

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Hope Wood Academy
Headteacher:	Adele Pearson
RRSA coordinator:	Rachel Masters
Local authority:	Durham County Council
School context:	Hope Wood Academy has 216 children aged 2-19 on roll with a range of special educational needs. All children have an EHCP and 1.4% speak English as an Additional Language. 70% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding. At its most recent Ofsted inspection, the school was judged to be Good.
Attendees at SLT meeting:	Headteacher, deputy headteacher, RRSA lead
Number of children and young people spoken with:	3 pupils from sixth form and 8 pupils from the Student Council
Adults spoken with:	12 adults including 5 teachers, 3 non-teaching staff, 3 parents/carers and the CEO of the Academy Trust
Key RRSA accreditations:	Registered for RRSA: 23 rd November 2016 Bronze achieved: 20 th June 2017 Silver achieved: 19 th October 2018
Assessor(s):	Isobel Mitchell and Helen Trivers
Date:	3 rd November 2021

ACCREDITATION OUTCOME

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

Hope Wood Academy 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:

- Strong pupil voice which has led to changes in school and influenced policy and practice in the local authority and local businesses, impacting on rights beyond the school gates.
- Pupil voice is now central to the EHCP review process, and the school makes sure this is effective not tokenistic.
- Good understanding of equity across the school community which ensures that young people are supported in the best ways for them, for example through Emotion Coaching when dealing with behaviour incidents, meaning that positive relationships are underpinned by an understanding of rights.
- UN Global Goals are driving policy and practice in areas of work across the Ascent Academies' Trust, including work on sustainability and poverty proofing.

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:

- Develop more explicit references to articles from the CRC in the curriculum, policies and on the school website to give a clearer message to everyone that the school takes a child-rights based approach and to ensure long term sustainability.
- Explore with the school community the links between improved outcomes for children and the implementation of a rights-based approach across the school.
- Play an increased ambassadorial role within the school Trust and local community.
- Continue to develop advocacy and campaigning work linked to the UN Global Goals to ensure that all young people have experienced making positive changes both locally and globally. Perhaps develop this through the school link with Bangladesh.

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>Children were familiar with a range of rights and could link these to their own lived experiences, such as learning to shop for and cook healthy meals linked to their right to health. Children knew that rights belong to, <i>“Everyone.”</i> that they didn’t need to be earned, can’t be taken away and are all equally important, with one child adding, <i>“You should learn about rights in all schools so they know what their rights are and that no one can take them away from them.”</i> Pupils understood that duty bearers are responsible for rights and one child said, <i>“The government are responsible for rights. In school it’s teachers and the headteacher and outside school it’s the police.”</i> The headteacher said, <i>“Our young people are confident, know their rights, and are actively talking about, for example, how we celebrate similarities and differences.”</i> Staff make links to rights across the curriculum and support students to learn and talk about rights in different ways, <i>“Some students use visuals. Some use text to talk. We do it at whatever level they need.”</i> Parents were very supportive of the approach, <i>“It’s given her a lot of confidence and improved her self-esteem,”</i> <i>“When our boy first went to Hope Wood, he was a shell of what he is like now. Now he isn’t afraid to speak out... 100% rights are respected at school. The atmosphere has helped our children thrive.”</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>There is a clear focus on ensuring that rights are met, and each child reaches their potential, with children supported to develop their independence and prepare for adult life. Sixth form students spoke about their travel training where they learn about bus routes and develop their understanding of money. The school’s evaluation form stated, <i>“The culture of our Academy has changed drastically for the better. We have a previously marginalised group of young people well prepared to advocate for themselves with a clear understanding of their own rights to access an inclusive and accepting society.”</i> The CEO of the Trust said, <i>“It is hugely important that our pupils know what their rights are as they are vulnerable to having their rights not being met. I fight for their right to work, changing policy, hearts and minds. We employ our own young people - we are an inclusive employer and want to lead the way.”</i></p>
<p>3. Relationships are positive and founded on dignity and a mutual respect for rights</p>	<p>The deputy headteacher explained that the school’s approach to behaviour had changed, and that data has shown a reduction in incidents, <i>“We use Emotion Coaching, listen to what is upsetting them and seeing behaviour as a symptom of something that isn’t right for the child. We teach zones of regulation, so they know that being angry is fine, but we learn how to deal with it in helpful ways.”</i> Children develop class charters which govern how their classrooms run and are beginning to solve problems using rights language, with one teacher commenting, <i>“I’ve noticed young people saying something inappropriate and other students have challenged this, using rights respecting language. I haven’t had to intervene.”</i> Another teacher added, <i>“RR has had a massive impact on behaviour, because children know they have a right to learn, to express their views and to feel safe.”</i></p>
<p>4. Children and young people are safe and</p>	<p>Children reported that they felt safe in school and that if someone didn’t feel safe, <i>“You would talk to the teacher.”</i> One child said, <i>“The staff in the school keep us safe – if someone got in a fight, they can solve the problem.”</i> A teacher</p>

protected and know what to do if they need support.	said, <i>"They know it's important for them to have a voice. Sometimes we are their voice as some children are nonverbal. We want them to feel safe and now they are more willing to speak up if they have any concerns."</i> Staff work closely with families and ensure they can access support from external agencies as, <i>"...when they don't get what they need it can really impact at home."</i>
5. Children's social and emotional wellbeing is a priority. They learn to develop healthy lifestyles.	The wellbeing of children is at the heart of Hope Wood Academy. The CEO of the Ascent Academies' Trust said, <i>"There has been a big push on student wellbeing, including a research project across the trust looking at pre- and post-Covid wellbeing,"</i> with the ImpactEd student survey scoring pupil wellbeing at 94%. The school is also part of a new North East hub being set up to develop trauma informed schools. There is a large pastoral student support team and each child's EHCP outcomes incorporates learning around social and emotional regulation and safety. Pupils are taught to develop healthy lifestyles and sessions prepare them for healthy living in adulthood.
6. Children and young people are included and are valued as individuals.	Teachers explained that they have just reviewed their PSHE curriculum, <i>"We want to make sure we have representation of all different people in our teaching, so they get to see diversity."</i> Special days are held to celebrate cultural diversity and a range of diverse texts are used across the curriculum. A whole school focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion is part of the Academy Improvement Plan with training for staff and students. Children and young people from Hope Wood have been involved in supporting local employers to develop more inclusive practices through Durham's 'Think Autism' strategy.
7. Children and young people value education and are involved in making decisions about their education.	All children are on a personal pathway to achieve their potential, working towards their individual targets. Children are involved in their own EHCP meetings and even lead them as they move up through the school. The Deputy headteacher explained, <i>"We are gathering video evidence to feed into reviews, to build a picture around a young person. We want the reviews to be focused on them."</i> A teacher added, <i>"We want them to have aspiration, and want to launch them into their own lives."</i>
STRAND C	Highlights and comments
8. Children and young people know that their views are taken seriously.	The school has an active School Council and children listed several changes that they had brought about including a new outdoor gym and climbing wall, a new sensory room for older students, staggered break times to ensure there are more quiet spaces and repairs to a perimeter fence which children and young people hadn't felt was safe enough. Children and young people have also been involved in recruiting staff for the school and health staff within the local area. The school holds student takeover days where children and young people take on a number of roles across the school.
9. All children and young people have taken action to uphold their rights and the rights of others, locally and globally.	Children and young people could talk about their work advocating for rights for example, <i>"We did litter picking to save the environment otherwise there would be plastic."</i> and one teacher added that each child is supported to take action saying, <i>"We looked at air purity, and a non-verbal child looked at videos of the atmosphere in India and wrote to the local MP about the environment."</i> The RRSA lead said they had, <i>"...really empowered young people to become advocates, working with our local community to develop an understanding of the needs of our young people."</i> The CEO explained that work on poverty proofing and sustainability was happening across all of the Trust's schools, linked to the UN Goals, including the creation of a trust-wide Sustainability Board and children developing Eco Councils in each school.