

# Restorative Practice as a Tool for Organizational Change

## Background.

- Started teaching 1975 - Manchester Comprehensive
- 1980 – Residential special school –  
– All age...mixed...EBD to ‘delicate’
- 1984 – Bessels Leigh School.  
non-maintained residential school for boys,  
11 to 16, who have social, emotional and  
behavioural difficulties.

Principal since 1995.

# Bessels Leigh School



## Pre 2000

Traditionally.....

- the pupils were at the milder end of the behavioural spectrum
- many were rather introvert... little acting out
- a number of school phobics
- academically able and far more focused
- stable and strong staff group.

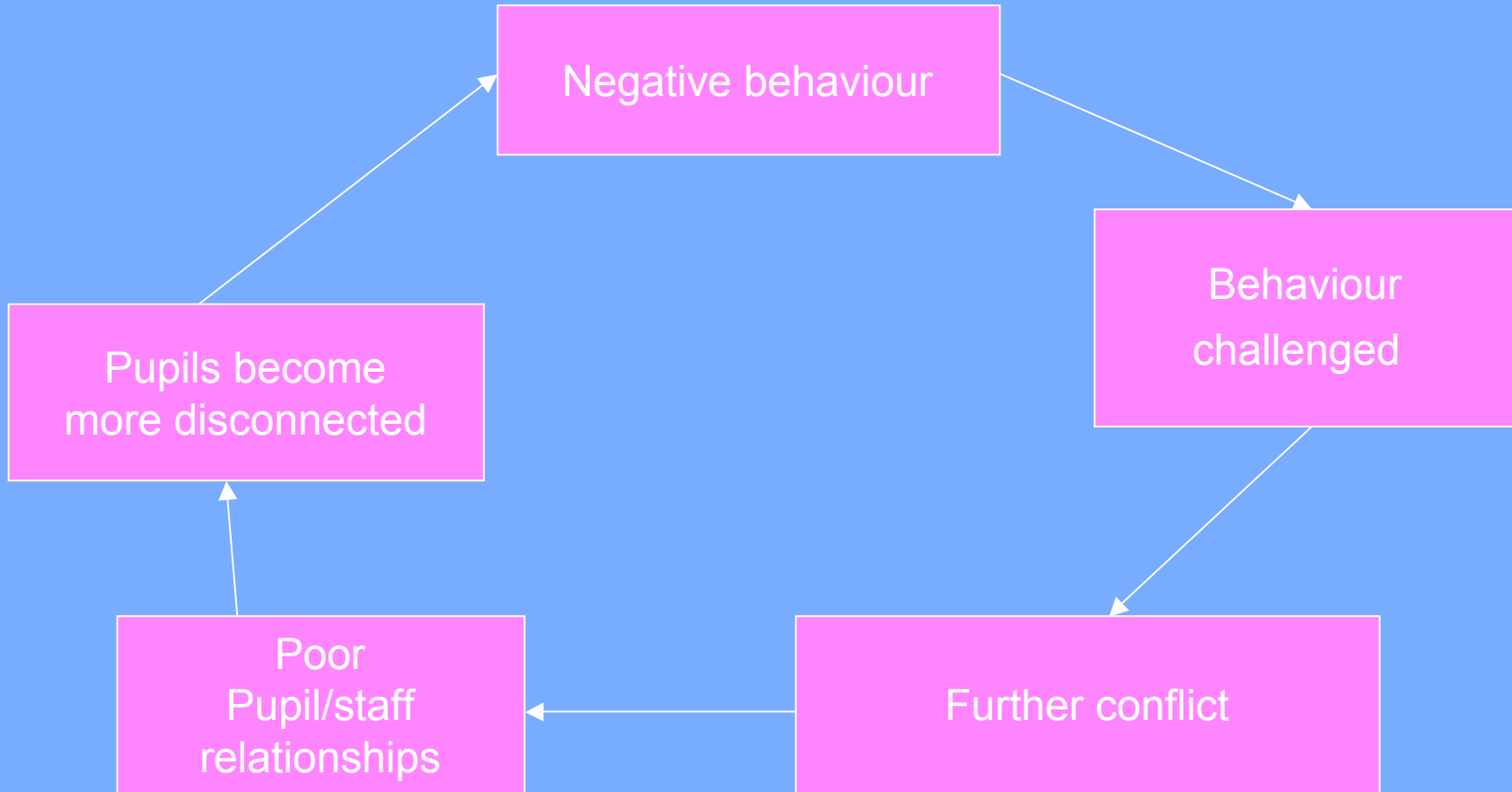
## Post 2000

- type and degree of behaviour more problematic
- emotional issues far more significant
- pupils are often older when referred (inclusion, local government finances etc.)
- high level of aggression and violence evident prior to placement.

# Results

- pupils more ready to challenge the staff
  - verbally
  - physically
- fewer staff able to cope with the challenging behaviour
- increased levels of stress for staff
- increased staff turnover rates
- huge increase in the amount of damage
- adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

# The cycle



# Culture

‘ the way we do things around here’

*(Ouchi and Johnson, 1978: Simpson, 2004)*

‘The set of basic assumptions which members of a group invent to solve the basic problems of physical survival in the external environment (adaption) and social survival in the internal environment (internal integration)

*(Schein, 1981).*



# Three prompts

- 'More of the same', created bigger problems
- Restorative Justice training provided by the Thames Valley Partnership
- Winston Churchill Travel Award – 2005-06.

# Strategy

- Introduce Conferencing – (April 2004)
  - ‘cherry pick’ cases that are likely to result in a high degree of success (across the full RP Continuum)
  - Select incidents which involve staff who are naturally inclined to the restorative approach, follow up with a thorough debrief / explanation
  - Look at ‘no alternative’ cases
- Training – (January 2005)
  - ❖ The supporting principles of RJ
  - ❖ Look at the successful examples, build upon the successes of individual staff
  - ❖ Plan further training. (Sept / Oct 2005).

# Achievements to date.....

- Recorded Behavioural Incidents

	Negative Incidents	Negative Incidents with Physical	Damage
• September 2004	219	12	17
• July 2005	362	33	10
• September 2005.	164	9	3

# Achievements.....

- 80% reduction of problems at 11pm (onwards) in the residential units
- Significant reduction in the levels of damage
- Circle meetings at the end of the school day
  - 100% attendance
  - Teaching staff staying at school to attend
- RJ – garden
  - Local quarry donated boulders, transported by local haulier
  - Plants / shrubs donated by local garden centres / staff
- RJ - B-B-Q area
  - Logs donated by local tree surgeon
  - ‘ad hoc’ fires in the grounds have stopped
- Repairs
  - Boys are actively employed in the repairing of damage
- Go Kart track created by the boys.

# 'RJ Garden'



# Achievements.....

- Improved attendance at lessons
- Pupils via Circle Meetings and the School Council are creating their own 'norms'
- Most pupils participate in facilitating the circle meetings
- Staff Views
  - From January 2006 we are looking to change the school timetable to facilitate the introduction of 'daily check-in' sessions.
  - The meetings have brought different departments of the establishment together
  - The staff circle meetings are proving both popular and effective, particularly in terms of reducing staff friction

# Staff say.....

- The general atmosphere during the evening is calmer.....78%
- There have been fewer positive handling situations.....89%
- I feel more satisfied with my work...than before the summer.....77%
- The staff group is now more supportive of each other.....83%
- There is now less damage.....83%
- The boys are more used to 'working with staff'.....88%
- There is less of a 'them and us' feel.....86%
- RJ has helped to improve the appearance of the establishment.....94%

# Issues and pointers.....

- All or nothing v. parallel systems
- Changing the mindset of managers is all important
- Link to whatever else is important, for the organisation and individuals
- Use data
- Celebrate success and use as a 'PR' tool
- Develop and use a common language
- Make the process, and whenever possible, the outcome, visual
- Be flexible in thinking, planning is important but so is seizing the moment
- Use the set backs as opportunities for reflection and training .