

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Longwill School for Deaf Children
Headteacher:	Alison Carter
RRSA coordinator:	Alison Jackson
Local authority:	Birmingham City
Assessor(s):	Hilary Alcock and Jilly Hillier
Date:	15 th July 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The assessors would like to thank the children, the Senior Leadership Team, staff and governors 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 assessment 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.

Particular strengths of the school include:

- The commitment and passion of the SLT to ensure that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has a high profile and that children can access their rights in accordance with their individual needs.
- A caring, nurturing environment in which children are happy, confident learners who know they are listened to and valued.
- The inclusion of deaf and hearing parents and families in their children's learning.
- The breadth of learning opportunities that the school provides, ensuring that children learn in a rights- based environment.

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 placing the CRC as the overarching theme for the GREAT Longwill Framework so that it becomes the rationale for all that you do in school.
- Continue to develop BSL with children to enable them to explicitly articulate a greater range of articles and develop the language of rights including the concepts that rights are universal, unconditional, inherent, indivisible and inalienable. Consider involving the children in ways to represent these visually.
- Continue to provide opportunities for regular staff training to extend their knowledge of the CRC and its links with global citizenship and sustainability.
- Continue to provide significant opportunities for the participation and decision making of children to influence and shape the life and work of the school, including school improvement.

3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

School context	Longwill is a special school that caters for the needs of severely and profoundly deaf children from ages 2 to 11 for whom BSL is their primary means of communication. There are 65 pupils on roll. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an EHC Plan. About half also have additional needs including learning difficulties, physical disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorders. 51% of pupils receive Pupil Premium funding. The school has a higher than average number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The most recent Ofsted Inspection in March 2019 rated the school as GOOD.
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher and RRSA coordinator who is also the deputy headteacher
Number of children and young people interviewed	18 children in focus groups, 4 children on the learning walk and 10 children in class visits
Number of adults interviewed	3 teaching staff, 1 support staff, 2 parents, 2 governors, 2 volunteers
Evidence provided	Learning walk, focus groups, written evidence, class visits,
Registered for RRSA: February 2016	Silver achieved: June 2017

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

Evidence throughout the visit demonstrated that children at Longwill are learning about their rights through a wide range of curricular activities. They spoke (through sign language interpretation) about their right to their needs and best interests, having a name, to being listened to and heard, choosing their own friends, having their privacy respected, being safe and protected, having clean water and healthy food, a good education, to enjoy lots of activities, to be able to play and rest. Children did not directly speak about or refer to Article 23 that relates to children with a disability because, as the headteacher explained, "*The children do not perceive themselves to have a disability,*" – or not one that affects their lives negatively. Children were animated during the steering group and focus group discussions. They were observed discussing through sign language and then feeding back to us that they are passionate about learning about their rights. Comments included, "*Adults have to teach us about our rights and what they mean...adults have to protect children...we write about our rights.*" Whilst they didn't use the terminology of rights holders and duty bearers, it was clear that the children understand these concepts. They know that rights are universal, inherent and inalienable. Children explained that whilst they know that, "*All children in the world have rights,*" they also know that there are children who do not access their rights both locally and globally stating that, "*There is poverty all over the world.*"

The headteacher highlighted the importance of Article 8, children's right to an identity, in terms of pupils' identity as a member of the deaf community. RRSA features in the School Development Plan and is an element of Longwill's GREAT Framework (in development). The RRS coordinator stated that, "*The CRC is a thread that runs through everything that we do.*" There was evidence around the school environment that children are learning about a range of articles from the CRC with links being made between these and British Values. Staff explained how the CRC is now part of regular curriculum planning e.g. the year 4 teacher commented that, "*I can now look at a topic and link a right to it. For example, in the topic 'Joseph' we looked at how he was taken away from his family and forced to work.*" The Early Years teacher commented that children are, "*Exposed to the language of rights as soon as they begin at the school.*" She explained how key articles are included in planning and in children's books to share the learning with parents.

A parent who is deaf and one who is hearing both commented that their children speak about their rights at home and they understand what they mean: "*Deaf children and hearing children have the right to be heard and to join in ...we want them to be part of the hearing world.*" Both parents said how positive the CRC BSL video that the school has made was in supporting them and (both deaf and hearing) siblings to be able to have discussions about the CRC learning that was happening in school and to extend the conversations further. Governors also commented that, "*It's now almost second nature to refer to the articles; it's almost seamless ...we see it working in school every day e.g. children referring to articles about being safe and healthy.*"

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

An understanding of children's entitlement to rights is a fundamental part of the school's ethos and underpins adults' daily practice. Adults ensure that children experience their rights with the right to be safe and the right to a voice as key articles that are prioritised. Children understand that having access to a range of clubs and enabling them to take part in activities such as Longwill's Got Talent is about helping them to enjoy their rights. They understand that it is the adults' role to ensure they have access to their rights explaining that "*Adults protect us... they teach us our rights... they need to listen to us.*" A senior teacher also commented that, "*You can hear children talking about rights and how they know that something can be done when rights are not being met.*"

Throughout the visit it was clear that relationships are positive and built on mutual respect. Adults treat children with dignity and nurture children's self-esteem. Many children explained that they are proud to be deaf, "*That's why we learn BSL and learn deaf history*" (Year 2 child). Children explained that treating each other with respect meant, "*Being kind and friendly*" and "*Not being rude*" giving the example that, "*If someone wants to talk, then we need to listen.*" They explained that teachers showed respect by, "*Not ignoring you*" and "*By helping you.*" Class charters provide a framework for rights-based classrooms. When talking about the consequences of behaviour issues, one child explained that they have a discussion with adults and that sometimes they might lose golden time or time on the iPad. Another child explained that if someone was, "*Really angry*" they would go to a safe space to calm down. When asked if they felt this system was fair, they said they thought it was.

Questionnaires show that 87% of children feel safe and know that adults protect them. Children talked about how adults kept them safe by not letting them go outside the school gates; keeping them safe on trips and by issuing visitors with coloured lanyards. The CRC is also referred to in policies such as the Anti-Bullying Policy (Articles 2, 13 and 28) and the Safeguarding Policy. The safeguarding governor described how, "*Safeguarding and RRSA goes hand in hand.*" She commented that she sees "*First-hand*" children learning about their rights. "*If something isn't right, they would say,*" she explained. All children have weekly swimming lessons and learn about safety in practical situations e.g. at home and when travelling. One Year 5 child explained how they are taught to keep safe online. Bullying is rare and there have been no permanent exclusions for several years.

It was clear that equipping children to feel valued, included and confident is a priority. A range of specialists work with children to build confidence and ensure their social and emotional needs are met. For example Learning Mentors help children to overcome barriers to learning. The school provides children with a wide range of activities that challenge them and enable them to succeed and feel proud. For example, as part of a garden competition the Reception class created a garden based upon the story of The Gruffalo. Locations, characters and messages about being safe and referencing the CRC using written English and BSL, were placed on placards around garden. Many children at the school have additional needs and are supported by professionals who help them to feel valued and included. For example, some children attend Lego therapy to help them learn about respect through play.

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Children clearly value their right to education and were able to talk about what they liked best at school. One child talked enthusiastically about a history project on the World War 2 and the Blitz. He talked knowledgeably about the rights denied to children who were evacuated to the countryside. The RRSA Lead described how children have been involved in curriculum planning, “*sharing things they want to learn more about.*” One teacher described how children, “*Always want to teach each other and use the pink and green pens.*”

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

Children explained their role as members of the School Council was to, “*Make life better and safer for children*” and to be good role models. They described how they vote for the Chair and Vice Chair. They meet with the Safeguarding governor in school to discuss issues and actions and write letters to the governing body to get their views heard. One child talked enthusiastically about the work he had done to stop parents parking in a way that was making the car park unsafe for children, particularly those with wheelchairs. He had been involved in placing posters, made by children, on the railings near the road. These posters made it very clear that children had the right to be safe and he was clearly pleased that they were having a positive impact. Another example of a positive change in school was when a child alerted the headteacher to unsafe flooring in the hall which led to a £50,000 refurbishment. The headteacher considers that these are both examples of how the school’s RRSA journey has strengthened and is having a positive impact on the children. “*They are now more proactive in trying to influence others. Before they knew they were heard, but the difference now through learning about their rights is that they know they can influence change.*” The RRSA coordinator talked about how one child had made a video about the importance of all children having access to BSL in response to the Silent Child film. The video was sent to the Prime Minister.

Hearing and non-hearing staff work alongside children to ensure children have the maximum opportunity to develop their communication skills. Adults described how children are involved in the discussions about what is, “*The best fit*” sign to go with particular rights – “*Creating the sign means we have to have the conversation about what the right means.*” The school also works closely with parents through the Deaf Child at Home project to enable that communication to continue at home. One governor, who is engaged in research about transition for deaf children, described how she had noticed that RRSA was not only enabling children to know their rights, but to “*know how to access what they need and are developing their independence to go out into the world.*”

Children are showing a keen interest in how they can take action for sustainability and environmental issues e.g. switching computer monitors, lights and taps off. One child spoke passionately about how, “*There is lots and lots of rubbish in the sea; it's horrible and needs to be cleaned up because I don't want dirty water and it's hurting the fish and they are dying. People dump lots of things and we have to stop it.*” One of the governors is clear that through learning about the CRC, “*The children are developing a strong sense of social justice, about what's fair and they are developing the skills, confidence and opportunities to voice this.*”

Children take part in an annual joint school Rights Respecting Conference – reaching out to local schools to share their RRSA work with the children themselves leading the activities. One recent

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conference had Article 17, access to information from the media, as its theme. The school also shares its RR work with a school in Ghana. Children explained how their ShoeShare collection, Books 2 Africa campaign, Unicef's Playground Challenge and supporting Fairtrade are helping children in some countries to have basic resources for school.