

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Comberton Village College
Headteacher:	Peter Law
RRSA coordinator:	Marielle Burgess
Local authority:	Cambridgeshire
Assessor(s):	Frances Bestley with Sophie Gallois and Rita Kis
Date:	19 th June 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessors would like to thank the students, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and parents for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with adults and young people during the assessment and for the evidence provided to support the process. Prior to the accreditation visit, the school completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form.

It was evident that children’s rights are embedded across the school and underpin every facet of school life. The accreditation does not yet apply to the sixth form.

Particular strengths of the school include:

- A very systematic approach to embedding the Convention across all aspects of school life.
- Confident and articulate young people who are very knowledgeable about their rights
- A very strategic approach to inclusion replicated across the MAT
- Lots of opportunities for students to engage internationally

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:

- Maintain the understanding and knowledge of rights.
- Develop an increased focus on campaigning locally and globally; consider using the Advocacy Toolkit.
- Act as an ambassador for RRSA; encourage and support the sixth form and other schools in the MAT to become rights respecting.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	Comberton Village College is a very large secondary school on the outskirts of Cambridge with over 1600 students on roll, including the sixth form. 8.6% of pupils are eligible for pupil premium which is below the national average. 4.5% of pupils have an education health and care plan and approximately 9% speak English as an additional language. The school has been outstanding since Feb 2013.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher, RRSA coordinator, deputy headteacher
Number of children and young people interviewed	16 students in focus groups, 2 young people on the learning walk and 3 class visits approx. 90 students
Number of adults interviewed	8 teaching staff, 3 support staff, 1 parent, 2 governors including Chair of governors
Evidence provided	Learning walk, focus groups, written evidence, class visits, visits to The Hub and The Cabin, informal discussion with staff at break
Registered for RRSA: May 2016	Silver achieved: March 2018

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 young people spoken with were familiar with a wide range of articles from the CRC. The Year 8, 9 and 10 class groups confidently cited the rights to education, good health care, the right to express their views, freedom of expression, the right to practise their religion and learn and use their own language. The knowledge of rights within the focus group was very strong citing many articles not often referenced by students. It was very clear that all young people understand that rights are universal, unconditional, inherent, indivisible and inalienable, saying: *“Children’s rights are for everyone across the world You shouldn’t have to do anything to access your rights....they can’t be taken away.”* They also understood that the government and adults are responsible as duty bearers to protect and promote children’s rights. Young people explained that they learned about rights in form time, assemblies, debating; from displays *“rights are in visible places”*; lessons– the Year 8 class talked about work they had done around children’s rights in Latin American countries; the Year 9 class talked about rights in ‘Animal Farm’ and the Year 10 class described their STEM work in terms of non-discrimination. *“Everything is related to rights; they come to me naturally”* stated a student. A member of the steering group explained that their role is *“to promote rights and make sure that everyone learns about them.”*

Students had a good understanding of how some children may not be able to access their rights. They explained that if children did not know about their rights they couldn’t claim them whether in this country or others; child labour impacts on children’s rights to education, discrimination may prevent some girls from attending school; war impacts on children’s rights to be safe, to clean water, medical care, shelter and education. Students were a little less aware of rights denials within the UK.

The SLT and school staff had a clear commitment to embedding a child rights-based approach. The Headteacher identified how RRSA *“absolutely fits with what we do – we want every child to feel valued and achieve their potential; it unifies a lot of what we do and provides a common thread and a consistent message of why we do what we do.”* He identified the difference since achieving Silver as, *“Rights are much more understood and disseminated by the pupils; we’re more outward facing; students understand the consequences of being a global citizen.”* The coordinator has implemented a very thorough, effective and straightforward process to ensure that in a very large school that rights are ‘drip fed’ at all opportunities: the weekly bulletin references articles which are displayed on a plasma screen, which are discussed in assembly and followed up in form time; reference to RRSA is in the school planner and articles are linked to subject areas. The approach is strategic: embedding RRSA is in the school’s 3-year vision; a clear action plan has been developed to achieve Gold; the coordinator has attended Unicef training and disseminated it to staff; policies contain references to appropriate rights; the school charter identifying actions for students and adults is on display in the reception. Staff agreed, *“In PSHE we talk about rights a lot looking at different families, different countries, FGM, homelessness...discussing social justice is easier talking about rights... it [rights] becomes part of the lesson.”* The first three weeks of Year 7 develops children’s understanding of rights. Governors have received presentations about the award. The Chair of Governors stated *“You cannot miss the school being rights respecting. I notice the language the students use and the tolerance that they have.”*

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

Young people explained how Comberton Village College facilitates them to enjoy a wide range of their rights. *“We learn about rights in assemblies; that’s Article 42...My friend gets a lot of support from The Centre, Article 23...Lots of languages are available and you can do exams in your own language, Article 30...Article 17 because we spend a lot of time learning about fake news in the media...extracurricular opportunities link to Articles 31 and 15.”* explained students enthusiastically in the focus group. *“The school wants students to access their rights”* stated a student in the focus group. The Rights Representatives look at how rights are upheld in their tutor group. The students spoken with were adamant that the school will always act on views or concerns that they share. They understand that adults in the school have the responsibility to ensure that their rights are met and explained that, *“If anything happens there are so many people we could go to school councils, head of year; there’re lots of options.”* This was corroborated by the deputy headteacher who explained that, *“Dialogue between young people and adults is challenging the ways of the school.”* *“You would hear about an issue straight away”* confirmed a teacher.

All adults and young people spoken with identified relationships as mutually respectful and as having strengthened over recent years. *“Now we’ve learned about rights my relationship with my teacher is better; my experience at school is a lot better”* stated a student. This was confirmed by other students in the focus group. The Headteacher agreed, *“The success of the school is based on its ethos and respectful relationships”*. Positive relationships were observed throughout the visit; students listened to one another’s views in class and in the focus groups and although it was busy at break and lunchtimes it was still very ‘well ordered’. The boy who led the learning walk was visually impaired and other children noticeably stood aside at the beginning of break to not get in his way. The school uses restorative justice. A student described that if someone behaves badly *“someone, tutors are really good at this, will help to find out what’s causing the behaviour – you talk to someone in a calm environment, say your feelings and constructive support will be offered. In all situations people are treated with respect not told off.”* Students agreed that the policies for managing behaviour *“are completely fair and treat us with dignity.”*

All students spoken with agreed that they feel safe and protected in their school. They identified that, *“There’s always someone to talk to...Teachers are very understanding and helpful...There’s lots of places to go and friends will look after you too.”* The Green Room provides alternative provision on site – a Year 11 student described the support positively as *“like being in a slightly dysfunctional family.”* Exclusion data shows that there has been a decline in the number of students being excluded since the beginning of the rights respecting journey. A student explained *“The right to be safe helps. If you know this is your right and it’s being violated, you can report something wrong and know it will be tackled.”* Students also explained that *“We have lots of lessons about drugs, online safety and other things so we keep ourselves safe.”*

The health and wellbeing of all pupils is of high priority within the school and there is a wide range of support in place for those students who require it. The Hub is designed to meet the needs of students with emotional, social, or medical issues and provides a breakout space for students unable to attend normal lessons; students can self-refer. Presentations in assemblies remind students of support available and posters around the school and on the website signpost out of school support.

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Extracurricular activities provide opportunities for sport, music, dance as well as subject based learning. These opportunities were recognised and valued by students.

The school is rightly very proud of its inclusive culture. The prospectus states ‘Comberton Village College is characterised by an inclusive ethos where every young person can thrive’ and this was evidenced throughout the visit. The Cabin is a centre of excellence for autism – when we visited all students bar two were in their mainstream lessons providing evidence of success in integrating and supporting students. The head of the Cabin explained *“We’ve spread this practice across the Trust giving more students the skills to cope and access their right to education.”* The SEN lead ensures that looked after and adopted students receive additional training, so they are all aware of their rights. A display linked the International Talent evening showcasing dance, drama and food from different communities to Article 30. The Equality & Diversity group is a strong force within the school supporting LGBTQ+ students, raising awareness of Aids and enabling student to attend London Pride. The school has achieved the Rainbow Flag award. *“It’s a very good environment in which to be openly gay”* stated a student during the learning walk.

It was clear that students like their school - *“It’s a really nice place to be”* stated one student - and enjoy their right to learn. *“There are lots of options and possibilities to take control of our learning”* stated a student in the focus group. Many talked about choice in what they learn but also the level of challenge within their lessons. They explained that it is important that they are independent learners but were grateful that *“There’s always a teacher there to help you.”* Targets were set jointly between adults and students; parents’ evening were a three-way discussion which the students valued. Progress 8 scores are well above average.

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

Students were emphatic that their views are taken seriously. There are a wide range of pupil leadership opportunities including: the Equality & Diversity group, the School Council, democratically elected Form Representatives, Prefects, Senior Prefects, Rights Representatives, Green Representatives, Charity Representatives. Students stated, *“We have much more influence on what happened.”* Staff agreed with this and identified it as a development from Silver, *“Students are empowered; they’re making a lot more decisions.”* *“My son is confident that he will be heard and his views taken seriously”* stated a parent. Students described how they give teachers anonymous feedback about their teaching, sit on pupil panels for trainee teachers (Comberton Village Community is a teaching school), develop lessons to teach about equality and diversity, deliver assemblies, are involved in developing policies (currently updating the mobile phone policy), have been consulted about the school uniform, have encouraged wooden instead of plastic cutlery and organised recycling for pens and crisp packets.

Young people have engaged in a wide range of activities to promote children’s rights locally and globally. Comberton Village College holds an International School Award and has partner schools in France, Germany, Spain, Peru, South Africa, Mozambique and Japan. The school holds an annual ‘Walk for the World’ event to fund-raise to facilitate projects in both African partner schools and orphanages close to our Peruvian partner school. Students are very clear that the money they raise helps children in Peru, South Africa and Mozambique to access their rights to education and good

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healthcare. Many students and staff have visited the partner schools and there are also strong curriculum links between the schools. Several of the staff identified that students since the Silver award had a much stronger interest in children's rights in countries outside the UK, "*Students want to fundraise for Yemen and Syria; they want to make a difference to their children's rights....they feel more personally affected by what they hear on the news or read.*" Students explained that they have also raised money for Children in Need, Comic Relief and the cyclone in Mozambique. The school held a Shoe Share collecting hundreds of pairs of shoes within the local community. Students are concerned about global warming and climate change and are "*recognising how they can take this on.*" Some students took part in the climate change march in Cambridge. The school also took part in OutRight "*It was really well received and supported*" explained the coordinator. Students were very pleased that they that they persuaded their coach drivers to have a switch off your engine day while waiting for students.