world”, including work on plastic pollution, promoting sign language and anti-racism campaigns. A particularly impressive example had occurred during lockdown, with children working alongside an author to raise awareness of pollution in the oceans; outcomes included children writing to shops and creating powerful videos and, because it was during a home-learning period, whole families were involved. The Head of one school summed it up: “We’ve really empowered children to have a voice, whether that’s in the school or globally. They know their rights and it gives them the power to promote what they think is important.”*