

RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

School:	Beatlie School Campus
Principal:	Carol Robbie
RRSA coordinator:	Debbie Green
Local authority:	West Lothian
Assessors:	Gerry McMurtrie and Karen McCubbin
Date:	31 May 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank the pupils, senior leadership team, staff and parents for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with adults, meet with the pupils and for the detailed evidence provided to support the process. Prior to the assessment visit, the school provided a comprehensive evaluation form. It was clear to the assessors that everyone places a genuine importance on developing a rights respecting ethos.

All of the pupils at Beatlie have profound, complex and multiple disabilities. Most of the pupils communicate at a sensory level. The assessors are confident that children and young people are provided with many opportunities to contribute in ways that are suitable for pupils with additional support needs. Pupils conveyed their experience of a rights based ethos and curriculum through a range of communication techniques with the assistance of adults who know them well. It was particularly notable that a focus on children’s rights is at the heart of the caring, inclusive and outward looking ethos of the school.

Particular strengths of the school are:

- Skilled, confident and committed staff who strive to do the best for every child
- Happy, safe and nurtured pupils who are supported to communicate in ways that meet their needs
- Strong whole school approach linking the individual needs of the child to the UNCRC,
- Strong parental support for RRSA

Strands A, B and C have all been achieved.

2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

None required

3. 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 current excellent practice
- Continue to embed the knowledge and understanding of articles across staff, parents and partners
- Continue to ensure that the principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation remain visible around the school
- Continue to act as ambassadors for rights
- Continue to strive for creative ways to raise awareness of rights with pupils

4. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

4.1. The school context

Beatlie School provides co-educational and non-denominational education primarily for pupils with profound, severe and complex learning difficulties aged between 3 and 18 years of age. Pupils travel from across the local authority and occasionally from other areas depending on need. A total of 68 pupils aged from 3-18 attend the school. 36 pupils attend the nursery with a further 32 attending primary and secondary. There are 6 classes in the primary/senior phase with a maximum of 6 pupils per class. Adult to pupil ratio is 1:1 with a range of teaching, support and health staff. The school has the services of 3 nurses located in the school and visiting health professionals including occupational health specialists and physiotherapists. The school consists of a custom made building which includes a nursery area, sensory rooms, classrooms, medical facilities, and gym and sports areas. Overall the provision creates a stimulating spacious, welcoming and flexible learning environment.

The school registered to become rights respecting in 2011 and achieved Silver in 2014.

4.2. Assessment information

Self-evaluation form received	Yes
Attendees at SLT meeting	Head Teacher, Depute Head Teacher and Principal Teacher
Number of children and young people interviewed	All pupils met with during classroom visits
Number of staff interviewed	12 teaching staff 8 parents
Evidence provided	Learning walk Written evidence Class visits Demonstration of a range of communication techniques and tools

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 living.

Strand A has been achieved

The concept of rights is extremely challenging for the pupils of Beatlie to understand. Staff advised that they, as duty bearers, are responsible for ensuring that every child is safe, nurtured and respected, that they have their rights met, not only in school, but outside in the local community, and at home. The Head Teacher said *“It is our job to make sure we get it right for the children here. The award has helped us to see that, and we are very proud that our school is rights respecting. It’s vital that we get it right”*. Staff use a wide range of communication tools to raise awareness of key rights such as the right to healthy food, clean water, play, education, medical care, the right to be safe and protected from harm and to have a voice and an opinion. As almost all pupils are non-verbal, the school use images, sounds and videos to spread key messages and during one class visit, pupils were learning about the right to play through video and song. Pupils, staff and the assessors engaged in sports and dance activities in class, preparing them for the school sports day and the UNICEF Soccer Aid playground challenge.

Pupils who are able to, use various communication methods and tools to tell staff how they are feeling and what they want to do that day. This communication forms the basis of planned lessons and activities for the children. Staff confidently said that their knowledge of rights has increased over the years through training and has supported them to have conversations about the needs of the child with parents and external partners. One teacher said *“It is our job to make sure the children receive the care that they are entitled to. That doesn’t stop, we keep going. If we feel a child or family needs extra help, we source it or bring in other agencies to help”*. All staff were clear that rights were universal and unconditional, with one teacher

commenting that “*every child has rights, but our children are very vulnerable, so it is vital that we know and that the children and the families know about rights*”.

All Pupils at Beatlie School have individual care plans that help identify the best communication tools for staff to use to support curriculum planning. Pupils are engaged in their learning through the use of switches, sensory tools, ‘tech talk’, ‘tacpac’ and responsive observations to name a few. Staff use various methods to gather opinions and suggestions from pupils. An example of supporting communication between the school and home, was the voice button where staff and parents record messages and use this to share news about what the child has been doing. All staff spoken with could confidently talk about articles of the CRC and how they use these rights on a daily basis to promote the safety and wellbeing of the pupils.

Curriculum planning, assemblies and regular staff training provide frequent opportunities for learning about rights. Across the school, numerous displays were linked to specific articles of the CRC and linked to Scottish Education policy drivers such as Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI). The displays across the school were creative, imaginative and a real strength of the school. Parents commented on the useful information they were able to gain from walking around the school. The school are involved in supporting a number of local and global charities and events to raise awareness of global issues and sustainable development. The school “Calendar of Rights Respecting School Events” highlighted the pupil’s recent involvement in activities such as Jeans for Genes day, Fairtrade Fortnight, Universal Children’s Day, Road Safety Awareness, Unicef Day for Change, World Environment day and Health and Wellbeing weeks.

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

The Head Teacher advised “*rights are paramount at Beatlie and our many years on the Rights Respecting journey has provided us all with not only the framework, but the knowledge and skills required to make improvements in the lives of our children. All of our children require structured routines that are focuses on their individual needs. We get to know our children very well with our intensive support so that every child has a tailored package. Rights have been central to this*”. Staff were clear that behaviour is a form of communication, and when challenges are faced, they look for the root of the issue and how they can best support the child. The HT advised that the introduction of rights based language and positive behaviour management had ensured that all children experience fairness and equity at all times.

As all children have support plans focusing on the needs of the child, dignity and a mutual respect for rights is key. Regular meetings and close agency working highlights any concerns and records and tracks that relevant supports are in place and that the children are

progressing as would be expected. The HT advised that relationships across the school are based on dignity and said *“When we originally started our journey, we became aware that we needed to improve and highlight good practice. I asked the staff to put themselves in the place of the child. This raised awareness across our team of the importance of eye contact. Sometimes people look at the adult and not the child, this has been a massive turnaround for us and highlights the importance of dignity”*. The HT went on to say *“the child is at the centre of everything and respectful relationships have improved since we started our journey”*. A staff member said *“It’s not just about inside of school, we work so much with the local community to raise awareness of the need for dignity and mutual respect. Our children can be made fun of and are very vulnerable, so we go out, meet with local people, and build up relationships. We go out and our children wave and smile at people they are getting to know. It helps to break down stereotypes and improves community spirit”*.

The safety and protection of all children is paramount within Beatlie. Pupils use a number of walking aids, wheelchairs and hoists to move around the school. All staff are trained in the use of equipment and work closely with external agencies and health care practitioners. Staff and parent evaluations highlight that children report feeling safe in school. The Child Protection policy has been updated and linked to the CRC, and SHANARRI well-being indicators. Staff support pupils to share their feelings using symbols and use this feedback to monitor and track any concerns.

The children’s social and emotional wellbeing is a top priority within the school, with every child having a sensory profile in place. This profile tracks the physical, mental, social and emotional needs of the child along with short and long term strategies being put in place. The plans are updated regularly and are linked to GIRFEC, SHANARRI and the CRC. Staff regularly introduce healthy foods to the pupil’s diets as and when they are able to, and encourage children to try new foods and sports activities. During the assessment the school were hosting their annual sports day highlighting to the assessors how children, staff and families work together to support the child’s wide range of physical, mental, social and emotional needs.

Inclusion was a real strength of the school, with parents and staff both talking about being part of the ‘Beatlie family’. Parents interviewed said that they were immensely proud to be part of the school community, and that the school had worked hard to ensure that everyone was valued and included. One parent said *“All of our children arrive in school by transport, so as parents, we don’t have that school gate time to chat to other parents. The school involves not only the children in everything they do, but us also. We are like a big family, and it’s something so important for us, especially as being a parent of a child with a disability can be very hard. I have no doubt my child is valued in this school”*. The RRSA lead advised that the school had also linked their Inclusive Communication policy to rights and said *“Our children can face discrimination, so we all work together to challenge that and raise awareness across the communities our families live in”*.

Staff support children to be as actively involved in their learning in a way that is meaningful to them. One to one support means that staff can build positive relationships with children and find out their likes and dislikes, their talents, skills and abilities. Staff reported that pupils can chose how they want to learn through communication strategies, with arts, crafts and outdoor activities high on the list of opportunities pupils enjoy being involved in. Sensory communication highlights when children are not happy with certain activities, and this is then recorded in pupil’s communication passports. One example of this was a child communicating that she did not like horses and did not want to go to the horse riding lessons and instead

wanted to go swimming. Daily news conversations and the use of communication switches help pupils, staff and parents to be aware of what is being introduced and planned, and parents receive regular updates on their child’s learning and progress.

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

Pupil voice and participation in the life of the school are areas that staff monitor and track through self-evaluation planning. Feedback from pupils and families have helped the school to introduce new activities such as swimming, relaxation therapies, horse riding and new outdoor play activities and the development of the sensory gardens. Pupils have communicated that they do not like certain equipment, so new equipment was provided and recorded in pupil passports. Some senior pupils communicated that they liked being involved in working with clay, and the school have since introduced ‘Potter around’ – a new National One qualification for 2018. Pupils are now able to work towards this national qualification and have been working with a pottery organisation to create bespoke artwork. This art work is about to go on display within the local community and parents will be shown videos of how their children were involved in the creation and design of their final art work. This public display will be held for one month and raise awareness of the talents and abilities of the pupils. Some pupils were able to demonstrate that they struggled when they were taken outwith their classrooms, or during transitions, so staff worked together to create transition signifier songs, images and feely objects to help them prepare for such experiences. This now supports pupils to know what is happening and where they are going, as highlighted during the pupil tour of the school.

The school have been very active in taking action to uphold the rights of others locally and globally. Aside from a very active fundraising committee, the school have campaigned for the rights of children through activities such as Outright, Fairtrade and the Clarks Shoe Share assemblies. Pupils were involved in litter picks in the local area to highlight their rights to a safe and clean environment, and creating posters and leaflets encouraging local shops to reduce their use of plastics. The school are currently involved in a campaign to raise awareness of the need to have suitable changing facilities in public venues for children and adults with disabilities. A recent school trip highlighted that children had to be changed on the floor as the only facilities available were designed for babies. This has since become a focus of their 2018 campaigning with the school writing letters and using social media to campaign for change. This is an ongoing campaign and one the school are keen to see have an impact. One staff member talked about the importance of rights, dignity and respect for all and said *“We stand up for our children, and together, as the Beatle family, we can make a difference, not just for our children, but for all children”*.