Establishing Restorative Practices

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St Edmund's Community Foundation School

Background

- Started teaching in 1994

- 2001 – Headteacher Gresham Village School

- 2006 – Headteacher Reepham Primary School

- 2009 – Headteacher St Edmund's Community Foundation School

- School Improvement Partner in 3 Norfolk Schools

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St Ed's – the facts!

- 3-11 years

- 174 pupils on roll

- Area of significant deprivation

- High crime, drug, alcohol, racial intolerance and domestic violence rate

- Standards below 55% L4 in Eng and Maths for the past 9 years

- High levels of fixed term exclusions, poor attendance and high persistent absences.

- 'Hard to Shift' school

Why Restorative Practices?

- Children's behaviour was out of control.

- Constant conflict situations – both verbal and physical.

- No respect for others or things.

- No negotiation or problem solving skills.

- Few staff able to cope with challenging behaviours.

- High staff turnover rate.

- Very negative external view of the school.

- Adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

Steps taken to implement RP: -

- Liaison with West Norfolk Police.

- Headteacher visit to Collingwood Primary in Hull to see RP in action.

- Other staff visited, were inspired and implemented RP at a class level.

- Other staff became interested.

- Whole school training in Restorative Practices.

- Whole school requirement to immediately introduce 'circles' and conferences.

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Practicalities

- Lead from the top

- Staff circles

- Creating 'non-negotiables'

- Relationship management plan – setting it out clearly

- Be prepared for 'circle and conference overload'!

- Regular review and reflection to keep 'RP' alive – staff and children.

- Support those who struggle

- Empower children by giving them training in how to run their own circles and conferences.

Barriers faced

- Some staff are resistant – "Another new initiative".

- Some staff struggle with restorative approaches and are more comfortable with punitive methods.

- Developing a restorative vocabulary and expressing feelings is hard for some children, parents and staff.

Sustainability……keeping RP alive!

- Relentless RP focus from leadership teams.

- Involving children and parents.

- Using circles in staff meetings and briefings.

- Developing teaching and learning through the use of circles.

- Listen to children's views and ideas on how circles and conferences can be used and developed.

- United and consistent approach involving all existing and new staff.

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So…….what difference has it made?

- Fixed term exclusions have reduced to 0.

- Attendance has improved - 1.72%.

- Calm ethos in school.

- Learning has accelerated particularly in KS2 where progress is 'good'.

- Parent and external perceptions of the school are changing.

- Children hold their own circles and mini conferences to resolve problems without support. This is second nature to them.

- Children's emotional literacy has improved considerably – they clearly state how they feel.

- Staff enjoy coming to school!

- There are no longer any unruly or disaffected children in the office corridor!

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This is what the children have said about circles: -

- I know my classmates better.

- I have a chance to speak.

- I know that we can sort problems out with circles.

- Circles are helping me with my learning.

- I've used circles at home when I fall out with my friends.

- I have asked my Mum to hold a circle because my sister 'hogged' the computer.

Achieving RP in your own setting

- Implementing Restorative Practices is not hard to do.

- It doesn't take long.

- It helps to see it in action at another school/ setting.

- It needs to have full commitment and drive from the school leader and leadership teams.

- It is essential that everyone is on board and actively participates. It needs to be kept alive and become integral to everyday life.

In conclusion……………..

- At St Ed's we are committed to restorative practices and feel passionate about it.

- Through this approach we have seen our school turn a corner.

- Children have a desire to learn; they take ownership for their behaviour; they support one another and they can clearly state how they feel.

- We are confident that RP will give our children the chance they need to break the cycle of deprivation and crime.

St Edmund's Community Foundation School

Relationships Management Policy

Rationale

At St Edmund's we believe that every human being has intrinsic value, deserves to be treated with respect, is capable of changing and growing, and is inherently motivated to learn. We also believe that learning occurs best within a learning community where children are actively engaged in their own learning and interacting with their fellow class mates, and that learning should not only build capacity for the future, but should address current problems and challenges facing individuals and society.

Our aim is for children to leave St Edmund's being thoughtful learners who are ready for their next stage of learning and who are committed to developing their own skills through habits of exploration and reflection. We strive for children to be effective communicators and have a well-developed capacity to engage in life-long inquiry and learning. We aim for children to have an understanding of healthy interpersonal and organisational relationships and are able to work well with others in responding to new and unexpected challenges that arise in their school and home life.

Background

As a school we have adopted the use of Restorative Practices (see Appendix A for additional information). Through this approach, we endeavour to: -

- Improve the emotional and social skills of staff and young people
- Develop a sense of community and belonging
- Resolve problems amongst groups of young people and/or staff
- Address bullying and gang conflicts with confidence
- Reduce exclusions
- Run effective re-integration meetings

What happens in school: -

In class: -

Circles take place each morning in every class. The morning circle involves the following: - greeting, feelings and fun/problem solving circle (depending on the needs of the class). There is a close of the day circle in each class.

Greeting – gives children a sense of community and vocabulary for greeting others.

Feelings – enables teachers to gauge the well being of the learners in the class and support children as required. Concerns that arise re safeguarding are logged and

referred to the Headteacher. Support partners are chosen for children who need additional support throughout the day.

Problem solving circles take place throughout the day as required. These are used to address both learning and behaviour issues.

End of the day circles take place in each class. These are used to conclude the day and establish a sense of community.

Circles are also integrated into the curriculum.

School Council

The following outlines how this works: -

• Class Councils take place once a week.
• These take the form of a problem solving circle.
• Problems for the circle are generated by the children (in a class book, post-its on a wall etc).
• Any problems that can not be solved by the class are taken to the School Council reps to the School Council meeting.
• We change reps 2x yearly and children put themselves forward (and write a manifesto) for the post. A class election decides who the reps are.

When new children start, the following takes place: -
• A welcome circle takes place when the child arrives.
• A circle of friends is appointed (from class and across the Key Stage – to include EAL for new EAL children and a child from the road in which they have moved in to).
• The role of the circle of friends is to introduce the new child to the pastoral team.
• Parent Support Adviser makes contact with the family to welcome them.

Around school

Staff encourage children to use circles (including a talking object) on their own to deal with issues - peer circles/conferences for pupil conflict; school councils for developing active citizenship skills.

Dealing with conflict: - Restorative conferences take place when there has been an incident in class or on the playground. These are facilitated by an independent member of staff who was not involved in the incident. All staff are required to use the 'Restorative Practice Questions' when facilitating a conference: -

Restorative Questions 1 – To respond to challenging behaviour

What happened?

What were you thinking about at the time?

What have your thoughts been since?

Who was affected by what you did?

In what way have they been affected?

What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Restorative Questions 2 – To help those harmed by others' actions

What do you think when you realised what had happened?

What have your thoughts been since?

How has this affected you and others?

What has been the hardest thing for you?

What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Additional information: -

Questions in bold are asked at the very end, after all involved have been asked the previous questions.

Questions are asked in the following order – perpetrator, person most harmed, person least harmed (for all but the last question); the sequence is then repeated for the last question.

Involving parents

Parents are invited to attend a conference if their child has been involved in a significant incident. They join the conference as a support partner for the child.

Staff

Circles are used in staff meetings and briefings – both fun and problem solving. These develop a sense of community and shared problem solving approach. These take place 3 times per week – Monday and Wednesday at 8.30am and Friday at 3pm.

Staff circles are used for staff development, for sharing difficulties in a spirit of open learning, for supporting teams (key stages, lunchtime staff, etc); workplace mediation for discipline issues amongst staff; mediation between parents and staff

Commitment –

- Our aim is to reduce fixed term exclusions to zero. Exclusions will only be used in extreme circumstances.
- All staff have received training for Restorative Practices (RP). Staff recognise that the effectiveness of RP relies on all staff actively engaging in the process and practices. New staff will receive induction training and support with Restorative Practices.
- The example of all the adults in a school is vital - senior management, teachers, learning support assistants, administrative staff, governors, parents, lunchtime staff etc - and they are required to use RP processes for their own team building and conflict management.
- PSHE links - Our school develops a strong positive ethos amongst all its members, adults and students alike. Restorative Practices enables community building, active listening, creative conflict management, emotional education and developing empathy, understanding and tolerance towards diversity.

> Restorative Justice is about encouraging offenders to be accountable for their actions and to take responsibility for repairing the harm caused.

Appendix A

Restorative practices is an emerging field of study that enables people to restore

and build community in an increasingly disconnected world.

The emerging social science of "restorative practices" offers a common thread to tie together theory, research and practice in seemingly disparate fields, such as education, counselling, criminal justice, social work and organizational management.

The restorative practices concept has its roots in "restorative justice," a new way of looking at criminal justice that focuses on repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than on punishing offenders (although restorative justice does not preclude incarceration of offenders or other sanctions). Originating in the 1970s as mediation between victims and offenders, in the 1990s restorative justice broadened to include communities of care as well, with victims' and offenders' families and friends participating in collaborative processes called "conferences" and "circles."

For the last decade the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), which grew out of the Real Justice program (see http://www.realjustice.org), has been developing a comprehensive framework for practice and theory that expands the restorative paradigm beyond its origins in criminal justice (McCold and Wachtel, 2003).

The fundamental unifying hypothesis of restorative practices is disarmingly simple: that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behaviour when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them. This hypothesis maintains that the punitive and authoritarian *to* mode and the permissive and paternalistic *for* mode are not as effective as the restorative, participatory, engaging *with* mode. If this restorative hypothesis is valid, then it has significant implications for many disciplines.

For example, contemporary criminal justice and educational disciplinary practices rely on punishment to change behaviour. As the number of prison inmates and excluded students grows unabated, the validity of that approach is very much in question. In a similar vein, social workers doing things *for* and *to* children and families have not turned back the tide of abuse and neglect.

Meanwhile, individuals and organizations in many fields are developing innovative models and methodology and doing empirical research, unaware that they share the same fundamental hypothesis. In social work, family group conferencing or family group decision making processes empower extended families to meet privately, without professionals in the room, to make a plan to protect children in their own families from further violence and neglect (American Humane Association, 2003). In criminal justice, restorative circles and conferences allow victims, offenders and their respective family members and friends to come together to explore how everyone has been affected by an offence and, when possible, to decide how to repair the harm and meet their own needs (McCold, 2003). In education (for more about restorative practices in schools go to http://www.safersanerschools.org), circles and groups provide opportunities for students to share their feelings, build relationships and problem-solve, and when there is wrongdoing, to play an active role in addressing the wrong and

making things right (Riestenberg, 2002).

In the criminal justice field these innovators use the term "restorative justice" (Zehr, 1990); in social work they advocate "empowerment" (Simon, 1994); in education they talk about "positive discipline" (Nelsen, 1996) or "responsive classrooms" (Charney, 1992); and in organizational leadership they use terms like "horizontal management" (Denton, 1998). All of these phrases are related to a similar perspective about people, their needs and their motivation. But in all of these fields, the implementation of this new thinking and practice grows only at a modest rate.

Restorative practices is the study of building social capital and achieving social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making. Through the advent of restorative practices, using its common perspective and vocabulary, there is now the potential to create much greater visibility for this way of thinking, to foster exchange between various fields and to accelerate the development of theory, research and practice.

The social discipline window (Figure 1) is a simple but useful framework with broad application in many settings. It describes four basic approaches to maintaining social norms and behavioural boundaries. The four are represented as different combinations of high or low control and high or low support. The restorative domain combines both high control and high support and is characterized by doing things *with* people, rather than *to* them or *for* them.
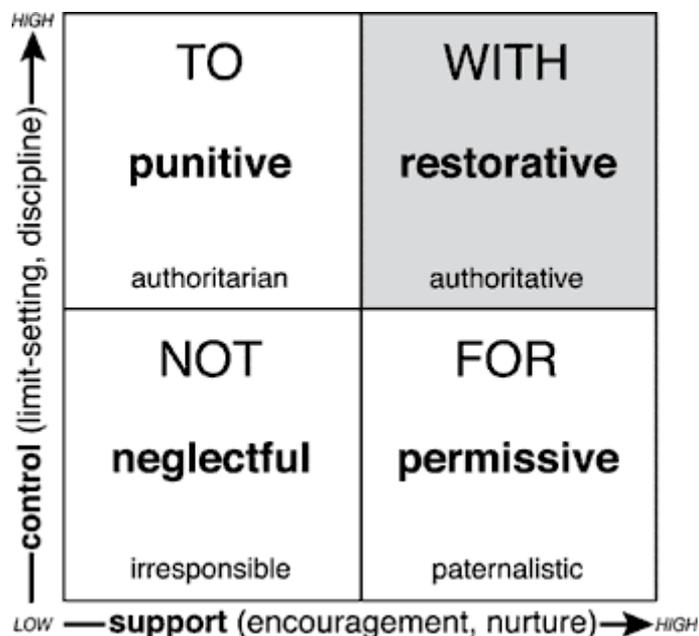

Figure 1. Social Discipline Window

Restorative practices is not limited to formal processes, such as restorative and family group conferences or family group decision making, but range from informal to formal. On a restorative practices continuum (Figure 2), the informal practices include affective statements that communicate people's feelings, as well as affective questions that cause people to reflect on how their behaviour has affected others. Impromptu

restorative conferences, groups and circles are somewhat more structured but do not require the elaborate preparation needed for formal conferences. Moving from left to right on the continuum, as restorative processes become more formal they involve more people, require more planning and time, and are more structured and complete. Although a formal restorative process might have dramatic impact, informal practices have a cumulative impact because they are part of everyday life.

Figure 2. Restorative Practices Continuum

The most critical function of restorative practices is restoring and building relationships. Because informal and formal restorative processes foster the expression of affect or emotion, they also foster emotional bonds. The late Silvan S. Tomkins's writings about psychology of affect (Tomkins, 1962, 1963, 1991) assert that human relationships are best and healthiest when there is free expression of affect—or emotion—minimizing the negative, maximizing the positive, but allowing for free expression. Donald Nathanson, director of the Silvan S. Tomkins Institute, adds that it is through the mutual exchange of expressed affect that we build community, creating the emotional bonds that tie us all together (Nathanson, 1998). Restorative processes such as conferences and circles provide a safe environment for people to express and exchange intense emotion.

Tomkins identified nine distinct affects (Figure 3) to explain the expression of emotion in all human beings. Most of the affects are defined by pairs of words that represent the least and the most intense expression of a particular affect. The six negative affects include anger-rage, fear-terror, distress-anguish, disgust, dissmell (a word Tomkins coined to describe "turning up one's nose" at someone or something in a rejecting way), and shame-humiliation. Surprise-startle is the neutral affect, which functions like a reset button. The two positive affects are interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy.

Enjoyment — Joy

Interest — Excitement

Surprise — Startle

Shame — Humiliation

Distress — Anguish

Disgust

Fear — Terror

Anger — Rage

Dissmell

Positive Affects

Neutral

Negative Affects

Figure 3. The Nine Affects
(adapted from Nathanson, 1992)

Shame is worthy of special attention. Nathanson explains that shame is a critical regulator of human social behavior. Tomkins defined shame as occurring any time that our experience of the positive affects is interrupted (Tomkins, 1987). So an individual does not have to do something wrong to feel shame. The individual just has to experience something that interrupts interest-excitement or enjoyment-joy (Nathanson, 1997). This understanding of shame provides a critical explanation for why victims of crime often feel a strong sense of shame, even though the offender committed the "shameful" act.

Nathanson (1992, p. 132) has developed the Compass of Shame (Figure 4) to illustrate the various ways that human beings react when they feel shame. The four poles of the compass of shame and behaviours associated with them are:

- *Withdrawal*—isolating oneself, running and hiding
- *Attack self*—self put-down, masochism
- *Avoidance*—denial, abusing drugs, distraction through thrill seeking
- *Attack others*—turning the tables, lashing out verbally or physically, blaming others

Figure 4. The Compass of Shame
(adapted from Nathanson, 1992)

Nathanson says that the "attack other" response to shame is responsible for the proliferation of violence in modern life. Usually people who have adequate self-esteem readily move beyond their feelings of shame. Nonetheless we all react to shame, in varying degrees, in the ways described by the Compass. Restorative practices, by its very nature, provides an opportunity for us to express our shame, along with other emotions, and in doing so reduce their intensity. In restorative conferences, for example, people routinely move from negative affects through the neutral affect to positive affects.

Because the restorative concept has its roots in the field of criminal justice, we may erroneously assume that restorative practices are reactive, only to be used as a response to crime and wrongdoing. However, the free expression of emotion inherent in restorative practices not only restores, but also proactively builds new relationships and social capital. Social capital is defined as the connections among individuals (Putnam, 2001), and the trust, mutual understanding, shared values and behaviours that bind us together and make cooperative action possible (Cohen and Prusak, 2001).

For example, primary schools and, more recently, some secondary schools use circles to provide students with opportunities to share their feelings, ideas and experiences in order to establish relationships and social norms on a non-crisis basis. Businesses and other organizations utilize team-building circles or groups, in which employees are afforded opportunities to get to know each other better, similar to the processes used with students. The IIRP's experience has been that classrooms and workplaces tend to be more productive when they invest in building social capital through the proactive use of restorative practices. Also, when a problem does arise, teachers and managers find that the reaction of students and employees is more positive and cooperative.

When authorities do things *with* people, whether reactively—to deal with crisis, or proactively— in the normal course of school or business, the results are almost always better. This fundamental thesis was evident in a Harvard Business Review article about the concept of "fair process" in organizations (Kim and Mauborgne, 1997). The central idea of fair process is that "…individuals are most likely to trust and cooperate freely with systems—whether they themselves win or lose by those systems—when fair process is observed."

The three principles of fair process are:

*   *Engagement*—involving individuals in decisions that affect them by listening to their views and genuinely taking their opinions into account
*   *Explanation*—explaining the reasoning behind a decision to everyone who has been involved or who is affected by it
*   *Expectation clarity*—making sure that everyone clearly understands a decision and what is expected of them in the future

Fair process applies the restorative *with* domain of the social discipline window to all kinds of organizations, in all kinds of disciplines and professions (O'Connell, 2002; Costello and O'Connell, 2002; Schnell, 2002). The fundamental hypothesis that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in behaviour when authorities do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them expands the restorative paradigm far beyond its origins in restorative justice.

(This explanation of restorative practices is adapted from [From Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices: Expanding the Paradigm](#), by Ted Wachtel and Paul McCold, a paper presented at the IIRP's Fifth International Conference on Conferencing, Circles and other Restorative Practices, August, 2004, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.)

SESSION INFORMATION

What needs to be done to establish a 'Restorative Practice' School.

SUMMARY: St Edmund's is a 3-11 primary school in an area of significant deprivation and challenge. Through restorative practices, the ethos and culture of St Edmund's Community Foundation School has changed beyond all recognition. Changing the culture and ethos of a school is a daunting prospect – at St Edmund's this was achieved over a four week time period.

This session will: -

- Go through the steps that were undertaken to fully implement Restorative Practices
- Explore the practicalities and barriers of implementation
- Talk through the impact in terms of attitudes, learning, independence skills, problem solving
- Look at how to achieve a Restorative Practice ethos in your setting.

AUDIENCE: Schools and colleges wishing to implement RP.

RELATES TO RP: The session is about implementing circles and mini conferences across a whole school and what impact this has in the way children and adults behave towards one another, the way they learn and their ability to solve their own problems.