Restorative Practice as a Tool for Organizational Change

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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

Negative behaviour

Pupils become more disconnected

Poor Pupil/staff relationships

Behaviour challenged

Further conflict
Culture

‘the way we do things around here’


‘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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negative Incidents</th>
<th>Negative Incidents with Physical</th>
<th>Damage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>September 2004</strong></td>
<td>219</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>July 2005</strong></td>
<td>362</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>September 2005</strong></td>
<td>164</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
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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