



# Restorative Approaches in Schools

A Guide for School Managers and Governors

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Prepared by Helen Flanagan, with support from Janet Clark



## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| About the Authors .....   | 4  |
| Restorative Approaches in Schools Guide .....   | 5  |
| Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS) .....  | 6  |
| Addressing Behaviour and Attendance: Links to Steer and the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century School ..... | 6  |
| Implementing Restorative Approaches .....   | 9  |
| Reaffirming Partnerships through Developing Social and Emotional Skills .....                     | 13 |
| The Restorative Continuum .....   | 14 |
| Repairing Relationships .....   | 14 |
| Peer Restorative Work.....  | 15 |
| The Restorative Champion .....  | 15 |
| Seven Steps to Successfully Implementing RAiS .....   | 16 |
| Perception and Reality .....  | 18 |
| Restorative approaches take up too much time .....  | 18 |
| Restorative approaches are ‘pink and fluffy’ and fail to hold the wrongdoer accountable .....     | 18 |
| Restorative approaches: Why Not? .....  | 19 |
| Restorative approaches in schools: ‘Does it work?’ .....  | 19 |
| The Evidence .....  | 19 |
| Impact on Educational Attainment.....   | 20 |
| Climate for Learning .....  | 20 |
| Impact on Attendance Rates .....  | 20 |
| The Bristol RAiS Evaluation .....   | 21 |
| Impact on fixed-term exclusions .....   | 21 |
| Other Experience of restorative approaches .....  | 21 |
| Working the Field.....  | 22 |
| The Way Forward .....   | 22 |
| Restorative Solutions Training.....   | 23 |
| About Restorative Solutions CIC .....   | 23 |
| Further Information.....  | 24 |

## About the Authors

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Janet has a BA Honours degree in Education and has been working restoratively in schools for the past eight years. Janet's previous post was a restorative approaches school's coordinator in London for the Youth Justice Board project 'restorative justice in schools'. Janet was closely involved in the production of 'Laters', a restorative justice training video funded by Westminster City Council featured on Teachers TV and more recently a production called 'Schools and Crime' involving a conference in a Bristol School. Janet is the Project Manager of the pilot project for RAiS in Avon and Somerset. The project has worked across 8 secondary schools, including academies, and has trained over 1200 staff and pupils in restorative approaches, and run in excess of 350 conferences. Janet is a successful trainer, speaker and facilitator.

## Restorative Approaches in Schools Guide

### Forward by Sir Charles Pollard QPM

During my time as Chief Constable of the Thames Valley Police and as a founding member of the Youth Justice Board and its Chairman for a time, one of the biggest challenges we faced then, as indeed we do now, is how to divert children and young people away from crime. We know a great deal about the risk factors which contribute to creating the conditions in which young people drift into criminal careers, not minor behavioural aberrations, but persistent and often serious offending behaviour causing much harm to victims and costing millions of pounds in catching, convicting and passing punitive prison sentences. The risk factors include growing up in dysfunctional families with chaotic lifestyles, erratic parental behaviour management, parents and siblings already in trouble with the law, living in high crime neighbourhoods and school failure. Of these all too familiar scenarios, the only risk factor we can do something about in the here and now is in schools. Most schools are caring, stable environments where young people can, given respect and consistent support, learn vital life skills, social, emotional and educational, learn how to treat their fellow citizens, young and old, with respect.

Young people, who for whatever reason, fail to complete their education or leave school with few or no qualifications, are eight times more likely to develop into prolific and persistent offenders, get involved in serious drug and alcohol abuse and serve repeated custodial sentences. The genesis for the restorative approaches in Schools project in Bristol (RAiS) was concern expressed by, officers from Children and Young Peoples' Services, the local Police Commander and the Head of Safer Bristol about the large number of pupils being excluded from schools both permanently and on a fixed term basis.

As the independent evaluation by Professor Hough and his team from King's College London demonstrates, RAiS achieved some notable successes. This guide is based not just on the experience in Bristol but other projects in Lancashire and London where restorative approaches have been introduced to deal with disputes and conflicts that occur every day in classrooms and playgrounds. The guide prepared by a senior teacher for senior teachers sets out how RAiS resonates with current educational thinking, how RAiS works and what you need to do to make it work for your school community, teachers, pupils and parents. Adopting RAiS will make a huge difference to the life of your school and the way you deal with difficult situations and young people including some of the most vulnerable in our society.

**Sir Charles Pollard, QPM**  
**Chairman, Restorative Solutions CIC**

## **Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS)**

Restorative approaches provide schools with a range of practices which promote mutually respectful relationships and manage behaviour and conflict, address bullying and absences and build community cohesion. Restorative approaches are not new, but offer a framework upon which to build on existing good practice. There is a wealth of evidence that shows how the use of restorative approaches alongside Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), helps to develop more resilient and self regulating learners, thus creating positive learning environments.

This guide will describe the underpinning philosophy of restorative approaches and their links to current developments in education, give advice on implementation and through case studies, show the impact on individuals, classes and whole school policy and practice. It will set out how restorative approaches can create a positive ethos, change perspectives of pupils, staff and parents and offer viable and successful alternatives to traditional conflict resolution approaches. The purpose is to connect and re-engage everyone on the learning journey.

Much of the evidence used in this guide is from the evaluation of the Bristol based restorative approaches in Schools (RAiS) project, conducted by Layla Skinns, Natasha Du Rose and Professor Mike Hough from the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR), King's College London. We have also drawn on the practical experiences of restorative work in schools in Lancashire and London. The RAiS project in Bristol was developed by Restorative Solutions (CIC) and funded by The Esmee Fairbairn and Paul Hamlyn Foundations, with additional support from Safer Bristol and Bristol Children and Peoples' Services.

### **Addressing Behaviour and Attendance: Links to Steer and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School**

Schools are places where everyone can engage in learning at both a social and academic level. In 2002, the All Parliamentary Group for Children asked "What do you as children want from school?" Among the answers were:

- **We want to learn**
- **We want to be treated with respect as individuals**
- **We need our schools to be safe places**
- **We want support when we have difficulties, not punishment**
- **We want to stay in school**

#### **"Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future: building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School"** **The Pupil Guarantee**

- **Every pupil will go to a school where there is good behaviour, strong discipline, order and safety**
- **Every pupil will go to a school that promotes their health and wellbeing**
- **Every child will have a chance to express their views**
- **Every child and their families are welcomed and valued**

In the Learning Behaviour Report (Steer 5, April 2009), Sir Alan Steer asks that schools have in place systems to address bad behaviour that are "...swift, intelligent and effective. The interventions must protect the interests of the majority while aiming to change the behaviour of those causing difficulty." Steer also states that "...tough love towards children can be appropriate, but a purely punitive approach

is immoral, damaging to society and doomed to failure.” The 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Pupil Guarantee further states that:

- **Pupils know what behaviour is expected of them and the consequences of misbehaving (September 2010)**
- **All pupils will have the opportunity to have a say about standards of behaviour in their school (Spring 2010)**
- **Pupils who need support for their behaviour outside the ordinary classroom have access to high-quality learning opportunities**

The White Paper commits to developing the skills of the workforce in addressing behaviour: “...We will also support teachers and other members of the school workforce in developing the skills needed to tackle underlying learning difficulties that may give rise to behavioural problems. And we will build on the work of many schools over many years which have improved behaviour by involving pupils more in the setting of expectations for behaviour at school.”

Restorative approaches used in schools (RAiS) and used in other settings working with children and young people, have been proven to meet these exacting standards. A restorative approach is a paradigm shift in the language we use to address conflict and inappropriate behaviour. In schools we usually revert to the default mode of: What's happened? Who is to blame? And what do I need to do to punish the wrongdoer? In any incident of inappropriate behaviour we need to establish the facts. It is often said that there are three sides to every story: yours, mine and what really happened. Restorative questioning allows those involved to tell their story, from their perspective and to be listened to in a way which assures no pre-judgement. Restorative language then builds on 'affect' and feeling by asking 'Who has been affected by what has happened and in what way?' This helps to develop self-awareness and awareness of the feelings of others which are two of the key aims of SEAL.

The restorative approach is to challenge those who behave inappropriately to find a solution that is meaningful and meets the needs of those harmed. It is solution focused, personal and more likely to build constructive and empathic bridges, rooting it firmly in SEAL. The restorative approach becomes a 'way of being', once all members of the school community see incidents where harm has occurred as 'teachable moments' to be learnt from and seek opportunities to facilitate conversations in which harm can be repaired, thus empowering all those involved to own the situation, and find the solution.

Once participants have found a way forward, they agree on the best way for the harm to be repaired and what outcome would best meet their needs and ensure that the incident will not be repeated. The agreed actions form an outcome agreement. A restorative intervention is voluntary for all those involved and paradoxically, it is the voluntary nature of the approach that encourages people to participate. The restorative approach is simple to introduce at a whole school level as it is based on using five questions to address incidents of conflict or inappropriate behaviour. When these questions become a natural part of the school lexicon, used consistently they are both effective and easily accessible to all members of the school community. Where restorative approaches have been successfully implemented, all members of the school community are given printed cards with the questions on which are displayed in all areas of the school.

### **The Five Questions**

- **What's happened?**
- **What were you thinking at the time?**
- **Who has been affected?**
- **In what way?**
- **What needs to be done to make things right?**

*“We introduced a restorative approach when our more traditional methods of assertive discipline were not impacting on overall student behaviour. Our core values of trust and respect are more fully reflected within the methodology and practice associated with a restorative approach. The impact on student behaviour and their wellbeing has been dramatic. Adults have also been given a different voice which enables closure to be reached in varying situations. We are still learning our way forward but our efforts in staff and student training offer great hope for the future.” John Matthews, Head Teacher, Brislington Enterprise College, Bristol*

### Case Study 1: Serious Bullying

Michael is a well-motivated and bright Year 10 student who wants to do well at school and go to university. He lives at home with his mum and has had no contact with his father. For months, Michael has been bullied by two Year 11 boys, Paul and Eno. Michael has told his mum about this but has asked her not to contact the school as this would only make things worse. One afternoon, Michael is leaving school. Paul and Eno are waiting for him and shout insults, grabbing his bag and throwing the contents over the road. Michael tries to pick up his belongings but Eno grabs Michael's tie and ties him to the bus stop, while Paul holds his hands behind his back. Both the Year 11 boys take his bus pass and run off leaving Michael struggling to free himself while his bag and books are blown down the road. Michael is eventually freed by a passer-by.

The next morning at school Michael is sent for by his Learning Manager, Mr Swift, and asked if everything is alright. The lady who helped him had contacted the school and returned some of Michael's belongings. Michael is upset but insists that any intervention from school will only make matters worse. At lunchtime that day a group of lads from year 11 push Michael around in the yard and steal his lunch. He is taunted as being 'a grass'. Michael goes home saying he is ill and refuses to go to school. Another serious incident occurs when Michael returns to school the following week. He goes to see Mr Swift again and says that he can't cope with the bullying; he is told that the boys will be spoken to. On the way home Michael is spat on. He goes home and takes 20 paracetamol tablets. His mother arrives from work and Michael tells her what he has done, both are distressed and Michael is taken to hospital. Carol informs the school about what has happened and says that Michael will not be returning there. Mr Swift goes to see Michael. Paul and Eno are excluded for 45 days.

Two weeks later Michael asks his mum if they can go to see Mr Swift. He says that he feels ready to return to school. Michael has always enjoyed school and doesn't want to start over at a new school. In the meeting, Mr Swift asks Michael how he will feel when the two boys return to school. Michael says he will cope. Mr Swift then explains to Michael and Carol about the possibility of a restorative conference where all those involved in the incident are given the opportunity to talk about what has happened and how they have been affected. Then everyone discusses how to repair the harm and find a way forward. All this takes place in a safe environment; everyone is asked the same questions and encouraged to be open and honest. Carol is reluctant, but Michael says that there is no other option.

Mr Swift asks the learning mentor, Diane, a trained restorative approaches facilitator, to run the conference. She briefs those who have agreed to take part about what to expect; namely, Michael, Carol, Paul, Eno, Paul's Dad, Kevin and Mr Swift. At the conference Paul and Eno are asked 'What happened' and 'What they were thinking when they behaved inappropriately to Michael'? Both boys sitting face to face with Michael and Carol are tongue-tied.

Michael is then asked 'what happened?' and 'how have you been affected by what has been happening?' Michael talks about how he has enjoyed school and wants to do well. He says that he keeps his head down and just gets on with things. Michael then says that he doesn't understand why he



has been picked on and he gets angry. He asks both the boys have they ever wanted to die and can they imagine how that feels? He says that the hardest thing for him was knowing that his mum would be wrecked if she found him dead, but that was easier to deal with than the bullying.

There is a stunned silence. Carol then talks about what happened when she heard Michael being sick. She tells how her heart sank when he told her what he had done; the hardest thing for her was realising that Michael was so unhappy and couldn't see any other way out. She felt that she had let him down. Kevin (Paul's Dad) then starts to cry. He said that he could not believe that his son had been involved. He talked about how the family had had to relocate caused through 'bullying' by their neighbours. He had felt that the move had offered a fresh start, but was 'gutted' by what his son had done.

Paul and Eno had become increasingly upset during the conference and when asked 'What do you think you need to do to put things right'? They offered unequivocal apologies. They assured Michael that the bullying would stop and that they would 'look out for him.' Michael asked if Paul and Eno could be allowed to return to school before the 45 days.

### **Outcomes**

Everyone involved in the conference said it had been a positive experience and a better way of dealing with the harm caused. There were no more problems and all three successfully completed their time at school, Michael achieving his aim of going to university.

The case study demonstrates both the power of the restorative conference in changing behaviour and successfully resolving a serious conflict as well as the processes involved in its preparation and organisation. It also shows how the participants at the conference found a resolution to the problem themselves.

## **Implementing Restorative Approaches**

### **Developing a Whole School Restorative Policy**

***'If you are not modelling what you teach, you are teaching something else'***

Drawing on the growing experience of schools engaging with restorative approaches, it is apparent that there are preconditions for successful implementation. These include:

- Readiness by the school leadership team, including governors to understand and support the approach
- Having a vision which is supported by planning and training
- Accessing high quality training, from providers with a proven track record, tailored to the needs of the school
- Engaging all school stakeholders, pupils, parents and staff in understanding what restorative approaches can achieve
- Monitoring how restorative approaches are used and evaluating and celebrating success

The Bristol RAiS Evaluation by King's College, London identified that successful implementation depended upon:

- Senior Managers in all four RAiS schools believing that restorative approaches provided their school with a framework, more direction and momentum to things they were already trying to do
- There were two different approaches to implementing RAiS (i) whole school (ii) pockets of restorative practice
- The quality of restorative approaches was higher in schools using the whole school approach

- The 'triad' model (involving three staff members of different ranks and roles at year head level regularly meeting with the RJ Champion, usually a member of the Senior Leadership Team) was an important part of the implementation process
- Full use of support personnel in the delivery of RAiS could be used to address staff concerns about not having enough time to implement the programmes

*"This is a fantastic Programme which is having significant impact on pupils. Evidence suggests that if young people are excluded and not in full-time education, they are more likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour in the community. Overall this programme means pupils do not miss out on their education which in turn, ensures that they have a much greater chance of success in the future."*

*Cllr David Williams, Deputy of Education, Hammersmith and Fulham, EIC Schools*

### **Case Study 2: Criminal Damage in School**

One afternoon, three boys truanted from lessons and hung around in the staff car park. They used the trees to climb up and then swung down onto the cars. They caused damage to six cars, including denting a bonnet, breaking off windscreen wipers and wing mirrors and stuffing exhausts with rubbish. They filmed themselves on a mobile phone, which was later handed into the school by one of their parents. Rather than opting for legal proceedings or permanent exclusion, the school decided to take a restorative approach. All six teachers agreed to attend a conference. All participants were briefed individually about what to expect at the conference. One of the boys was intensely remorseful and was filled with dread at the thought of facing the teachers he had harmed. He said he would prefer to be permanently excluded than to come to the meeting. There were doubts about whether he would show at the conference in spite of his agreement to attend and his mum's guarantee to get him there. The other boys all agreed to attend. The teachers seemed sceptical about the process and what it could achieve. They all felt angry with the boys and each felt that some sort of financial recompense needed to be made.

On the day there was a surprise in that the third boy's mother decided she did not want him to attend the meeting with the six teachers, the deputy head, the school police officer and the other two boys and their mothers. The boys were able to see how the damage they did to the cars led to people feeling angry and upset. The teachers expressed their anger and disappointment, as well as acknowledging the strength it must have taken for the two boys to face them at the conference. When the boys heard the stories of teachers finding out about their cars and the other people affected, they were clearly very ashamed. During the re-integration stage phase, the teachers were friendly to them and each thanked them again for taking part.

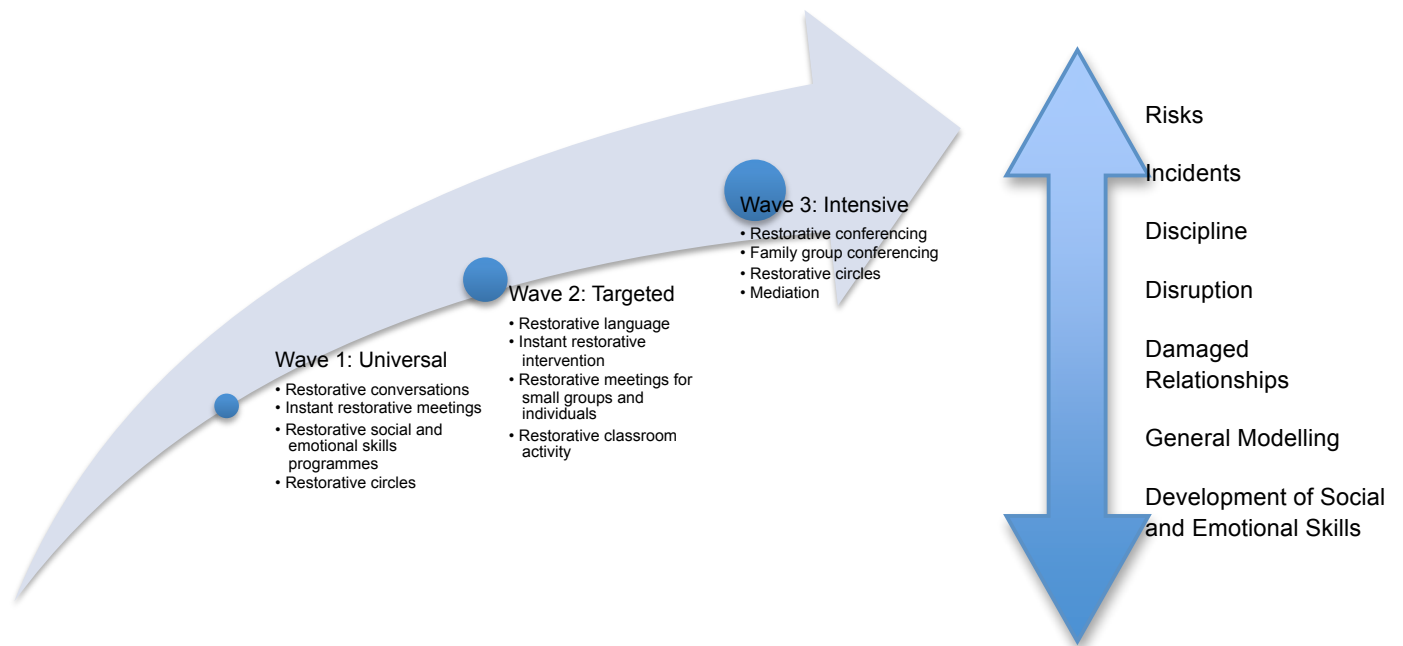
The victims agreed that the boys should make financial reparation for the damage and that this should come from them, not their parents. The outcome agreement said that each boy would repay a third of the cost of the damage. One boy gave his mobile phone to a teacher as part payment, and the other agreed to sell his Xbox. They also agreed to do regular work in the school to pay off some of the costs. Any re-payments would come through the deputy head. Each boy would also write letters to two relatives of the teachers who had been affected by the damage to the cars. One of the boys also agreed to start attending his English lessons and accepting help (his English teacher was one of the victims).

### **Outcomes**

"This conference proved to be a tipping point in our development of restorative practices....largely due to the positive outcomes experienced by all parties from what was a serious incident. The teachers were able to have their say and receive compensation. They were also able to receive not only an

apology but assurances that it would not happen again. Most significantly, they emerged with respect for the students for taking part.” Nigel Manning, Vice Principal at the time the incident.

## The Waves Approach



There are phases that are involved in introducing restorative approaches into any school and these mirror the 'waves' approach used to introduce SEAL.

### Wave 1: Universal Entitlement

Creating a Restorative Ethos: Whole school training, involving all members of staff to increase awareness and promote understanding of the philosophy, psychology and benefits of using restorative approaches.

### Wave 2: Nominated staff and pupils who will have a greater role in delivering restorative approaches

Practical Application: Higher-level training, delivered to a small number of nominated staff who will use the approach to address incidents of low-level disruption or inappropriate behaviour. The staff involved in training at this level may have leadership responsibility in a department or pastoral team. Training will also include peer restorative teams or peer mediation which involves the training of pupils to support their peers in resolving low level issues, usually during lunch and break times. It is essential that the team of peer mediators is allocated a member of staff to support the work they do.

**Wave 3: Key staff, governors and parents with a role in delivering restorative interventions to address more serious incidents of inappropriate behaviour and support reintegration meetings, members of disciplinary committees and parents wishing to take a more proactive role in supporting behaviour and attendance in the school.**

This is the highest level of training which provides the skills and knowledge to facilitate restorative conferences, as well as giving an understanding of the full range of restorative responses. Members of the school community involved in the development of restorative approaches may include members of the senior leadership team and governors with a specific interest in behaviour, attendance, SEAL and supporting emotional health and wellbeing. Among the staff trained to this level will be someone who will take on the role of the restorative approaches champion, usually a member of the senior leadership team. The champion will have responsibility for monitoring the use of restorative approaches across the school, supporting peer mediation, challenging and supporting those having difficulty engaging with restorative approaches and evaluating impact. A restorative school puts good relationships at the heart of all interactions be they child/child, child/adult or adult /adult.

### **Case Study 3: Healing the rift between school and parents**

The school engaged RAiS Bristol to act to facilitate a conference because they acknowledged that the parents thought they had mishandled reports of their son being bullied.

#### **Preparation**

We started with a home visit to the parents, also attended by their social worker. Initially, the son was not present. The parents wanted to talk about specific bullying incidents and how the school had communicated with them, as well as their dissatisfaction with the way the school had followed up the problems. The parents were concerned that their son would retaliate and get into trouble so they wanted extra support put in place to prevent this; they acknowledged that they were only hearing their son's version of events. They were concerned that the school was not contacting them quickly after incidents. Previous meetings with the school had not gone well because the parents not felt their concerns had not been heard.

The father also discussed his own childhood experiences of bullying and how they continued to affect him. He was very concerned that this should not happen to his son. Both parents felt thoroughly fed up with the school and the responses they had had so far.

The boy joined the meeting to talk about specific incidents of bullying and how they had affected him. At the end, the parents thanked us for listening to them and agreed that a 'conference' would help. The parents had initially asked for a number of teachers to be present but in the end decided on the four most important ones – the teacher responsible for special needs, the tutor and two support teachers and the social worker.

#### **The Conference**

The pupil and particularly his parents were able to speak at length about what the experience of school was like for him. The response from school staff was sensitive and supportive, and in the end an agreement was written that incorporated a high level of support from the school.

#### **Outcomes**

The great benefit of using a restorative approach to facilitate a meeting between the school and the parents was that everyone was aware that the facilitator was neutral. Both sides commented

afterwards how helpful it had been for the parents to speak for a long time and ask questions directly to the relevant staff. They saw that the school was willing to put in a lot of time to try to address their son's issues with the school. The Social Worker who attended the conference also made very favourable comments about the experience. After the preparation visit the parents had made very positive comments to him about feeling listened to for the first time and he felt the conference enhanced this. The case study demonstrates that although the conference took a lot of time to prepare and deliver and involved a number of staff, it successfully resolved what had been a long running dispute and created a climate in which the parents, the pupil and the school could properly communicate with each other.

### **Reaffirming Partnerships through Developing Social and Emotional Skills**

In chapter 3 of Steer, April 2009 'Schools Have the Power to Discipline' states that there is "... a widening of the duty on all school governing bodies to consult on the overall principles of school behaviour policy including, crucially, a duty to invite views not only from staff, but from pupils and parents."

Implementing a whole school restorative approach needs to be led by strong management including governing bodies, with a clear vision of what can be achieved. The approach needs to be planned as 'universal non-negotiable' and supports efforts to raise attainment, learning and teaching, emotional health and wellbeing, sitting alongside SEAL. Senior Leadership Teams need to write restorative approaches into their School Improvement Policy, Behaviour/Relationship, Attendance and Anti-Bullying Policies, Community Cohesion Policy and also refer to restorative approaches in the Self Evaluation Form. Once the vision is understood and accepted by stakeholders and the approach is an ongoing part of the planning process, restorative practice can begin.

Successful implementation of restorative approaches demands high quality training; starting with awareness raising and information sessions for everyone, including pupils, parents and carers, all staff and governors. Schools that successfully implement restorative approaches generally have all (or at least the majority) of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) substantially trained in restorative approaches. Whilst there is no single staff development model recognised as being most effective, successful programmes typically provide the following levels of staff training:

- Initial awareness-raising, including reflection on the values and ethos of the school, for all staff is typically half or 1 day equivalent
- Training for staff using Level 1 restorative interventions to address low level conflicts is typically 1 day
- Training for staff using Level 2 restorative conferencing to address serious or more complex incidents is 2 days
- 'Training for trainers' is typically around 2 days and is offered to successful restorative practitioners
- Training for pupils is undertaken during a school day and often used in conjunction with peer mentoring programmes

#### **Case Study 4: A Pupil's Perception**

"I took part in a restorative meeting after I used racist insults to threaten another girl in my year. I was actually really jealous of her because she's clever and fit. I felt really awful when her Dad told me about their lives before they came to live in England and how the whole family had been bullied and frightened for their lives. Yasmin said that when I'd started on her she had nightmares and flashbacks and couldn't sleep. She said her little sister was also afraid because she cried at night. I thought that the meeting would be just me saying sorry and that would be it. But everyone asked me questions and asked how I felt. It was so hard to take and I felt really small. Yasmin even said she liked me. My mum

was well upset and I just wanted to make things right when I realised how much I'd hurt everyone. I didn't realise that saying something I didn't really think about could cause so much hurt. I won't be doing that again and want to make up for what I did." Cheryl, Year 8

### The Restorative Continuum

Restorative approaches employ a variety of methods and practices that will have a part to play in a whole school approach including:

- Restorative ethos building
- Curriculum focus on learning and relationship building
- Restorative language and 'scripts'
- Restorative conversations: affective statements and questions
- Peer restorative approaches
- Parent restorative approaches programmes
- Restorative meetings, restorative reintegration meetings, informal conferences
- Classroom conferences to resolve disputes
- Formal restorative conferences and now with the growing number of Safer Schools Partnerships and police working within schools
- Youth Restorative Disposals: this is a new approach to tackling low-level first-time offences. The police will use the principles of restorative justice, bringing the offender and the victim of the crime together and agreeing steps the young person must take. The aim of this approach, often used by Safer Schools Officers as part of their partnership with a school, is to nip early offending in the bud, avoiding criminalising young people for low level crime and also as a trigger to identify any underlying problems which may lead to future, more serious offending.

*"If you're a bully and you hear somebody's point of view, you start to think differently."*

*Pupils aged 12, RAiS Evaluation*

In his Learning Behaviour Report, April 2009 Steer states: "A clear, consistent approach is essential ... but this needs to be balanced with a recognition that it is the nature of childhood that it is a period when mistakes are made and lessons learned."

### Repairing Relationships

*"As a Head Teacher in a Short Stay School I believed that I already used a restorative approach. During the training, I became increasingly aware that whilst I am 'restorative' I was not facilitating restorative interventions, but using a form of mediation to give advice and prescribe solutions. Restorative Conferencing is altogether different and far more productive." Head Teacher, Short Stay School, Lancashire*

### Case Study 5: Peer Restorative Facilitation

Peter is in Year 6. His school career has been chequered. He is not academic and by Year 3, was reluctant to put any effort into the reading and writing which he found difficult. He was placed on the SEN Register. He is not particularly sporty, artistic or musical and the other children settled upon something in his appearance which they began to make fun of in a concentrated but subtle way, which

made it difficult to stop. He would go home and complain to his mother who would come in shouting and he would then suffer more when the children laughed at him for being a 'mummy's boy'. All of this was followed by a family crisis which resulted in his father leaving the family home amongst gossip and jibes. Peter and his brother began to stay out late around the estate and overturned their mother's authority to the point where they dictated what they would eat; Peter sometimes had 12 chocolate biscuits in his lunch box as well as where they would go and whether or not they would come to school. Peter's attendance became erratic and his school work suffered even more. We were surprised that when we offered peer mediation he put his name forward.

### **Outcomes**

He threw himself wholeheartedly into the training and showed great skill in mediating and observing; giving intuitive feedback. After the training Peter took his responsibility seriously and gradually extended his interests by befriending some of the younger children, especially a child with ASD. He found a way to communicate with the little boy and devised games for him to play. He displayed insight and patience. When we praised Peter and told him he had a natural talent for counselling he was delighted. We then explained that to have a career in counselling he would need better literacy and numeracy skills and since then he has been reading assiduously and putting renewed effort into all of his work.

Whilst the case study is about peer mentoring, the restorative theme is very powerful and moving and demonstrates yet again how young people respond when treated with respect.

## **Peer Restorative Work**

Peer restorative work, sometimes known as peer mediation, empowers young people and provides them with negotiation and conflict resolution skills which they use in all aspects of their lives. Working with young people in this way enhances their social skills and emotional literacy. Peer restorative work encourages young people to use restorative questions and language to address harm and conflict and also to repair relationships. Peer restorative work has an impact on the school at an individual, class, unstructured time and whole school level. In some areas this development has been so powerful that parents have asked for training in restorative work. Both peer restorative work and staff using restorative interventions have an impact on the quality of learning and teaching across the school.

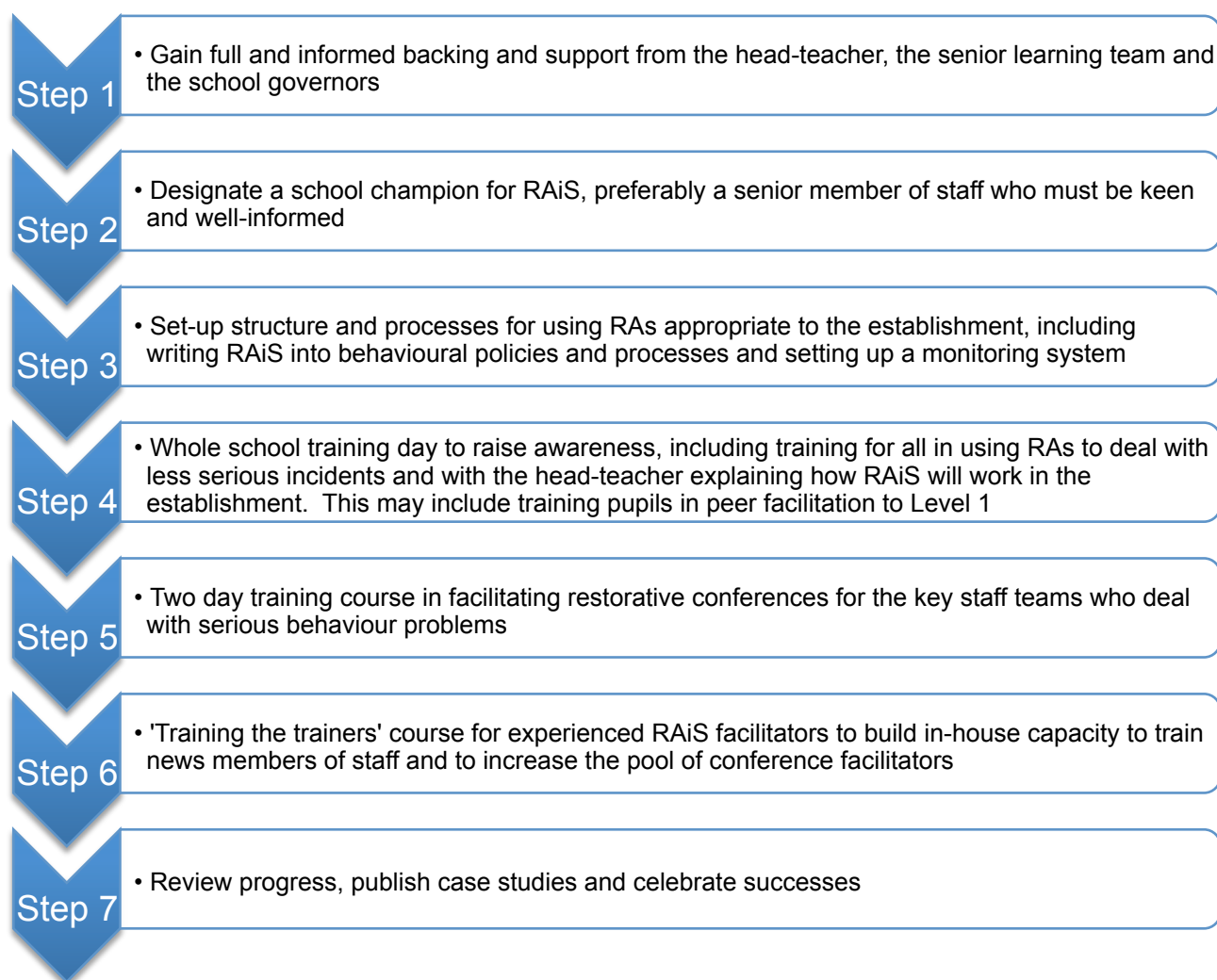
## **The Restorative Champion**

The Restorative Champions or lead teachers monitor the use of restorative work across the school, identifying training needs and establishing support networks for staff running restorative conferences and high level interventions. When necessary, Restorative Champions will challenge staff who find using restorative approaches difficult who work in less proactive, often more sanction driven ways. They also have the responsibility for rolling out peer restorative training.

Schools that currently work to a 'quasi-judicial' model of finding out who is to blame and be punished, often by exclusion or detention find that the unresolved tension between the individuals involved often prevents young people from successfully reintegrating into the life of the school, even after fulfilling the school's sanctions. Whenever there is inappropriate behaviour, inevitably someone is harmed and relationships are damaged. Unless the relationships are healed, the effect of the behaviour and tensions between those involved will remain unresolved. This makes reintegration difficult for everyone. Many schools find that after using a restorative approach as default mode of working there is less need for high level conferencing as there is less conflict and inappropriate behaviour. All schools working in this way would strongly agree that quality training is essential to engage the school community.

The three levels of training and implementation in the waves approach can be introduced in any order, perhaps starting with the high level training for a few members of staff who can then champion the approach and establish 'buy-in' from others by demonstrating the effectiveness. However, it is crucial that all three levels are implemented for the approach to be successful across the whole school community. It is the role of the Restorative Champion to ensure this happens.

### Seven Steps to Successfully Implementing RAiS



#### Case Study 6: Classroom Conflict

Mary teaches Modern Languages in a large inner city secondary school. She has been teaching for 3 years and enjoys her role. Mary has positive relationships with many pupils, however she is finding her Year 9, set 4 French really challenging and now coming towards the end of the spring term she knows that the class has made little progress.

Mary feels that within the class there are some young people who really want to learn but are intimidated by three others. Mary is also feeling stressed and dreads the lessons with the group, particularly the one directly after lunch on Wednesdays. When she discusses the class with colleagues



she doesn't feel supported and is advised by some staff not to worry as the class is 'only set 4, they won't take Modern Languages as an option anyway.' Mary feels this is unfair.

On the penultimate Wednesday of the spring term Mary goes to the lesson. She has spent much of the previous evening preparing the lesson, but is still feeling apprehensive. She begins the lesson and the 'usual suspects' arrive late, upsetting the lesson starter. Mary asks the three pupils to sit down and get out their books; they inform her that they haven't got them. Kim says that she has left her bag in the dining hall and goes to leave the room. Mary refuses her permission and asks Kim to sit back down. Kim says she won't and that 'Miss always picks on her and that the lesson is crap.' Stuart and Josh, the two others who were late join in.

Mary becomes upset and begins to shout at the class to be quiet; she tells the group that she has spent a lot of time preparing the lesson and that there are exams after Easter. After a few minutes the class is in uproar; some pupils are yelling at others to shut up and the three 'late comers' are enjoying the havoc. Mary cannot regain control and sends the Teaching Assistant for a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Mr Wilson, the Assistant Head arrives and asks the class to settle. Mary asks him to remove Kim, Stuart and Josh, as they have disrupted the learning.

Mary gets through the rest of the lesson and then goes to the staff room where she breaks down. Mr Wilson sends for Mary and she tells him about how the lesson has gone all year. She acknowledges that she has a poor relationship with class, but doesn't want it to be like this. Mr Wilson tells Mary that he has spoken to the three pupils he removed from the lesson and believes that they are sorry for their behaviour; Mary is doubtful about this as their poor attitude has been ongoing for the year. She doesn't want the pupils to return and asks if they could be moved to a different set.

Mr Wilson asks Mary to think about what this would achieve for her, the class and the three pupils. Mary says that she would feel 'a failure' but at least the rest of the class could then learn. She would like the pupils to be part of the class, but doesn't feel that they respect her and she is nervous of them. Mr Wilson then suggests the possibility of a restorative class meeting. After discussing how this would work, Mary agrees. Mary also asks can her friend Julie attend to give her support. The 'Class Conference' is held the following Wednesday during the normal lesson time, facilitated by Mr Wilson who sits everyone in a circle and begins by establishing the ground rules with the group. Then using a talking piece and passing it in a circle he asks the class:  
'What happens in this lesson that you enjoy?'  
'What is the lesson like when those positive things are happening and how do you feel?'  
'Are there times when the learning isn't good? What is happening then?'  
'How do you feel when things aren't going so well?'

Most of the class has joined in up to this point and responded well. Kim has refused to speak, passing on her turn, but it is obvious she is listening. Two of the pupils talk about how upset they are when things don't go well and how they feel afraid sometimes 'when things kick off'. Mary also says that she really likes the class, but feels upset and frustrated when some pupils seem to want to wreck things.

At this point Julie, Mary's friend talks about how much Mary wants to teach and how she rarely hears Mary say anything unpleasant about this class. Julie tells Kim and Josh that Mary often 'sticks up for you two in front of other members of staff.' Josh now admits to his poor behaviour and says that he hasn't meant to upset Miss and likes her. Mary thanks him and says that she feels sad and doubts her own ability as a teacher when things don't go well. Kim has still said nothing. After everyone has had a chance to speak Mr Wilson asks if anyone has anything else to say. He then asks: 'As a class what do we need to agree to for good learning to take place from now on?' At this point, Kim says that she wants to move to another set and that should solve the problem. Mary responds by asking her to stay.

## Outcomes

After this restorative class meeting Kim stayed in the class and there was a great change in behaviour. Mary and Kim identified some goals for their future learning journey. The atmosphere was more positive and fun. The case study demonstrates the power of using a restorative approach to help teachers regain the control and respect of difficult class groups.

## Perception and Reality

Some teachers perceive the use of restorative approaches to be too time consuming and query its effectiveness in addressing the needs of those harmed by inappropriate and offensive behaviour. In reality, restorative approaches have been shown to save time by resolving long running conflicts and recurring incidents. The experience of those taking part in conferences overwhelmingly shows that their needs have been met and the wrongdoer has been held to account. In the Youth Justice Board National Evaluation of Restorative Justice in Schools Programme in 2005, 92% of interventions resulted in the successful completion of outcome agreements between parties; 89% of participants reported a high degree of satisfaction and 93% of those harmed reported that they thought the process was 'fair' and that justice had been done.

*"I think it's better because like some cases people are just like seen as bullies and victims and that, but not actually like knowing the actual story, so it kind of clears that up." Pupil aged 15, RAiS Evaluation 2009*

*"Like two boys the other day, year 7s, one's small, and one was quite a big lad, so you know, straightaway I think, well there's a little boy and he's crying and all the rest of it. So straightaway I felt sorry for him, because I thought Jake's, picking on him, and bullying him. But in the discussion before the meeting Jake actually said, "But he's been calling me fatty". So straightaway you think I'm glad I've now got them together because my initial reaction was that the little boy was being bullied." Support Worker RAiS Evaluation 2009*

## Restorative approaches take up too much time

*"Since we started to use restorative approaches in our school the number of behaviour incidents has more than halved in a year. 'Exits' from classrooms are down from 518 to 236 and the staff feel happier about using the restorative script to address issues. We don't have traditional detentions anymore and use restorative meetings to repair the relationships which in the past would have remained uneasy. RA is written into our Behaviour Plan and has had a huge impact since being introduced at a whole school level. We have 10 staff trained to 'conference facilitator' level, but they don't do much conferencing now; it is mostly used at a conversational level by most staff to nip incidents in the bud." Deputy Head Teacher at a Liverpool High School*

## Restorative approaches are 'pink and fluffy' and fail to hold the wrongdoer accountable

Taking part in a restorative conference is not an easy option for the people who have caused the harm and many say it is easier to be excluded. Facing up to the harm they have caused is one of the drivers for changing behaviour and repairing relationships.

### **Case study 7: Attendance a family problem resolved**

Ben in Year 4 has been refusing to attend school, his attendance rate being of 52%. Mum, Donna has tried everything, working closely with the school to keep Ben in school, but with little success. The school has recently adopted a restorative ethos and the Deputy Head, Kay feels that a restorative meeting with Ben, Donna, Paula (the attendance support worker) and Gail (the Learning Mentor) would be a possible way forward. Donna agrees to take part and Ben says that he will go along. Gail also suggests inviting a peer restorative 'buddy', Anthony to try to encourage Ben to attend more regularly.

Everyone attends the meeting and Anthony begins by telling Ben how he had difficulty attending school, but that he now goes every day because he was helped by a peer mediator. He says that he now wants to help Ben. Anthony then leaves the meeting. Kay facilitates the meeting and asks Ben about school and about what he enjoys when he is there. She also asks Ben about what happens at home when he is there.

Donna then tells Ben about how she feels when he won't go to school and asks him if there is a reason he won't go to school. Ben says that he is afraid that Donna won't be safe if he goes to school and that she won't collect him at the end of the day. There is a lot of discussion around this and it is agreed that Donna will contact Ben during school, everyday for a week if he returns to school. It is also agreed that Anthony will 'buddy up' with Ben until he feels happier in the playground. At the end of the week Gail will meet with Ben and Donna to see how things are going.

At the end of the first week Ben has been to school every day. He asks Donna not to contact him during the day as it interrupts his playtime. By the end of the term Ben's attendance had increased to 91%. Everyone involved felt that this was a positive experience which led to a greater understanding of the situation and the needs of all. The school has adopted this approach for all persistent absence issues and this year attendance was graded as 'good' by OfSTED for the first time. The case shows how restorative approaches can help unscramble misunderstandings between pupils and their parents that can impact so significantly on attendance and attainment.

### **Restorative approaches: Why Not?**

Many teachers comment on the 'safety' of the approach and find that using the restorative approaches script stops them from reverting to more reactive language and responses. It also helps to reconnect those involved in an incident. In short, the adoption of restorative approaches has been shown to transform conflict situations and re-engage children and young people in education.

*"After the meeting I realised that I would change. I just thought bad things are not really fun. In the school, I thought everyone would like me better. I'd be respected if I was kinder and everyone would appreciate me more". Pupil aged 12, RAiS Evaluation 2009*

### **Restorative approaches in schools: 'Does it work?'**

#### **The Evidence**

A restorative approach, introduced as a whole school policy has been widely evidenced as having major impact on the learning and teaching of the school community, forging more respectful and productive relationships and successfully addressing both behaviour and attendance issues. As a behaviour intervention tool restorative approaches are one of the most evaluated and respected, internationally, melding with Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and Solution focused work.

In February 2009 the evaluation of the impact of the restorative approaches in Schools (RAiS) project in Bristol was completed by Layla Skinnis, Natasha Du Rose and Mike Hough from The Institute of

Criminal Policy Research (ICPR), King's College London. The findings summarised below, show that restorative approaches have a significant part to play in supporting socially and emotionally literate schools where all members of the community feel safe, enjoy and achieve, are nurtured and make a positive contribution.

### **Impact on Educational Attainment**

The case studies evidenced in this guidance document highlight the fact that RAs impacts on educational attainment. Young people involved in incidents that may have led to them being absent from school or excluded from school have successfully reintegrated. Some felt that restorative approaches were likely to improve attainment by increasing pupils' capacity for learning and their ability to concentrate and because they contributed to a less fractured and calmer learning environment.

### **Climate for Learning**

Restorative approaches are:

- Likely to have the biggest impact on the climate for learning in schools employing a whole-school approach to implantation
- Built on and consolidated existing practices, but some teachers are resistant to changes such as ending conventional forms of punishment because they believed it would take away their authority
- Impacted on the climate for learning because they were:
  - Perceived as better than conventional forms of punishment
  - Perceived as fairer
  - Improved communication and relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils.
  - Partly contributed to a better atmosphere in school
  - Improved emotional literacy of staff, but particularly pupils (e.g. their ability to empathise and to take responsibility for their actions)
  - Improved well-being for staff and pupils

*"I think the staff that do restorative justice definitely get that better rapport with students. The students, perhaps I'm not saying respect them more, but they respond in a more appropriate manner, and perhaps take on board your feelings as well because you are prepared to take on board theirs and listen to them." Head of Year, RAiS Evaluation 2009*

### **Impact on Attendance Rates**

*"Introducing RAiS has supported the college in improving attendance and reducing fixed term exclusions. The college completed 95 conferences from April 07 and July 08. Attendance for the academic year 2007-2008 was 91.2% and our records show a 57.4% decrease in the number of fixed term exclusions compared to the previous academic year." Lynette Newman, Deputy Head, Brislington Enterprise College and RAiS Champion*

*"They can bring people together so they can understand why this is happening to them." Pupil aged 14, RAiS Evaluation 2009*

*"It kind of takes it away from all the shouting and screaming, and trying to sort things out, where you can kind of get everyone to sit down calmly, and kind of talk things over, and they can maybe learn*

*skills and that, and then take that home with them as well in their families.” Support Worker, RAiS Evaluation 2009*

### **The Bristol RAiS Evaluation**

- Staff and pupils reported that restorative approaches helped increase the attendance rate because the approach reduced the likelihood of conflicts and victimisation that may have, otherwise, kept pupils at home
- The quantitative analysis confirmed staff and pupils perceptions about the benefits of restorative approaches for attendance rates
- Analysis of mean attendance rates between high, low and non-RA schools and between 2005/6 and 2007/8 showed that attendance rates were significantly higher in RAiS schools compared to non-RAiS schools
- The regression analysis confirmed this picture. It showed that attendance rates in 2007/8 were significantly predicted by a number of factors, including the type of school (High or low restorative approaches)
- We can conclude that RAiS offers a promising way of increasing attendance rates

### **Impact on fixed-term exclusions**

*“If you exclude a child for two days, they’ll take more just to spite you. By the time they come back the world’s moved on, you know. Their learning was fractured anyway, a bit disjointed, so exclusion doesn’t help. And they will take out that exclusion on someone when they return. And we need to repair those relationships quickly, RJ provides us with that vehicle.” RJ Champion, RAiS Evaluation 2009*

- There were reductions in the absolute numbers of fixed-term exclusions in the RAiS schools. This reduction was noted by staff in all four RAiS schools
- Staff believed that restorative approaches impacted on fixed-term exclusions either directly or indirectly
- However, it is likely that restorative approaches were contributing to reductions in fixed-term exclusions, particularly in the schools where conferences were routinely and explicitly used as an alternative
- Given that conferences were used for pupils with significantly higher levels of fixed-term exclusions, we tentatively conclude that restorative approaches have considerable promise in reducing fixed-term exclusions in the longer-term

### **Other Experience of Restorative Approaches**

Many schools witnessed the impact of restorative approaches on reducing both fixed-term and permanent exclusions. In Sefton in Merseyside schools began to implement RA through the Behaviour Improvement Project, in partnership with the Sefton Centre for Restorative Practices and saw a 70% reduction in permanent exclusions and a 60% reduction in fixed-term exclusions in just 18 months.

#### **Case Study 8: Averting an Exclusion**

An incident between two Year 10 girls had led to one of them being excluded from school and the other threatening to press charges for assault. The school was keen for it to be dealt with in a restorative way and asked Bristol RAiS to facilitate.

The first step was to contact the victim, Harriet to find out if she was going to proceed with police charges and to let her know that a restorative conference was available. Initially she was angry and wanted to go down the route of police involvement. Next day she contacted us saying that she had changed her mind as she wanted to be able to talk to the other girl about what had happened and to see if they could be friends again.

We then met with the other girl, Julie, to find out if she wanted to attend a conference. It quickly became apparent that she regretted her actions – she had hit Harriet in the face, thinking that she had been spreading rumours about her. Julie had been excluded from school and felt she could not return until the situation was resolved. She expressed regret that she had not believed Harriet when she denied saying anything about her, as their friendship had been badly damaged and Julie was missing her.

### **The Conference**

Before the conference the two girls had spoken to each other on MSN and Julie had offered an apology. Before they even got into the room they hugged each other! After this the conference was something of a formality. A member of the school staff also attended and added a new perspective on how what had happened had affected the school but other than that the script just provided a way for the two girls to talk about what had happened and how they felt about it. By this stage all the anger had gone so this was an open and easy discussion.

### **Outcomes**

At the ‘implications for the future’ stage, the girls were asked if they would like some time alone to discuss this. After a few minutes the meeting resumed to hear if the girls had found a way forward. Both girls said they were satisfied with the verbal agreement that they had made, which included resuming their friendship.

## **Working the Field**

Schools working in Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships have adopted this approach to support ‘Managed Transfers’ by using conferences either to help a pupil start at a new school or re-integrate the pupil after a period of enforced absence. Restorative approaches have been used to address issues between schools and also to support staff relationships. RA has also been adopted as the basis on which successful Day 6 provision for excluded pupils is established and is an integral part of the reintegration process.

Another successful application of restorative approaches relates to Behaviour and Attendance partnerships and in individual schools is through the work of Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs.) In a SSP, a designated police officer works with a school to support the many and varying aspects of Behaviour and Attendance. In many SSPs, restorative approaches have become the underpinning ethos that supports this work and is evidenced as having substantial impact.

## **The Way Forward**

A restorative approach is “swift, intelligent and effective” and can be applied by all members of the school community within each person’s sphere of influence. It is not a panacea for all problems within schools, but when thoughtfully and correctly implemented, it has been proven to enhance the school

environment, remove barriers to learning and attendance and develop more resilient, self regulating and empathic communities.

### **Restorative Solutions Training**

- Level 1      Basic Awareness of Restorative Practice and use of 'Instant restorative approaches. (Can be applied to Whole School).
  - Level 1P     Level 1 for pupils
  - Level 2      Preparation and Restorative Conferencing (For key staff involved in handling serious disputes and behaviour problems)
  - Level 3      Refresher and Specialist Approaches
  - Level 4      One to One Practice Evaluation
  - Level 5      Training the Trainers Course (For training school staff as restorative approaches trainers thereby building the RA capacity of a school or group of schools)
  - Seminar      Awareness for Governors and Senior Managers
- Call Down Conferencing and Consultancy

### **About Restorative Solutions CIC**

Restorative Solutions work on a not-for-profit basis. Our mission is to develop and promote the use of restorative approaches as an effective method in dealing with conflicts and disputes in schools, neighbourhoods and other communities. We work directly with police sources and other agencies tackling neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour, with Prolific and Persistent Offenders and with YOTS, Social Housing Officers and Young Offender Institutions.

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## Further Information

### Websites

Restorative Solutions CIC: [www.restorativesolutions.org.uk](http://www.restorativesolutions.org.uk)

Department for Children, Schools and Families: [www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)

International Institute for Restorative Practices: [www.iirp.org.uk](http://www.iirp.org.uk)

Restorative Justice Consortium: [www.restorativejustice.org.uk](http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk)

Youth Justice Board: [www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)

Restorative Practices International: [www.rpiassociation.com](http://www.rpiassociation.com)

Transforming Conflict: [www.transformingconflict.org](http://www.transformingconflict.org)

### Books and Guides

Lewisham Action on Mediation Project: Restoring the Balance Books 1 and 2  
*LAMP, 020 8690 0760*

Hopkins, B (2004): Just Schools, A Whole School Approach  
*Jessica Kingsley Publishers, available from Incentive Plus*

Wachtel, T et al (2009) / IIRP: The Restorative Practices Handbook  
*Available from [iirp.org.uk](http://iirp.org.uk)*

UN: Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes  
*Available from United Nations Publications*

Scottish Assembly: Restorative Practices in Three Scottish Councils  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2007/08](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2007/08)

Zehr, H (2002): The Little Book of Restorative Justice  
*Good Books Publishing Incorporated*

Thorsborne, M and Vinegard, D (2004): Restorative Practices in Schools  
*Available from Incentive Plus Publishing*





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