

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	The Oaks Secondary School
Headteacher:	Andrea English
RRSA coordinator:	Rebecca Farrow
Local authority:	Durham
School context:	The Oaks Secondary school has 336 pupils all of whom have an EHCP or a Statement of Special Educational Needs, 50% are eligible for support through the Pupil Premium and 1% speak English as an additional language.
Attendees at SLT meeting:	Executive Headteacher, 2 x deputy headteachers, RRSA Lead
Number of children and young people spoken with:	5 students from Yr11 and 9 students from Yr9
Adults spoken with:	2 x teachers, 1 x teaching assistant, 1 x governor, 1 x cleaner
Key RRSA accreditations:	Registered for RRSA: June 2016 Bronze achieved: June 2016 Silver achieved: September 2017
Assessor(s):	Isobel Mitchell and Kathy Allan
Date:	30 th September 2021

ACCREDITATION OUTCOME

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

The Oaks Secondary School 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 assessors 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:

- Children's rights are embedded through all areas of school particularly in Key Skills for Learning, Life and Work, supporting the development of empowered and confident young people.
- Implementing a wide range of strategies to ensure that students continued to be able to share their views and feedback on provision during lockdown so that the school could best ensure that pupils rights were all met.
- A caring and inclusive ethos where the values of dignity and respect are lived. A family group model supports children's understanding of each other's needs, ensuring pupils feel supported and fully involved in school life.
- Confident, articulate students who know they have a voice, are listened to, and who are engaged in taking their ideas forward across the school, influencing change and making a positive difference.

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:

- Focus on ensuring reference to rights is made specifically and explicitly across the curriculum, policies, in the SIP and in communications with families throughout the school year to support sustainability of RRSA.
- Continue to develop rights respecting relationships with families helping them to learn about and understand the CRC and engage further with the school's rights respecting journey.
- Develop a structure for rights-based debating perhaps through the family group curriculum and exploration of current affairs. Consider using Philosophy for Children (P4C) to support the development of oracy skills and use this as a spring-board for student led campaigning.
- Continue to act as ambassadors for rights and the RRSA through supporting your federated schools and local mainstream schools to learn about children's rights and RRSA.

2. VISIT HIGHLIGHTS

STRAND A	Highlights and comments
<p>1. Children, 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>Rights are high profile across the curriculum, in discussion and throughout the school environment and the rights-based approach is helping strengthen the individualised curriculum based on pupil interests. Young people’s understanding of rights helps them to understand that duty bearers are responsible for ensuring they can access their rights. They explained that <i>“We deserve our rights no matter what.”</i>; <i>“You do not have to be good to get the rights.”</i> and <i>“Everyone should have rights no matter what.”</i> Pupils spoken with were clear about their rights and were able to describe scenarios in which children cannot access their rights due to disability or poverty. One young person also passionately shared his views about rights violations in North Korea and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan he identified that children with disabilities are not being allowed to access their rights. A member of Sixth Form staff described how the life skills curriculum prepares pupils for the future. <i>“Being aware of rights allows us to ensure they have their rights. We have a lot of discussion if they aren’t getting them at home or in other countries. It allows us to dig down deep.”</i> Another member of staff added, <i>“Children can now reflect on whether they are getting their rights met and if not, what they can do about that.”</i></p>
STRAND B	Highlights and comments
<p>2. In school children and young people enjoy the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>	<p>Young people spoken with were confident in the school’s ability to act upon concerns and facilitate their rights. <i>“If we didn’t have rights in school then there would be a lot of discrimination of others.”</i> explained a pupil with another adding, <i>“You get treated the same even if you have been naughty.”</i> Staff supported this in saying <i>“Everybody is approachable and supportive around the school. All adults in roles interact respectfully with children.”</i> Another shared the impact that knowledge of rights is having <i>“It gives them confidence and they are empowered to move towards independence....it gives them a positive perspective of themselves and a wider view of the world, it broadens their horizons.”</i> Staff explained that this knowledge is critical for children moving into adult services.</p>
<p>3. Relationships are positive and founded on dignity and a mutual respect for rights</p>	<p>There is a sense of community within the school where mutual respect is modelled and lived. Staff understand <i>“Behaviour as communication.”</i> and ensure that all sides are listened to and supported. The RRSA Coordinator explained how <i>“Referring to rights is helping children to realise the impact of their actions – everything is bespoke and differentiated.”</i> Young people have regular input into reviewing the rewards and consequences system so have a good understanding of the behaviour system and feel it to be fair.</p>
<p>4. Children and young people are safe and protected and know what to do if they need support.</p>	<p>Safety is a key priority at The Oaks and all young people have at least one member of staff they can talk to if needed. Healthy sexual behaviour and consent are explored with pupils and the deputy head shared how skills and understanding about rights, and having a voice, is supporting children to engage in challenging conversations. Pupils spoken to were clear how to keep themselves and others safe: <i>“If people are being naughty, it makes the school less safe for everyone.”</i> and <i>“I think people get on well most of the time,</i></p>

	<i>it is safe here. If we have a problem we can tell a teacher, they will help us feel safe and happy."</i>
5. Children's social and emotional wellbeing is a priority. They learn to develop healthy lifestyles.	Healthy lifestyles are promoted across the school and young people have a range of opportunities to access support if they need it. Investment has been made in training for staff and all students are given a mindfulness taster. <i>"We have a teacher who helps you with mindfulness and you can go to lessons if you like. It gives your brain a rest and gets all the bad thoughts out of your head."</i> explained one young person. Another shared their experience, <i>"The Young Minds peer support group has helped me. Their job is to help us stay happy; I had really bad anxiety and Listening Matters really helped."</i>
6. Children and young people are included and are valued as individuals.	The school's culture of inclusion and mutual respect ensures that pupils feel valued as individuals. This is supported by the school's approach to achievement where progress in behaviour and academic success are both taken into account allowing all pupils to be successful. A pupil explained that <i>"If a new child joins, we would show them around and play with them at break times. New children get a buddy to help them feel welcome."</i> A Governor added, <i>"We are committed to embracing the whole child through the CRC."</i>
7. Children and young people value education and are involved in making decisions about their education.	Charters in classrooms frame a positive learning environment within which young people are engaged and supported. Pupils confidently talked about their active role <i>"We get to work as partners and share our opinions.";</i> <i>"We mark and make comments on others work."</i> and <i>"We get to speak out about our opinions, choosing what we learn about."</i> They also shared how their interests have tailored the curriculum citing examples of photography and health and beauty courses. A member of staff also shared how the school's Duke of Edinburgh programme grew from pupil feedback.
STRAND C	Highlights and comments
8. Children and young people know that their views are taken seriously.	Student voice plays big role in all elements of the school and the Student Council regularly attend Governor meetings while the Governing body includes a children's committee that ensure pupils' voices and needs are at the heart of decision making. The RRSA Lead explained that since achieving Silver they had <i>"Focused on ensuring that students are involved in making changes rather than just suggesting them."</i> and additional time has been allocated to this. Surveys ensure that enrichment activities are shaped by pupils and last year each class had their own budget to deliver a bespoke Christmas celebration.
9. All children and young people have taken action to uphold their rights and the rights of others, locally and globally.	Students at The Oaks are active campaigners for their own rights, and the rights of others. Staff described how Article 29 has provided a framework to develop understanding of the wider world. Pupils animatedly shared their understanding of climate change, <i>"The ice caps are melting,";</i> <i>"It is destroying habitats and we are chopping down trees."</i> One pupil shared his views of the M25 protestors, <i>"They are stopping cars and people are keeping their engines on so it is sending more gas into the air and increasing climate change."</i> They also took part in the COP26 vote explaining that, <i>"In Glasgow there are a lot of countries meeting to talk about the environment and we get to vote on climate change."</i> another adding, <i>"We had lots of differing views so had a debate."</i> Pupils also took part in a road safety campaign, marching with placards to raise awareness and managing to reduce the speed limit to 20mph outside their school.