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RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL AWARD ASSESSMENT REPORT LEVEL ONE

School:	Ballyholme Primary School
Headteacher:	David Hewitt
RRSA coordinator:	Pamela Rothwell
Local authority:	South Eastern Education and Library Board
Assessors:	David McGimpsey, (UNICEF), Deborah Trainor (CASS)
Date:	28 February 2012

Introduction

We would like to thank the Board of Governors, the leadership team, staff and young people for their warm welcome to Ballyholme Primary School, for the opportunity to speak with staff and pupils during the assessment and for the evidence detailing the work towards becoming a Level 1 rights-respecting school. The assessors would like to make a special thanks to David Hewitt, the Principal, for his quality of leadership and strong support for the values of the UNCRC and to Pamela Rothwell the Rights Respecting Coordinator for her enthusiastic dedication in providing exemplary supporting material.

There was ample evidence to suggest that the school had worked tirelessly to promote a Rights Respecting ethos throughout the school.

The Outcome

The external assessment confirms that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and that it has attained Rights Respecting School status Level One. Congratulations!

THE ASSESSMENT IN DETAIL

The school context

Ballyholme Primary School is situated in Glenburn Park, Bangor, Co Down. The school has a very wide catchment area; the children come from the town and the surrounding rural areas. The enrollment currently stands at 618 pupils. This includes some children from the Philippines, Thailand and Germany.

An ETI Report in March 2010 concluded 'the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement'.



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Assessment information

Self-evaluation form received	Yes
Impact evaluation form received	Yes
Attendees at SLT meeting	Headteacher / RRSA coordinator
Number of children and young people interviewed	10 children formally interviewed. Pupils informally questioned throughout the day
Number of staff interviewed	4 teaching staff 2 support staff 1 parent 1 governor Staff questioned informally throughout the day.
Evidence provided	Learning walk Written evidence Assembly Lessons School choir rights song



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Standard A:

Rights-respecting values underpin leadership and management

Summary

Standard A has been achieved.

The decision to take part in the Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) was welcomed by the Principal and SLT as they believed the programme presented strategic opportunities to deliver Every School a Good School in a way that best reflected the new vision and mission statement agreed by the school. The promotion of a rights respecting ethos would add to the school's already excellent reputation as a caring, inclusive and welcome place of learning. The Principal believed involvement in the RRSA had "increased pupil self-esteem and self-confidence". Staff had embraced the programme as an opportunity to "raise standards and celebrate achievement" and "Since taking on RRSA there is more warmth in the school and children have become more confident in approaching adults if they wish to suggest or discuss something".

The RRSA was an integral part of the School Development Plan (SDP) and strategic planning. The RRSA had been used to develop work as an Eco-School and is now embedded across a range of curricular areas and assemblies. The Principal was confident that success at Level Two was within reach and that the programme did not rely on a narrow support base for its delivery, "the school has embedded the programme to such an extent that it would be impossible to turn the clock back".

Standard B:

The whole school community learns about the CRC

Summary

Standard B has been achieved.

The day began on a high note with a splendid Rights Respecting performance from Ballyholme Choir who were able to tell us that they were enjoying their right to develop their talents (Article 29).

The SLT provided an extensive tour of the school led by an informed and enthusiastic group of pupils. We observed classrooms where creative rights respecting lessons were in progress. In other classrooms, we admired the impressive display of charters and were given the opportunity to question the children at random on their knowledge of the CRC.

In a P4 lesson the pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of Articles 24, 27 and 31. Children could locate the appropriate rights on the wall when requested and one pointed out that "all pupils in the world have the same rights as me". The classroom charter was clearly displayed at the front of the room. There was a planning board in the classroom which provided evidence of children's participation in their learning. Articles were displayed around



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the room and were linked to displays on the notice boards. The children were able to tell the teacher what a right was and they recapped on the rights they were previously taught.

In P7 we observed an interesting lesson on Victorian times. Pupils were expert in comparing rights with then and now while recognizing the complexities and challenges of radical change. One said “it is important we do not take our rights for granted”. The teacher asked excellent probing questions that encouraged the children to think. Responses from the children were very mature and it was evident that quite a lot of foundation work had been done in advance of the lesson. Children were very articulate and were able to offer ideas and opinions in a developed way, giving good reasons for their views. Furthermore, they were very competent in asking relevant questions that resulted in greater clarity. Children came to realise that they can make a change to what happens in the world.

There was a lot of evidence on notice boards around the school that RRS is a whole school, community project. We witnessed some work carried out by the P1 classes on the right to be safe and the right to a name. A lot of work and discussions had taken place on feelings and emotions. These were explored through the story of ‘The Rainbow Fish’.

In a P6 class, pupils carried out an impromptu wants and needs activity. The children had a clear understanding of what these were and were able to differentiate between the two. Children enjoyed the lesson. There was also evidence of class charters and the Articles were linked to their topic – these were displayed around the classroom.

Standard C: The school has a rights-respecting ethos

Summary Standard C has been achieved.

Ballyholme Primary School demonstrated a positive rights respecting ethos throughout our visit. Pupils interviewed talked enthusiastically about the staff and their enjoyment of lessons, “we are safe in school and always welcome new pupils” and “we do not believe bullying exists because everyone can speak up”.

Staff interviewed reinforced the opinions expressed by pupils. They explained that children were more motivated and had a more mature attitude towards their learning.

When asked if they thought the school was a Level 1 all agreed it was. Responses included: ‘Pupils have a voice in the school – children are involved in planning their topics and in assessing their work. They get to express their feelings and use a number of assessment strategies’ A Foundation Stage teacher explained that teachers ‘give the children a voice during plenary sessions when children can discuss what they have learned’.

One teacher explained that every class has a class charter and that these have replaced the rules. They are based on the Articles and were developed in full consultation with the pupils.

When asked if there were any negatives teachers thought there weren’t any. They explained that time had been given to teachers to implement the initiative. They had time to discuss



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what was happening in each of their year groups so that they could ensure continuity and progression throughout the school. Good planning was the key to success.

Teachers believed all staff were on board including classroom assistants. The RRSA had become part of school life. They would like the initiative to continue because the RRSA had made a significant impact on the children.

Standard D:

Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners

Summary

Standard D has been achieved.

Through participating in the RRSA children have been given a greater say on what happens in their school and classroom. They have a very effective school council and this has been one of the great successes of the school. The Council are given a budget and they have to give reasons/rationale as to why they have chosen one thing over another.

The Eco committee reported that the school received their bronze award in June and were now working towards their silver award. They discussed some of the projects they had been working on; these included healthy food, fair-trade, being energy efficient, composting, caring for bugs/insects and eco notice board (managed by the children).

The members of the committee were able to link their work to Article 24 – the right to a clean environment. They reported that the best project that they had been involved in so far was the Bug Hotel – they designed and made a natural habitat (hotel) for all the bugs/minibeasts in the school. The hotel was made out of recycled materials. They are now in the process of creating a sensory garden. Plans have been drawn up and work was starting that weekend. All children and parents were invited in on the Saturday to help with all the digging and planting. The pupils connected their work to the Articles of the CRC.

Pupils explained in detail how the school council elections operated and how council business was conducted.

‘A teacher attends the school council but he lets us discuss the issues, he just makes sure nobody wants to do anything silly’. They talked about how they have roles in the school council and that ‘they know from past experiences who is best for the job’.

When asked if the younger children were included they stated that the school council members go down to talk to the younger classes to get their opinions and tell them what is happening. They reported that ‘everyone is involved because we have a suggestion box’ and that the younger children have got this to look forward to’.

The children stated that they like being on school council because ‘its good fun’ and ‘we are allowed to help buy equipment’, ‘we have a budget of £250’, it’s mainly up to us what we buy but we have to be sensible’.

The school council talked about other ways that they communicate with pupils e.g. they had an online chat during their ICT class to decide what charity they were going to support. They reported that ‘¼ of the pupils wanted it to be an animal charity but ¾ wanted it to be a



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people charity, so the people charity won'. The school raised money for Obana - £870 'to help other children get their rights'.

When asked why they thought this school was an RRS school responses included:

'We've all agreed to it and put our stamp of approval on it'

'We are a happy and healthy school and teachers respect our opinions'

'Children reported that they felt 'proud and important' that they had been on the focus group.

One child reported that she felt 'everybody was happy with what she had done'.

The future

The assessor would like to encourage the school to continue work on becoming rights respecting and work towards the award at Level Two.

The following recommendations are made to support the journey based on those that have proven valuable in other schools and settings in helping them to develop their practice at Level 2. The recommendations made by the assessors are listed below:

- Continue to fully embed the UNCRC in appropriate policies and the curriculum
- Develop the rights based approach to global citizenship
- Continue to enhance the schools ambassadorship role with regard to the community and other schools
- Consider ways to enhance the involvement of junior classes in the work of the school council
- Develop strategies to strengthen links between the School Council and the BOG and PTA
- Ensure all school charters reflect RRSA recommendations
- Create links on the school website to information on the RRSA and UNCRC