

UNICEF UK RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL AWARD ASSESSMENT REPORT LEVEL TWO / GOLD

School:	Gracemount High School
Headteacher:	Ross Hunter
RRSA coordinator:	Lewis Whale
Local authority:	Edinburgh City Council
Assessors:	Gerry McMurtrie & Jen Myddleton
Date:	20 February 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessors would like to thank the pupils, the leadership team, staff, parents and community partners for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with adults and pupils during the assessment, and for the detailed evidence provided to support the process. Prior to the assessment visit, the school provided a comprehensive self-evaluation form and impact evaluation form.

It was clear that during the visit everyone placed a real importance on respect for rights and promoting the school's rights respecting ethos, which was both inclusive and participatory.

Particular strengths of the school are:

- Strong strategic direction that is fully committed to RRSA
- Very positive respectful relationships throughout the school
- Pupil voice is a strength of the school and continues to be nurtured and encouraged
- Effective systems to ensure all pupils feel included and respected

2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING LEVEL 2

No requirements noted.

3. MAINTAINING LEVEL 2

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 Level 2. Here are our recommendations for your school:

- As the first local authority Secondary School in Edinburgh City to achieve Gold, continue to act as an ambassador for RRSA and support and encourage other schools within the local area.
- Continue to make explicit reference to relevant Articles of the CRC in the curriculum and in the development of school documentation, such as policies and the SIP.
- Continue strengthening global citizenship work by taking part in the World's Largest Lesson and further developing your work around the Global Goals for Sustainable Development <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/world-largest-lesson/>

4. THE ASSESSMENT IN DETAIL

4.1. The school context

Gracemount High School is a small non-denominational secondary school with a roll of 610. The school served the community of South East Edinburgh, and has been in existence for over 50 years. The school teaches a range of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds with 70% of the pupils coming from SIMD 1-3 and 23 % of pupils accessing free school meals. The current school building was constructed under PPP and opened in 2003.

The school registered to become rights respecting in 2014 and achieved the RRSA Level 1 Award in 2017.

4.2. Assessment information

Self-evaluation form received	Yes
Impact evaluation form received	Yes
Attendees at SLT meeting	Deputy headteacher x 2, RRSA Lead (The Headteacher was unavailable on the day of the assessment, and was interviewed separately)
Number of children and young people interviewed	74 pupils (focus group, presentations and class visits)
Number of staff interviewed	11 teaching staff, 4 external partners, 1 parent
Evidence provided	Walking tour, pupil presentations, documentation

Standard A:

Rights-respecting values underpin leadership and management

Standard A has been achieved

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are very committed to creating a Rights Respecting ethos at Gracemount High. The Headteacher advised that the RRSA has been a passion of his for a number of years and said *“I was involved with the award in my previous school and knew the impact it could have. I used the RRSA very much as a pitch for school improvement during my interview for this post. I took up post in 2014 and the first thing to do was develop our vision and values. The question was about what sort of school we wanted to create. School is about building character and confidence in our young people, respect is the foundation needed to move forward. Young people are at the heart of our community and we are all proud to be in a school where our rights are central. The RRSA has been key to achieving this”*. The Impact Evaluation Form and school survey results showed significant impact across all areas, particularly in wellbeing, attainment, attendance, and significantly reduced exclusions. The RRSA lead said *“The award and our inclusive and restorative practice has significantly impacted on all areas across the school”*.

Becoming Rights Respecting and maintaining the culture is a clear priority within the School Quality Improvement Plan (SQIP) and has also been included as a priority area within every Faculty Development Plan. The HT said *“The RRSA is now fully embedded into the life of the school and this ensures its sustainability. It is not down to just a few areas, it’s the whole school”*. All new policies, including the Equalities policy, Positive Behaviours policy and the Relationship for Learning policy have been explicitly linked to key Articles of the Convention. The SLT advised that all policies will link to the CRC and the RRSA framework as they are refreshed. The Attendance policy is being developed to be inclusive and supportive to young people’s circumstances and needs along with the new Family Learning policy which focuses on supporting families/carers to learn with their children.

The school prides itself on its inclusive and participatory ethos along with its positive image within the local community. The SLT have been looking at ways to further develop as an inclusive school and have consulted with pupils, families and staff. The Family Learning policy has been created to further engage and encourage families to become involved with their children’s learning. This also encourages families to get involved in the life of the school and is seen as key to removing barriers. The new 1 in 5 opportunity fund is supporting the schools Global Goal focus of ‘No Poverty’. The fund is supporting pupils to access resources and opportunities such as extra-curricular activities/groups, school trips, free sanitary products and access to grants for school uniforms. Every classroom has a resource box to provide free stationary to pupils to ensure that everyone has the tools and resources required to learn. The school received Scottish Government funding to support Pupil Equity (PEF) and have used this to employ Wider Achievement Officers, Equity in Literacy and STEM posts along with Learning to Learn mentors to nurture and support pupils across the school.

The RRSA lead and RRSA pupil group have been instrumental in supporting a number of schools within the Local Authority on their RRSA journey. The RRSA lead delivered a good practice session on the RRSA in November 2017 to 25 staff members from schools across Edinburgh City. A very active twitter account is used to share and highlight achievements and pupils have developed a rights DVD and drama/dance production. The RRSA group have delivered rights lessons to P7 pupils as part of transition. The school also recently worked with UNICEF to host a visit from senior members of the Scottish Government and Education Scotland. The purpose of the visit was to highlight the impact RRSA and a rights based approach has had within the school. The HT, RRSA Lead and a number of pupil groups presented to the visitors and spoke passionately about the school, their RRSA work and the importance of a child rights based approach to Education.

There is very clear evidence of the SLT promoting global citizenship and sustainable development throughout lesson plans, activities and specific focus events during the year. The school are working on the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDG’s) with a focus this year on No Poverty. Lessons linked to the SDG’s have been delivered across the school and are linked to articles of the Convention. The school have a long running partnership with Ogwini High School in South Africa and have supported a number of pupils to visit the school. Pupils interviewed shared that they helped to deliver lessons on rights to pupils at Ogwini, raised fund to support the school, and helped to repair the school water tower. One pupil described this experience as *“a life changing opportunity.”*

Standard B:
The whole school community learns about the CRC

Standard B has been achieved

The pupils interviewed confidently talked about the importance of the CRC and about knowing about their rights. One pupil said *“I didn’t know anything about rights until I came to this school. We learn about them all the time and they are all over the school. It has made the school a better place”*. Another pupil said *“We know we can make a difference and that we are listened to”*. During the focus group and class visits pupils were able to talk about a number of articles such as the right to an education, clean water, privacy, medical care,

play, to be looked after, cared for and protected, to an identity, a voice and opinion and to reliable information. Another pupil said *“The most important thing about rights is knowing that we are all equal and that we can help others”*. Staff were also confident when talking about key articles and how they were linking these naturally during lesson planning and delivery. Staff have received training, support from the SLT and resources around the CRC to ensure sustainability.

Parents are kept informed about the school’s rights respecting work via the website, online RRSA blog, twitter feed, newsletters, information events and homework tasks. The Parent Council have received RRSA training and one parent has joined the RRSA school group. All new S1 parents receive a mini rights lesson delivered by the RRSA lead at P7 transition events. All SLT led presentations to parents have a rights focus and all include an opening slide with the RRSA logo. The Chair of the Parent Council said *“We are always fully included and informed about the work of the school. It’s clear that the school places a real importance on the needs and rights of the pupils, and we are always invited to contribute”*.

The RRSA lead advised that the creation of the new curriculum tracker for the 2017/18 session ensures that every faculty department link their work to rights. Staff interviewed described this process as a natural step to deepen the learning of rights across the curriculum. One staff member said *“It was natural, and didn’t give us anything new to do. It’s been about realising where rights sit already in topics and making it explicit. That can only really happen when staff understand and know about rights”*. The RRSA lead advised that he was very proud that every single faculty in the school is now involved in teaching about rights and that this now means pupils are being taught rights throughout the school year, not just at certain points. Faculty boards are linked to rights, rights posters, art work and information leaflets were evident throughout the learning walk.

A key aspect of the Scottish curriculum is global citizenship and sustainable development. All staff have received training and are specifically highlighting related areas within the curriculum tracker. Staff and pupils were clear that they understood the importance children’s rights played in the links between global citizens and sustainable development. The school are supporting the SDGs and decided on No Poverty following a pupil and staff survey. The school promotes Fair Trade, hosted a Holocaust Memorial Day event, supported LGBT History month and hosted the WE annual conference within the school. This event attracted representatives from across Scotland to Gracemount High.

Standard C: **The school has a rights-respecting ethos**

Standard C has been achieved

A whole school charter has been created and is used as a tool by both staff and pupils to promote rights across the school. The SLT advised that the charter took some time to get right and involved a number of consultations with pupils, parents and staff. The charter is on display across the school and within classrooms. Pupils have also created a dyslexia friendly version of the charter to ensure that it is fully inclusive. The charter underpins the school’s policies, ethos and values. A number of stand-alone lessons were delivered to

pupils during PSE as part of the charter launch. One pupil said *"It's not about rules now, it's how we listen and respect each other"*.

Staff reported that relationships across the school have improved with the introduction of rights respecting language and restorative practice. This has been supported by staff training and the introduction of the restorative behaviour management policy. A 'cool-down' room has been introduced to support pupils who may be struggling and need some time out of class during the day. The purpose of the room is to support pupils and to de-escalate incidents from occurring, using a nurturing approach. Praise postcards have been introduced and are linked to Articles 28 and 29 and used by staff when pupils show respectful and positive behaviour and attitudes. One pupil said *"We have people we can go to and talk to whenever we need it"*. It was clear during discussions with pupils and staff that the school places genuine value in the continual development of respectful relationships.

Pupils talked about being involved in their own learning and having the opportunity to set their own targets and track their progress. Staff work closely with pupils and parents to develop learning plans. Pupils have access to guidance staff for further support with their learning and were confident that if they needed help, they would receive it. One pupil said *"We do work well together and respect each other. We are involved in our learning and are asked to give teachers feedback about the topics we do. They listen to that and make changes"*. Pupils spoken with knew that they had a right to an opinion and to be heard. The Headteacher introduced the 'Daily Dozen' to the school, a mechanism for pupils to feedback ideas, comments and suggestions. The results of this are compiled and fed back to staff and pupils and used to inform the School Quality Improvement Plan.

All pupils spoken with confirmed that they felt safe, respected and included. The 'Daily Dozen' questionnaire regularly asks pupils to rate how safe they feel in school. The SLT track this and raise any concerns or patterns to the Pupil Support Team. A recent Health and Well-being survey highlighted that 95% of pupils felt safe in school. The SLT advised that the RRSA has supported the school with the introduction of rights respecting language and that the ethos that has been created means everyone knows they have the rights to be safe, and that they also have the right to support when they need it. A number of anti-bullying posters and displays around the school offer pupil's information for agencies they can speak to if they had a concern.

Pupils reported that they are encouraged and supported to sort issues out between them respectfully. Staff are on hand to offer support when required and a number of external partners and agencies visit the school regularly to offer training, support, guidance and information to pupils and staff. Pupils have access to a number of pupil support groups such as anti-bullying, LGBTQ+ and pupils from the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) group to support them in resolving conflicts. Pupils were involved in the creation of the anti-bullying policy and were confident that they would receive support when they asked for it. One pupil said *"We listen to each other here, it's good that we have each other"*. The introduction of pupil statements is another way the school are able to track incidents and encourage pupils to reflect on incidents that may happen.

Gracemount High provides pupils with numerous opportunities, through the Curriculum for Excellence, to learn about global citizenship. One pupil said *"The school gives us lots of opportunities to learn about what is happening around the world. A global citizen is someone who knows they can make a difference. We are all of equal importance. We are*

working to support our global school in South Africa and have been using 'Face Time' technology. This makes it real because we can see each other. If we educate everyone about rights then the world will see a real difference". The school are also beginning to use the World's Largest Lesson resources to deepen awareness of global citizenship

Standard D:

Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners

Standard D has been achieved

Pupil voice is a real strength of the school and pupils understood that their voice mattered in the life of Gracemount High School. One pupil said *"We have the right to be heard and share our opinions. We are the bricks that hold the school together"*. Pupils demonstrated in each of the committee presentations just how much input and to what level they are consulted and were confident that their views are taken on board. The charities committee votes on what charity they will support, and what they can use the money for. Pupils held a whole school vote to decide if they should keep registration time or not, with pupils overwhelmingly voting to keep registration. The feedback from pupils was that this helped bring everyone together and was an important way to begin the day and settle in school. The new behaviour policy was written in partnership with pupils and pupils were also consulted on the recent anti-bullying work. The 'Daily Dozen' organised by the Head Teacher is a set of questions for pupils about the life of the school – pupils are encouraged and take advantage of the opportunity to put forward some of the questions – pupils views from these are then considered and acted upon as appropriate.

With the diverse pupil population at Gracemount it was acknowledged that the curriculum as it stood, had not provided the best fit for all pupils. After consultation with the pupils a new curriculum was developed with vocational pathways as well as routes to 'advanced higher's'. It is hoped this will support and encourage more young people to remain in school for longer. Partner agencies represented at the focus group shared that they had noticed a significant difference in the pupil's uptake of their services. One partner said *"It is clear to see that this has been a journey. Now that pupils know about their rights, you can really see it being embedded in their learning. They are able to source support and ask for it"*. Another partner said *"Now that children know that support is a right, they also are more aware that it is their choice to attend a session with a partner agency and they are not being made to attend. It's now much more likely for them to make the choice to stay for the session"*. The PSE curriculum has been adapted to allow pupils to make more informed decisions and choices about their health and wellbeing, rather than being a 'top down' filtering of information. Pupils also confirmed that they are supported to access information relevant to their needs and interests and teaching is framed around this. All pupils have been provided with an iPad to support their learning and are able to use this at home and within school.

The cluster primary school is not currently using RRSA in its work and a group of S3 pupils devised a presentation which they then delivered to P7 pupils. Pupils felt it was important for them to share the knowledge around rights with the pupils about to move to the school. One pupil said *"We wanted to support them to understand how this would fit with their*

experience when they transitioned to S1. If you're more aware of your rights, you can actually seek it out and go to someone to get something done about it". The school has a long standing link with a school in South Africa (Ogwini High School) and through this they have made several trips to support the school and learn about the life of the students there. On a recent visit pupils took information about children's rights, delivered lessons and supported the school to make improvements to drinking facilities. The school continue to raise funds to support the school.

Pupils are involved in supporting a number of local and global charities, including the local foodbank, Cancer Research and Fairtrade. Pupils have been keen to support the newly developed Opportunities Fund linked to the 1 in 5 Raising Awareness of child poverty work. This is a key priority area across the local authority highlighting that 1 child in every 5 is living in poverty. The fund helps to provide financial support so that every child can access opportunities where their family financial circumstances may normally preclude them from doing so. One pupil, when speaking about this, said *"You shouldn't have to feel bad if you can't (participate) and someone else can. It's good to be in a school that helps everyone."* Through work in RME, pupils have been writing to the local government and the PE department to ask that they use Fairtrade footballs. Pupils also decided to write to Nestle to complain that they are selling powdered milk to mothers in developing countries where access to clean water is limited. Pupils also invited some human rights speakers into the school and followed up on this by creating a poster campaign within the local area to raise awareness of rights. A group of pupils have also supported the WE campaign to highlight the difference that can be made when you work together to campaign for change.