

UNICEF UK RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL AWARD ASSESSMENT REPORT LEVEL TWO (Re-accreditation)

School:	Newfield School
Headteacher:	Geoff Fitzpatrick
RRSA coordinator:	Jenny Riley
Local authority:	Blackburn with Darwen
Assessors:	Pat Peaker and Paul Harris
Date:	29 th June 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank the whole school community at Newfield for making us so welcome when we visited for the re-accreditation of the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) at Level 2. Prior to our visit, you provided very comprehensive Progress & Evaluation and Impact Evaluation forms.

It is most encouraging to see that the pupils of Newfield who present with a range of profound and multiple learning needs continue to be empowered to take an active part in their school and the wider community on an equal basis (Article 2). Supported access to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) continues to underpin the ethos of the school.

Standards A, B, C, and D have all been met.

2. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE ATTAINING LEVEL 2

No requirements noted.

3. MAINTAINING LEVEL 2

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 Level 2. Here are our recommendations for your school:

Continue the excellent work you are doing in embedding the UNCRC into the ethos of Newfield. Your work as ambassadors for rights-based education in the locality and beyond is commendable.

Whilst it is clear that the school community understands the unconditionality of rights, ensure that all staff are consistent in the use of language about rights by not linking 'rights with responsibilities'. This can be done through an ongoing emphasis that rights are universal and for everyone equally, so actions of individuals should respect the rights of others.

In public areas of the school, look for opportunities to make links to the UNCRC more prominent, for example through different forms of the school charter such as symbol and auditory versions.

Ensure that the ethos of the UNCRC is embedded in the everyday practice of the new autism centre which is currently being built and that the whole of Newfield continues to be a rights respecting school.

4. THE ASSESSMENT IN DETAIL

4.1. The school context

Newfield School is a multi-faith community special school maintained by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. It provides high quality specialist education for children and young people aged 2-19 years. The school serves children and young people who have a wide range of learning difficulties including autism, complex medical needs and sensory impairment. The majority of pupils are boys. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for

the pupil premium is higher than the national average. Fifty per cent of pupils are of Asian heritage and a majority do not have English as their first language.

The school was inspected by OFSTED in February 2016 and judged to be ‘outstanding’ in overall effectiveness and in all other areas.

The school is currently in an exciting stage of development. A new specialist provision is being built onto the premises to meet the needs of 60 pupils on the autistic spectrum.

The school achieved Level 1 status of the RRSA in May 2013 and achieved Level 2 in June 2014.

4.2. Assessment information

Self-evaluation form received	Yes
Impact evaluation form received	Yes
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher, RRSA coordinator / deputy headteacher
Number of children and young people interviewed	24 children and young people
Number of staff interviewed	4 teaching staff 3 support staff 2 parents 1 governor, 1 parent governor Catering manager Premises and Services manager
Evidence provided	Learning walk Written evidence Web site

Standard A:

Rights-respecting values underpin leadership and management

Standard A has been achieved

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has a high status at Newfield and is embedded in all aspects of the life of the school within the context of its special needs provision. This has been achieved as the result of the very high quality leadership, management and vision of the headteacher and his senior leadership team. The commitment to meeting the needs of children and young people with severe and challenging needs is closely linked to rights respecting values. The headteacher is motivated by ‘meeting children’s needs’. He believes passionately that *‘the children are the start of*



everything' and *'giving them their voice and listening to it are at the heart of the teaching'*. The promotion of communication has a high profile in the school. All pupils have an expressive communication target set within their annual review which ensures the best possible input to support them to communicate in whatever way is most appropriate. The RRSA lead believes that maintaining the vision and understanding of the relevance of the UNCRC in school has, over several years, *'empowered the children and it is now entrenched in school'*. OFSTED noted that *'the school's promotion of pupils' rights and responsibilities is exceptional'*.

The principles of the UNCRC are included in the school development plan. An example of this is the emphasis given to ensuring that the focus on children's rights is maintained. To meet this need a key focus of staff training is helping adults to effectively support pupil voice. New subject co-ordinators, when planning their work, link the content with the UNCRC. These Articles are also linked into all new and revised policies. Of the ones examined (Teaching and Learning, Community Cohesion, Equality and Anti-bullying) there is a separate section in each making specific links between the RRSA and the policy, indicating the specific Articles which are relevant. The successful leadership by the deputy headteacher of the RRSA over a number of years has ensured the sustainability of the award in school. She is in no doubt that *'if she were to walk away, it would continue.'* Careful questioning of candidates at interview establishes whether they hold the values of the school and of the UNCRC. As the deputy headteacher comments on the Impact Evaluation Form, *'if you don't buy into it, then maybe we are not for you!'*

As would be anticipated in an outstanding special school, inclusion is at the heart of the work at Newfield. The school has recently received re-accreditation of its flagship status of the Inclusion Quality Mark. The curriculum and teaching is used to enhance the self esteem of the pupils and provides a learning environment in which each individual is encouraged to fulfil his or her potential. With such a diversity of learning needs in the school, steps are taken to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum by taking account of their cultural backgrounds, linguistic needs and learning styles. There is continuing work on the pupils' Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) to ensure that high quality, aspirational outcomes are at the core of each child's plan.

The school has developed strong links with a number of local schools and very recently with another special school in a different local authority which has just started its Level 2 journey towards the RRSA. These links have initiated workshops to promote the UNCRC and UNICEF with the pupils acting as ambassadors. Feedback received from these schools indicates that they are impressed and engaged by what they hear and in some cases they have pursued their interest further. The annual Friendship Week facilitates links with many primary and secondary schools within the local authority. Web pages show the evidence of the number of schools enjoying their visit. They learn, through activities, about children's rights and are helped to develop empathy with children from different cultures and with disabilities. The school uses its web site to inform and enhance promotion of the school's ethos with regular updates to keep the UNCRC and the RRSA at the forefront of people's minds.

The school is addressing global citizenship in a way which has captured the interest of the pupils. A link with an orphanage school via the 'Love for Kenya' charity has enabled the children to support the school and share experiences, this included a visit this month from a staff member in Kenya. The RRSA steering group recently planned and led 'Waste Week'. Pupils worked with the site team to make sure waste was disposed of correctly and recycled

where possible. Older pupils monitored food waste and will meet with the catering manager to look at ways of reducing this. There is a growing awareness of Fairtrade and when questioned, the catering manager said that some Fairtrade products were now used in school.

Standard B:

The whole school community learns about the CRC

Standard B has been achieved

The pupils spoken to clearly enjoyed being able to express, using their different communication skills, their knowledge of a wide range of rights. They readily agreed that these rights were for *'children around the world and you get them for free'*. They understand though that some children will be denied their rights through, for example, *'dirty water makes you poorly'*. When questioned about natural or human-made disasters one pupil suggested that floods could spoil crops and another that war could make children homeless. All pupils have communication passports which are updated annually. These are in a prominent position in each classroom. Essentially these are supporting each individual to communicate their rights and choices. There is a strong 'buddy' system in place; older pupils help younger ones and give them a 'voice' by acting as advocates. On the learning walk, a student commented *'whoever needs help, I will help them.'*

There is evidence that the school has ensured that parents/carers and governors understand the school's commitment to the UNCRC. They receive updates via the termly newsletter which always has a section devoted to the RRSA and is also posted on the website. One parent said, *'the school does a lot to help parents. We know they (referring to the children) have the right to do these things.'* They appreciate the ambassadorial role played by the school. *'They are educating other schools, children and parents that every child has a right to learn.'* A parent/governor commented *'we are the experts, we have other schools asking for advice. We're now helping other schools on their journey.'* A link visit to a local secondary school for the daughter of one of the parents present was greatly appreciated *'she made friends there and it is great for us as a family.'* There is parent and governor representation on the steering group demonstrating their very pro-active support for the UNCRC and the RRSA.

PSHCE and English include many activities to help children learn about their rights. Validation pages in the evidence file which include photographs give an indication of pupils' progress against specific Articles of the UNCRC. Monitoring of whole school approaches to the delivery of curricular experiences ensures that pupils' voice is heard and that their communication needs are met. There is a clear understanding that the better the opportunities are for developing independent communication, the more able pupils will be to articulate their preferences (Article 12). Post-16 provision offers a broad range of learning experiences designed to promote the students' personal development and help them to make a well-equipped transition into adult life. Students spoken to in their final year, who have been acquiring accreditation within the ASDAN framework, have placements in local colleges appropriate to their needs and capabilities. Students are part of the planning

process and therefore have some choice about placements not only in their further education plan but in community and work experiences. Independent travel training is offered. The school has a large number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. These young people enjoy the fully inclusive opportunities of the school and work within a developmental framework which addresses their specific needs. Classes are small and with minimal distraction. The majority use picture exchange cards to communicate their choices. At Newfield, the child is placed at the centre of any decisions that are made (Article 12). The pupil is as fully involved as possible in the process of assessment, recording and reporting so that he or she understands that their work is valued. Praise and celebration of their efforts can be seen in classrooms and around the school. Amongst all stakeholders there is a commitment to valuing the children's independence and respecting their rights, beliefs, cultures and abilities (Articles 13, 14 and 23).

Teaching about the UNCRC is included implicitly in the newly structured PSHCE curriculum. Additionally, the RE curriculum affords many opportunities for reflection on citizenship both locally and globally. Events are held to celebrate different religions. At harvest, the school was visited by a local vicar and in the interview with pupils the distribution of the food donated to the Blackburn Food Bank was discussed. The school was planning to have their Eid party the day following the assessment visit. Since their Level 2 assessment in 2014, the school has been using the issue of Fairtrade to support pupils in their learning about global citizenship and there is an awareness of how Fairtrade purchases support access to rights.

Standard C: The school has a rights-respecting ethos

Standard C has been achieved

Newfield has its own school charter, originally developed with the help of the student council and steering group, which includes Articles 12, 15, 19, 23, 28, 31 and 39 accompanied with rights respecting actions. In addition, all classrooms have individual charters covering a selection of rights chosen by the pupils and they vary according to the age and capabilities of the children. In class 4 for example, Article 23 was clearly of significance for pupils as they had chosen to remind everyone that '*we all have the right to personal needs being met.*' The steering group carries out regular audits of displays and charters. A whole school charter has been drawn up and translated into one of the languages of the Indian sub-continent. It is displayed in school and included in the anti-bullying policy.

The school is committed to addressing the issue of any potential bullying through the curriculum and in order to create an environment where bullying is not acceptable, pupils and staff are taught about the rights of children and appropriate ways of behaving. This includes the annual review of the whole school charter as well as classroom charters. The anti-bullying policy links directly to several Articles of the UNCRC (3, 12, 13, 15, 19, 23, 28, 29 and 39). The school's feedback with the RRSA 'Impact Evaluation' indicates that the policy is very effective in reducing bullying and creating a school environment in which pupils respect each other, value their differences and can solve their disagreements amicably. OFSTED reported that pupils agreed '*that bullying in school does not take place.*'

Throughout the visit there was much evidence of mutual rights respecting behaviours and very good relationships. A teaching assistant commented *'they [the pupils] give way to others, everybody has respect for others.'* The pupil passports in each classroom remind staff and visiting staff of the individual needs and choices of pupils which goes some way to ensuring that this will be a rights respecting classroom. Visits into classrooms showed that these were prominent and easily accessible to all. One boy was keen to share his, and his 'buddy', who was accompanying the assessors on the learning walk, helped in the handling of this for him. In a classroom within the provision for those on the autistic spectrum, there was a calm exchange of pictures in a small group setting.

Pupils who were interviewed all agreed that they feel safe in school and this was a judgement made by OFSTED that pupils *'feel safe in school.'* In response to school questionnaires, parents also acknowledge that they agree with this and consider their children to be well-cared for. Newfield is committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of the children and vulnerable young people in its care. There is a high priority placed on providing a secure environment. The school recognises that effective safeguarding systems are those which put the child's needs first and provide the child with a voice (Articles 12 and 19). The school makes sure that children know there are adults who they can approach if they are worried. This was corroborated by a child who said *'there's someone special I can go to.'* Curriculum activities and PSHCE equip pupils with the skills they need to stay safe and communicate any fears or concerns to their trusted adult.

The pupils at Newfield follow personalised learning plans which support their individual needs and encourages them to communicate their preferences and make choices. Classrooms visited reflected a calm but purposeful working environment. A student explained to us that he could not work well in the recently installed Portakabin (used due to building construction on the site). He did not feel calm there, staff listened and he was moved. The school council, steering group and class groups regularly make choices about special meals, an activity or a visit and a consensus is reached. This supports pupils to understand that what they want cannot always take precedence over the wishes of others. This is engendering a sense of democracy and fairness.

Pupils are encouraged to think about the needs of others. They created a display 'a wish for the world' in which they linked a wish to a right which would improve the lives of others. Displays are used too as a visual reminder of the school's focus on the promotion of global citizenship. Newfield's link with 'Love for Kenya' is one of these reminders shown to the assessors on the learning walk.

Standard D:

Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners

Standard D has been achieved

Pupils take part in decision making via the school council, the steering group and class activities. Post-16 students are being encouraged to take an active interest in the new building being constructed adjacent to the school to accommodate the new autism resource centre. They have opportunities to meet the builders and project manager and on their most recent visit to adhere to the safety regulations of high visibility jackets and hard hats. Their

photographs are being used in the newsletter so there is a sharing of information with all the school community. The security fencing has a 'porthole' so that all pupils can feel involved in the stages. There is much in place to make sure that the pupils are included in decisions affecting them (Article 13). There are opportunities for their involvement in staff appointments through a pupil panel meeting and their performance is *'very impressive'*. New staff meet with the steering group for a coffee morning and receive an information leaflet which they have put together on the RRSA. Staff make sure that students have opportunities to influence democratic processes events in the Borough. Following some input from the local authority's youth services team, the students watched a video presentation of candidates who were presenting for the Youth Parliament and then placed their vote.

The headteacher commented that *'at interview, candidates' responses and subsequent induction process will shape the duty bearer role of staff who are appointed.'* This role is very apparent in Newfield where pupils are helped and encouraged to access their rights and make informed decisions. Life skills to increase the independence of pupils feature regularly. They are supported to make choices that are healthy and helped to understand why this is important; for example, this may be to accept a wider range of foods or to improve their dental hygiene. A course on 'Body Awareness' has been successful in supporting children to understand their health and how to get support. A member of staff said *'they are being empowered to say no.'* As children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect than other children, the school places a great emphasis on child protection. Children are aware of their right to privacy (Article 16) and staff take steps to ensure that this is upheld. There are bilingual staff who assist in removing language barriers and supporting children's access to information. All students in their final year at Newfield have one to one sessions to prepare them for transition. These sessions support them in making choices about their continued learning and expressing them effectively so that their views and choices are adhered to.

Pupils enjoy acting as ambassadors for UNICEF and they welcome children and their teachers to Newfield. At these events they use activities such as the wants and needs cards to share their understanding. They are generous in their activities for charity and are keen to engage with events which will raise funds both locally as seen in their donation to the Blackburn Food Bank and globally. Their Bag2 School funding was linked to wants and needs. Pupils understand that they were donating unwanted items of clothing to a charity which needed clothes for projects in the developing world. Each year pupils support Genes for Jeans, a charity which they appreciate is relevant to many of them. They enjoy potting plants and baking cakes for the Macmillan Cancer Coffee Afternoon. Be Seen in Green was an event to raise money for Manchester Children's Hospital. Other national appeals are supported such as Children in Need and Marie Curie Cancer Care.