

# RRSA ACCREDITATION REPORT

## GOLD: RIGHTS RESPECTING

<b>School:</b>	Children’s House Montessori
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Randa Williams
<b>RRSA coordinator:</b>	Randa Williams
<b>Local authority:</b>	Kent County Council
<b>Assessor(s):</b>	Frances Bestley and Helen Trivers
<b>Date:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2021

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a Gold virtual accreditation report. The assessors would like to thank the Senior Leadership Team for their warm welcome to the school, for the opportunity to speak with a governor and parent during the assessment and for the detailed evidence provided to support the process. Prior to the accreditation visit, the school completed a comprehensive School Evaluation: Gold form and provided a good collection of evidence including video and audio evidence of children engaging in Rights Respecting activities and discussions.

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:

- A wide range of age appropriate, creative resources to teach about rights.
- Rights based planning successfully used across the setting.
- Identifying the strong links between the Montessori approach and RRSA and strengthening this by ensuring that the approach is underpinned by rights.
- Communication with parents about rights work, including through learning journals which parents are encouraged to contribute to with home learning about rights.
- Good use of Picture News to engage children in discussions about global citizenship issues.

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:

- As much as is appropriate for the age of the children, ensure that staff use rights language accurately. UNICEF’s online training course, ‘Strengthening the RRSA’ may be useful to support staff to recap rights language.
- Further develop opportunities for children to campaign and advocate for rights issues they are interested in.
- Continue to develop the excellent rights-based practice and share this work with other Montessori nursery schools.

## 3. ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

<b>School context</b>	Children’s House Montessori is a small pre-school setting with 32 children on roll. 2 children have EHCPs and 4 are on targeted plans. At its most recent Ofsted inspection it was judged to be outstanding.
<b>Attendees at SLT meeting</b>	Headteacher/RRSA coordinator and deputy headteacher.
<b>Number of children and young people interviewed</b>	Video and audio evidence of children engaging in rights activities and discussions.
<b>Number of adults interviewed</b>	1 governor and 1 parent.
<b>Evidence provided</b>	PowerPoint (photos, voice recording, video), evaluation form.
<b>Registered for RRSA: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017</b>	<b>Silver achieved: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018</b>

**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**

The headteacher of Children’s House Montessori is passionate about children’s rights and has embraced a child rights-based approach within the school. Staff have developed a wide range of creative activities to support children to explore rights in age appropriate ways and have set up a dedicated area of the classroom which supports both child initiated and adult led rights activities. In line with Montessori principles, the nursery present rights concepts from concrete to abstract, using objects and pictures to represent rights when talking about them with children. A staff member explained the Montessori approach saying, *“A model of a baby in a womb is the way we explain rights from birth when looking at the ABCDE of rights.”* A video showed children celebrating the birthday of the UNCRC, where children discussed the right to protection, to education, to be healthy, to a name and to play. During the daily circle time, children often discuss the ABCDE of rights, and children understand that rights are for everyone, you are born with them, they cannot be taken away. One child explained ‘indivisible’ to his mum in a voice recording saying, *“None of these are worse... All of them are the same.”* He also referred to the symbols they use in the nursery saying, *“Your heart means it’s unconditional.”*

Children develop an understanding of the lives of other children around the world through specially chosen books and the regular use of Picture News images. The headteacher noted, *“We have books that we put the UNICEF flag on. They read about children around the world, for example how schools are very different. We then talk to them about what they are finding out and about other children’s lives.”* Picture News is used to engage children in discussions about global events, including complex and controversial issues such as the storming of the Capitol in the USA, and the staff support them to link these issues to rights.

Staff are passionate and knowledgeable about rights and explained that rights are now at the centre of everything they do. The headteacher explained, *“We plan together. Our planning is cross curricular; we have planning boards for everything which highlight the rights we want to teach and how we are going to teach them. Each teacher leads on a curriculum area and try to link their area with rights e.g. if we are doing phonics and the p sound, we might look at the right to protection.”* Staff review the children’s progress on their rights learning in their daily meetings, *“We believe in reflective practice and continually think about how we can improve.”* The headteacher explained the difference in practice between Silver and Gold, *“At Silver it was teaching them about rights. At Gold it is more about a way of being, our way of being, who we are - it’s part of everything we do as opposed to activities.”*

Parents are very supportive of the school’s work on rights. When their children start at the nursery, they receive booklets on children’s rights and each child makes their own rights plate which is taken home. Children’s online learning journals track the understanding of rights and use of rights language by children and parents contribute to this by adding observations from home, and evidence showed that they are increasingly seeing the importance of celebrating their children’s developing understanding of rights. One parent said, *“It’s not just that he knows it and can repeat it back – he understands it. We were talking about education at dinner and he said, ‘We all have the right to education and education can protect us.’ He talks to us about democracy and voting and tells us that we could settle arguments with voting.”* The school’s governor is passionate about the school’s work on rights and the positive impact it has on children. *“I’ve been blown away by the way it has been implemented. Rights Respecting Schools crosses so many important lines of nurture, inclusion, world views, taking the children beyond localised views.”* He added, *“The setting prepares children for the wider world. I get the feeling that the children are prepared to change the world in a positive way.”*

**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**

Children are supported to enjoy a wide range of their rights; excerpts from their online learning journals showed the children discussing the rights they are enjoying, such as their right to be healthy, to speak and be listened to and to be protected. Children understand the role of staff, as duty bearers, in supporting their access to rights. The headteacher said, *“One child went up to a teacher and said that they were a duty bearer because they help children access their rights. It wasn’t prompted – it was just from his own ideas.”* Children know that they can ask adults for help and support when needed. One child was struggling to reach the easel and she asked an adult for help. The adult asked her what they could do then supported her to realise her idea of finding a stool to use. Relevant policies, such as the Equal Opportunities Policy, explicitly place rights at the centre and rights articles and principles are threaded throughout the School Improvement Plan. Children are supported to understand the importance of fairness and equity, that everyone is different, and some people need more support or to do things differently. The headteacher gave the example of one child with autism, and how understanding the other children were of the specific way he needed to do things.

As a Montessori school, Children’s House is child centric and child led, therefore children are treated with great respect and relationships between pupils and adults are very respectful. The school has a high teacher to pupil ratio, so children have freedom to access what they want, when they want to, and the school frames this within respecting the dignity of the child. The school teaches children to treat others with respect; the headteacher explained, *“We used the brown eyes, blue eyes experiment to explore treating people differently, to see how they felt.”* Staff reported that children now use rights language independently to sort out disagreements. They have a Montessori Peace table which children can use to resolve conflict. Teachers all have bumbags with little peace bunnies attached, which means that wherever children are, they can use the peace bunnies to resolve issues. The headteacher said, *“They know we will listen to them and hear them. They know that there is someone to talk to if they need to sort something out.”* The school also celebrates children who respect the rights of others during their daily circle time.

Children at Children’s House Montessori feel safe at school. The headteacher reported that there have been no instances of bullying at the school. Throughout the Covid pandemic there has been a high rate of attendance and children reported that they felt safe in the nursery survey.

The school supports children’s social and emotional wellbeing in a number of ways. Children attend Forest School sessions and they also have a free flow approach to indoor and outdoor play areas. They have a curriculum area with both adult and child led resources that support the physical, mental, social and emotional needs of children. The school has an inhouse Centre of Excellence in partnership with a number of professionals who support the wider needs of individual children and their families, such as paediatricians and play therapists. The headteacher noted that, *“As a school we have volunteered 100 hours of play therapy, with the support of Redhill Trust to those that most need it thereby ensuring that children’s needs are met in order that they are in the best position to access their learning.”* Children learn to develop healthy lifestyles and link this with their right to health.

The school strives to ensure their practice is as inclusive as possible, and works closely with specialist nurseries, schools and professionals to support the needs of the children attending. Numbers of

children with SEN have increased each year and the school has supported children through the Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) process. The school has a diverse staff body and they run cultural days on various countries they have links with. The headteacher noted, “*We recently hired a teacher who wears a hijab and children have raised questions – they are not afraid to ask! We linked this back to rights.*” Children also explored the Black Lives Matter protests through Picture News and were encouraged to discuss their thoughts.

As part of the Montessori approach, children are involved as active partners in their learning - choosing what they want to do and where they want to learn. Resources are laid out in different areas for children to choose from and children are taught to respect each other’s work and to wait their turn. The free flow concept which gives children the choice of learning indoors or outdoors supports and encourages children to take an active role in their learning.

**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 at Children’s House Montessori know that they are listened to. They influence decisions daily, in line with Montessori principles and underpinned by Article 12 of the CRC. If a child has an idea, staff will support them to put this on the wishing tree. Any decisions which will affect everyone are voted on. One example of this is during the recent cold weather where staff asked children if they wished to continue with their Forest School session as planned. Children discussed this and then voted to go as usual. Another example is where children were getting upset that they didn’t get to blow out the candle at the end of circle time. The staff asked children how they could solve this problem, and they shared their ideas. They voted for putting names in a hat to choose who gets to do it and now are all clear that this was chosen in a democratic way. Children also vote for a head boy and head girl annually. Circle time is used as an opportunity to ensure that everyone’s views can be heard. One experienced nursery teacher (who is new to the school) wrote, “*I have been really impressed by the way children are included in making decisions.*”

Children at Children’s House Montessori have taken action to uphold their rights and the rights of others in several ways. They have participated in the Clarks shoe share appeal, raised money to purchase a UNICEF School in a Box, raised money and collected resources for local children’s hospitals and also recycle crisp packets to support the Air Ambulance. In the current situation due to Covid, as parents cannot enter the nursery building, they have created the ‘world house’ at the gate of the nursery, which they link to rights. Through this area they encourage families to become involved in crisp packet recycling and donation of hygiene products for those in need. After learning about issues at school, children tell their parents to bring in goods to donate or recycle, demonstrating their understanding of the issues. When children engage in cooking, staff discuss issues such as fair trade with them and link this to rights. The headteacher stated that the school’s use of Picture News and books such as the Little People, Big Dreams series have increased awareness of and engagement in global issues such as climate change, giving children the big picture for their involvement in local litter picking to keep the environment clean. The headteacher said, “*These actions support children to learn that rights are about the whole world, not just themselves.*”