RAiS

Restorative Approaches in Schools

Key Findings of the Bristol RAiS Evaluation

Report Commissioned by Restorative Solutions CIC

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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 communities. We work directly with police forces 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.

Overview of RAiS

"...To enable learning to take place, preventative action is most effective; but when this fails, schools must have clear, firm and intelligent strategies in place to help pupils manage their behaviour." Sir Alan Steer, 2009

Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS) is a programme which provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively tackle conflict and behavioral problems. The aim of employing restorative approaches is to avoid situations in which schools are obliged to resort to more extreme measures of behaviour management such as exclusion by empowering teachers, parents and pupils to tackle problems at grass-roots level. A restorative approach, introduced as a whole school policy, has been widely evidenced as having a major impact on the learning and teaching of the school community, forging more respectful and productive relationships and successfully addressing behaviour and attendance issues.

The Bristol RAiS Project

The Bristol RAiS project was established in partnership with the Bristol Children and Young Peoples' Service and Safer Bristol. RAiS set out to determine whether permanent and fixed-term exclusions could be reduced by using restorative approaches to deal with conflicts caused by abusive behaviour, fighting, bullying and poor attendance. It was also anticipated that the methods could be used in handling disputes between schools and parents.

The end objective of RAiS is to assist and support pupils in completing their education and for schools to meet the ideals of SEAL. It assists pupils in achieving the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, whilst supporting their well-being and promoting community cohesion. RAiS has a key role therefore in improving the learning and teaching environment and raising attainment of pupils in school by keeping them safe, resolving disputes and contributing to improved behaviour and attendance. All of these elements form core parts of the 'Self Evaluation' process for schools. RAiS is currently working in eight of the eighteen secondary schools in Bristol.

Supported by

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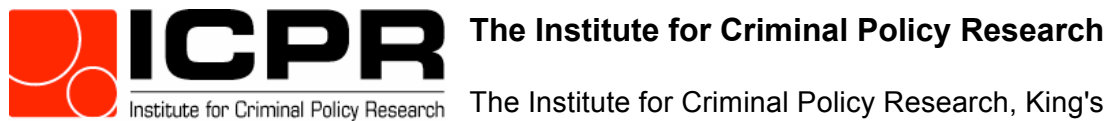
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Executive Summary
Bristol RAiS Research Findings

Implementation

- Senior Managers in all four RAiS schools thought that restorative approaches (RAs) provided their school with a framework, more direction and gave momentum to things they were already trying to do.
- There were two different approaches to implementing RAiS (i) whole-school (ii) pockets of RAs.
- The quality of RAs was higher in schools using the whole-school approach in that there was greater adherence to the programme.
- The 'triad' model (involving three staff members of different ranks and roles, regularly meeting with the Champion) was an important part of the implementation process.
- Full use of support staff in the delivery of RAiS could be used to address staff concerns about not having enough time to implement the programme.
- The frequency of use of conferences varied significantly between schools depending on the school vision for use of RAs
- Across all schools, conferences were used equally for boys and girls and mostly to deal with fights. There was little use of conferences for re-integration after exclusion.

Climate for learning

- RAs are likely to have the biggest impact on the climate for learning in schools employing a whole-school approach to implementation.
- RAs built on and consolidated existing practices, but staff could be resistant to changes to the school climate, such as the end of conventional forms of punishment, because they believed it would take away their power and authority.
- RAs impacted on the climate for learning because:
- i. They were perceived as better than conventional forms of punishment.
- ii. They were perceived as fairer.
- iii. They improved communication and relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils.
- iv. They partly contributed to a better atmosphere in school.

- v. Improved emotional literacy of staff, but particularly pupils (e.g. their ability to empathise and to take responsibility for their actions)
- vi. Improved well-being for staff and pupils (e.g. greater confidence).

Impact on attendance rates

- Staff and pupils reported that RAs helped increase the attendance rate because the reduced the likelihood of conflicts and victimization that may have, otherwise, kept pupils at home.
- The quantitative analysis confirmed staff and pupils perceptions about the benefits of RAiS for attendance rates.
- Analysis of mean attendance rates between high, low and non-RAiS 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 RAiS).
- Conference participation also significantly predicted attendance rates in 2007/8, but in the opposite direction to what was expected; conference participation reduced rather than increased the attendance rate. This may have been because the pupils most likely to participate in conferences tended in any case to have lower attendance rates than others, although this was not significantly so.
- We can conclude that RAiS offers a promising way of increasing the attendance rate.

Impact on fixed-term exclusions

- There were reductions in the absolute numbers of fixed-term exclusions in the RAiS and non-RAiS schools. This reduction was noted by staff in all four RAiS schools.
- Staff believed that RAs impacted on fixed-term exclusions either (i) directly or (ii) indirectly.
- Difficulties with the local authority data and limitations to the quantitative analysis meant that we could not detect a discernible impact from RAiS on the fixed-term exclusion rate. The YJB (2004) reached a similar conclusion in their research.

- However, it is likely that RAiS was a contributing factor to reductions in fixed-term exclusions, particularly in the schools where conferences were routinely and explicitly used as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions.
- Given that conferences were used for pupils with significantly higher levels of fixed-term exclusions, we tentatively conclude that RAiS has promise in reducing fixed-term exclusions in the longer-term.

Impact on educational attainment

- The analysis of the educational attainment data was limited because Key-Stage 3 data were not available for 2007/8. Based on Key-Stage 4 educational data alone, RAiS did not have a discernible impact on GCSE performance. However, this may simply reflect the limitations of the data.
- Staff were also hesitant to conclude that RAs impacted on individual or whole-school attainment, saying that it was too early to say.
- However, some felt that RAs 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.

Recommendations

1. The whole-school approach to implementation employed by staff in School 2 contributed to higher quality RAs in that staff delivered the programme in the way that it was intended. For this reason, we recommend that schools implement RAs using a whole-school approach
2. The difficulties identified in the report, in relation to the dilution and distortion of the programme, particularly in schools that did not take a whole-school approach to implementation, suggest that there needs to be a continuous dialogue between staff and the programme co-ordinators, as well as refresher training, time permitting, to ensure that the programme is delivered in the way it is intended.
3. The resistance to RAs reported by pupils and staff in all of the schools, even those implementing RAs on a whole-school basis, suggests that this could be a challenge for the programme in the longer-term. Little data was collected from this group of disengaged pupils or resistant staff, which would have enabled

recommendations. However, we recommend that more is done to understand these perspectives so that RAs can be implemented on a truly whole-school basis.

4. The continuing support for traditional sanctions, such as exclusions, amongst staff and pupils suggests a graduated response, using RAs initially, with formal sanctions as a measure of last resort, and for serious incidents.
5. RAiS showed promise in terms of tackling school exclusions, particularly, when conferences were routinely and directly used as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions. This suggests that teachers require greater encouragement to routinely use conferences as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions.
6. The importance of the routine monitoring data to the evaluation, particularly the information about the conferences held in each of the schools suggests that this is a vital and ongoing part of the programme. We recommend that staff in schools remain in regular contact with those implementing the programme and continue to supply regular updates about conferences held in the schools.
7. This evaluation provides a snap-shot of RAs after only two years of implementation. We recommend further research to examine whether any positive outcomes are maintained in the longer-term, as well as an assessment of the impacts of RAs in any other schools that have begun to implement the programme.
8. It would also be of interest to explore in more detail, perhaps using a survey, aspects of the climate for learning such as improvements to emotional literacy and well-being, and perceptions of legitimacy. This might indicate other mechanisms by which RAs make an impact on key outcome variables.
9. Given that the programme that we evaluated was implemented entirely in schools in one area of Bristol, it is difficult to say whether if it were rolled-out to other areas in Bristol or to other schools in other areas of the country it would achieve the same impact. We recommend that caution is exercised in how this programme is rolled-out in the future, paying attention to the contextual similarities and differences between the schools in this one area of Bristol and any new schools.

Overview of Research Findings

Introduction

The basic tenets of restorative justice are that the response to harm should be to put right the harm; it emphasizes the responsibility and accountability of offenders to make amends for their actions; it focuses on providing support to the victims and aims to reintegrate the victim and offender in their communities. In the case of young people in schools, the idea is that restorative approaches (RAs) offer an effective alternative to the use of traditional discipline (Malouf 1998, Krygier 1997, Cox 1995) enabling us to invest in the development of social capital in our schools (Morrison et al. 2005) as well as prevent crime. We use the term RAs to convey that the concept of restorative justice is not wholly applicable to schools since it emerged in criminal justice settings and because the concepts of victims and offenders are not appropriate. Therefore, we use the terms harmers and harmed.

In this evaluation, we examined how RAs were implemented in four schools in one area of Bristol, as well as how and whether these RAs impacted on the climate for learning, attendance, fixed-term exclusions and educational attainment. These RAs were implemented at staggered intervals as part of the programme, Restorative approaches in Schools (RAiS), which began in April 2007. The programme was set up by the community interest company, Restorative Solutions, with funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Trust and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, who also funded this independent evaluation. RAiS was also supported by Safer Bristol, Bristol Children and Young People's Service and Reliance Taskforce Management.

The research employed two research strategies to explore the implementation and impact of RAiS from different angles:

In total, thirty-four interviews were conducted with staff and twenty-six with pupils. These provided a snap-shot, at one point in time, of the implementation process and the impact on the climate for learning, as well as providing insights into how RAs impacted on attendance, exclusions and attainment. This data was thematically analysed.

Local authority data from 2005/6, prior to the implementation of RAiS, were used as a base-line against which to compare pupils' attendance, exclusions and attainment in 2007/8, that is, after the implementation of RAiS. The performance of pupils at the RAiS schools was also compared with the performance of pupils at two other schools in the same area of Bristol that had declined to participate in RAiS. In addition, the performance of pupils participating in conferences was compared with the performance of those that did not. The data were analysed using regression analysis, which is based on correlations, meaning that the data cannot be interpreted as proof of causal relationships.

Where possible, we integrated these two sets of data and explained any contradictory findings.

Implementation

Bristol was chosen for the location of RAiS as school exclusions are high and on this criterion the Local Authority was one of the worst performing ones in England & Wales. In addition, the six schools selected for the initiative were all drawn from one segment of Bristol, selected because of its high levels of deprivation. All six schools approached had significant issues with behaviour, attendance and attainment and were making extensive use of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. However, only four of the six, Schools 1 to 4, agreed to implement RAiS. These six schools were broadly similar in terms of contextual variables such as the size of the school, free-school meal eligibility, special educational needs, pupils in care and ethnic and gender composition.

In each of the RAiS schools, staff were trained to level 1 and/or 2. In level 1 training, staff spent one day learning about RAs and shown how to use basic (instant) restorative skills. In Level 2 training, staff spent two days learning how to convene restorative conferences. In each school, all staff received Level 1 training and approximately 40 staff across all the schools also received Level 2 training. In all schools, Level 2 training was provided to those who expressed an interest in it. This tended to include at least one Senior Manager, an RA Champion, Heads of Year and Support Staff.

There were varying degrees of participation in the programme indicated by the approach taken to implementation and the number of conferences convened. We have identified two approaches to implementing RAiS: (i) whole-school where RAs were incorporated into policies and procedures and used throughout the school (ii) pockets of RAs where RAs were used in different parts of the school, for example, in particular year-groups or classes. Only School 2 employed a whole-school approach, whereas the rest implemented RAs in pockets. The advantages of the whole-school approaches were that staff had maximum access to training and support and also that the programme was less likely to be diluted, distorted or forgotten. However, the pace of change created dissatisfaction and resistance amongst staff, although this was not insurmountable. By contrast, implementing RAs in pockets meant that there was greater scope for staff to adjust to the changes and that they were less likely to feel that policies had been imposed on them. But the cost was that staff lost the opportunity to fully integrate RAs into policies and procedures and traditional sanctions continued alongside the new RAs.

> ### The 'whole-school approach': the perspective of senior staff
>
> Brislington Enterprise College introduced the RAiS whole school approach into the school because traditional methods of assertive discipline were not impacting on overall student behaviour. The level, type and amount of training were sufficient for RAiS to be delivered as a self-sustaining, coherent package, as a fundamental part of the school behaviour policy.
>
> John Matthews, Head Teacher, said: "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 that 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".
>
> "Introducing RAiS has supported the college in improving attendance and reducing fixed term exclusions", said Lynette Newman, Deputy Head and RAiS Champion. "The college completed 95 conferences between from April 07 and July 08. Attendance for the academic year 2007-2008 was 91 % and our records show a 57 % decrease in the number of fixed term exclusions compared to the previous academic year".
>
> Source: Restorative Solutions

In terms of the conferences convened since the programmes began in each of the schools, Schools 1 and 2 held a high number of conferences (6.1 and 9.9 per month respectively), whereas Schools 3 and 4 held a low number (2.5 and 2.7 per month respectively). Across all schools conferences were used equally for boys and girls except in School 3 where they were used more for girls and in School 2 where they were used more for boys. Across all schools the main reason that conferences were convened was to deal with fights, except in School 3 where they were used mainly to deal with disagreements and arguments. There was little evidence of conferences being used to re-integrate pupils, after exclusion.

Other implementation issues revolved around staff feeling short of time to implement the RAs in their day-to-day practices, as this support worker explained:

> There was a lot of cynicism, because teachers are a bit like…"Oh when are we supposed to find time to do this?" And I think a lot of them sort of panicked and thought, oh, we're going to be expected to be having these conferences, and things. Support Worker 2, School 4.

However, one of the solutions could be to make greater use of support workers, for example, to convene conferences. In addition, the triad model used in School 2 (involving a regular meeting between the triad of a Support Assistant, Learning Mentor and a Head of Year, and the RA Champion) might help resolve implementation issues, as they arise. Staff also suggested that greater pupil involvement would increase awareness of RAs. Staff made various suggestions about how this could occur in their school or in lessons: It could be like a dialogue day session where the students have an hour with someone, and they'd maybe do a bit of a role play. It could also be integrated into some of their lessons. Head of Year, School 3.

> They could have it as part of their curriculum. It could be integrated

into their Personal and Social Education lessons. Teacher 2, School 1.

> We could do that sort of scenario in drama lessons. These are the stages you need to go through when you try and resolve issues that are going on. Teacher 3, School 4.

In addition, staff suggested that ongoing training for staff would help prevent the dilution of the programme.

The climate for learning

We examined the perceptions of the impact of RAiS on the climate for learning, that is, on the culture and ethos of the schools. It is likely that the benefits of RAiS for the climate are likely to be more apparent in schools that have implemented the programme using a whole-school approach. Nevertheless there were still improvements in schools which had only implemented RAiS in pockets. RAs built on and consolidated existing practices (e.g. in relation to communication), as this interviewee explained:

> Years ago we did this sort of thing … we'd just sit down, and we'd just say, what have you got to say, what have you got to say, that sort of thing, so we've been doing it for years, but not properly. RJ Champion, 2.

However, the idea that staff "do it already" could be used to resist change. Staff were also concerned that by taking away options to use conventional punishment, such as detentions and fixed-term exclusions, RAs would take away their power and authority. Consequently, staff and pupils thought that punishments such as exclusions and detentions should continue to exist alongside RAs, as they could be used as a last resort, particularly for serious incidents and if RAs did not work, as these two interviewees explained:

> If someone's going to deny it, then it doesn't work, so you've still got to have exclusions there for the

kids that say, "No, I didn't do it. I didn't hurt anyone. I don't care". Head of Year, School 2.

If the people actually don't care about what the other person is thinking, and don't really care if they're being horrible to someone, and if they're sort of winning, in a way, then it doesn't work, maybe they should get in trouble. Pupil 9, aged 13, School 2.

RAiS was perceived to impact on the climate for learning in six ways. Firstly, it challenged pupil and staff perceptions of the usefulness of existing mechanisms for punishing pupils. Staff described RAs as better than punishment because they could be used to resolve behavioural issues for good by getting to the bottom of it. For pupils, RAs meant that did not feel as if they were 'in trouble', which could be beneficial given the negative implications of labelling. In addition, they felt as if they were treated in a more reasonable and adult way and that they had to face up to being in the 'wrong'. This could bring about real changes to their behaviour, as this pupil explained:

After that thing that happened and 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 17, aged 12, School 3.

At the same time, for a minority of pupils, not being 'in trouble' also amounted to 'getting away with it' or 'to getting off lightly'. Some also regarded conferences as a waste of time, as this pupil did:

Sometimes even if things have been sorted out, you leave there like even more pissed off because you're like, I've wasted a whole day talking to people I hate. Pupil 6, aged 15, School 2.

Secondly, they encouraged a fairer approach to dealing with bad behaviour which got to the bottom of the problem and moved beyond simplistic bully/victim categories, as these two interviewees explained:

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 14, aged 15, School 3.

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, School 2.

Thirdly, RAs improved communication between staff and pupils, encouraging people to talk calmly, rather than shouting, as well as improving relationships. These two interviewees explained how:

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, that kind of thing. Support Worker 2, School 4.

You can kind of just end up shouting, and then like when you all start shouting other people start gathering round because they think there's going to be a fight, or like other people get involved and say, well no, Jenny feels like this, and like it was better because it was just the people that were involved, rather than bringing people in who had

nothing to do with it. Pupil 16, aged 15, School 3.

Pupils reportedly got on better with their peers and conferences gave pupils a voice and helped to redress the power imbalance in staff-pupil relationships, humanizing staff in the process.

Fourthly, there was some evidence that RAs had partly contributed to a calmer atmosphere in school, emanating from staff to pupils, as this interviewees described:

> It [RAs] just creates a calmer atmosphere, so kids, kids copy us don't they, if you're calm, they're going to be calm, if you're ranting and raving, they're going to be. Head of Year, School 1.

> Before there was like bad vibes like when you walk around like, just even walk past each other, but there was no bad, it was just like you were a friend and just chatting about normal things, so it's definitely like, I think it's a really good idea. Pupil 10, aged 13, School 3.

Fifth, RAs reportedly improved the emotional literacy of staff, but especially pupils, in their ability to reflect on their behaviour, empathise and to take responsibility for their actions, as these interviewees illustrate:

> It's given students an opportunity to be reflective on their behaviour. The nature of adolescence is that you're not always aware of the impact of your actions on other people. When young people are in adolescence, it's very much a 'me' driven conversation. They don't often have that space to reflect about how their actions impact on this person, or these people. I think that restorative approaches have given some of our young people that opportunity to reflect. Senior Manager, School 2.

> They sit down and the kids see they've upset the other kid, and see why. They see the parents

are upset. They see their parents are upset, because then they find out that their parents were bullied when they were kids. It is a good eye opener. It really is a good eye opener. Head of Year, School 4.

I think it's improved their behaviour, it's given them a sense of responsibility for their behaviour, and it's made them think about the impact of their actions both verbally and physically, and even their body language. And it's opened up sometimes, it's been, you know, they've been able to talk about perhaps where they were, and we've been able to talk about alternative responses to that. Senior Manager, School 3.

Some staff remained resistant to the new approach; yet, those in favour of them experienced the development of pupils' emotional literacy as a 'time-saver' because they could sort out problems for themselves.

Finally, RAs also helped improve the well-being of staff and pupils. Staff had the confidence and skills to deal with pupils without relying on support staff or senior teachers. Pupils had an outlet for their feelings and expressing them was both empowering and gave them confidence, as this staff member explained:

> I guess it's good for kids to realise, to actually get the opportunity to say sorry, or to say how they felt, because I think that can be quite a release, can't it, if you've been able to apologise to somebody, and you're given that opportunity. So I think in terms of well being, I think that's helped a lot of children, yes, rather than keeping it all in. Head of Year, School 1.

The impact of RAiS on attendance, fixed-term exclusions and educational attainment

In terms of attendance, RAiS appeared to have a positive impact in that being in a school convening a high number of conference (Schools 1 or 2) or a low number of conferences (Schools 3 or 4) predicted a significantly higher attendance rate than being a non-RAiS school (Schools 5 or 6). Whilst conference participation did not predict a higher attendance rate, this may have been because those participating in the conferences had a slightly lower attendance rate to start with. It may have been that without input from RAiS, their attendance rate would have been even lower. Indeed, the qualitative research suggests that pupils did find conferences beneficial in terms of resolving conflicts or victimization that may have otherwise kept them at home, as these interviewees explained:

[T]here's a couple of cases in my year group where kids have been out because other people have said stuff to them, and they've been scared of them, and getting them together and sorted out their problems, and then attendance goes up. Head of Year. School 4.

I was missing time off school because they [the bullies] were in the school. Pupil 7, aged 14, School 1.

We can conclude, therefore, that over time RAiS may be a promising way of increasing the attendance rate. In terms of the fixed-term exclusion rate, there were reductions in the absolute numbers of fixed-term exclusions in the RAiS and non-RAiS schools. This reduction was noted by staff in all four RAiS schools. Staff also believed that RAs were one of a number of factors that impacted on fixed-term exclusions, as this interviewee explained:

The first impact you would notice [of RAs] would be the reduction in fixed-term exclusions, it's not the only reason but it is a big contributor to the way in which we deal with fixed-term exclusions, and how we've changed our practice using restorative approach. Senior Manager, School 2

Staff believed that RAs impacted on fixed-term exclusions either (i) directly (when restorative conferences were used instead of fixed-term exclusions) or (ii) indirectly (when conferences were used at an earlier stage and prevented incidents from escalating to the stage where fixed-term exclusions were necessary). However, it was only in School 1, which employed a whole-school approach to implementation, that staff routinely and explicitly used conferences as an alternative to fixed-term exclusion.

Difficulties with the local authority data (e.g. the absence of educational data, an important additional independent variable) meant that it was not possible to test if RAiS made a discernible impact on the fixed-term exclusion rate. The YJB (2004) reached a similar conclusion in their research. However, it is likely that RAiS was a contributing factor to reductions in fixed-term exclusions, particularly in the schools where conferences were routinely and explicitly used as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions. Given that conferences were used for pupils with significantly higher levels of fixed-term exclusions, we can tentatively conclude that RAiS has promise to reduce fixed-term exclusions in the longer-term.

The analysis of the educational attainment data was limited because Key-Stage 3 data were not available for 2007/8. Based on Key-Stage 4 educational data alone, we did not detect a discernible impact of RAiS on GCSE performance. However, this may have been because of the limitations of the data. Staff were also hesitant to conclude that RAs impacted on individual or on whole-school attainment, saying that it was too early to say. At the same time, some felt that RAs 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, as these interviewees explained:

> Pupils often tell me that they sometimes get really affected by problems with other pupils in the school and they might sit in lessons but not really concentrate or participate. Things will be bothering them. These conferences give them a chance to sort things out and that is bound to affect their academic performance. Support Worker, School 2. I think most staff would say they can teach better because it's calmer, calmer because of the behaviour. There is a reasonable strand there, but you know, proving that link is difficult. RJ Champion, 2.

There was also evidence from the qualitative research that RAiS impacted on outcomes that were not quantified in the local authority data. Staff and pupils felt that restorative approaches were an effective way of dealing with bullying incidents. Half the pupils, (n=13) thought that there was less bullying in the school as a result of RAiS. Interviewees explained how conferences had helped to stop bullying occurring and also gave pupils a forum to talk about their experiences of bullying, as these interviewees explained:

> Like some of the stuff these people were doing to me was really nasty, and right, at the time I thought I hate them, I want all this bad stuff to happen to them, but then one of the girls actually came and said sorry and stuff like that, and she was acting all OK about it, so I think that's fine and I think it might have been the restorative justice a bit that made her think. Pupil 9, aged 13, School 2.

> It gives those that sometimes would be described as victims, it gives them a voice. Now this is a critical thing, in a very clear structured way, you know, when we talk about the actions, and who's been harmed, it allows that voice. You know, they may not be able to describe it in detail, but they do, they are able to articulate and say, "This is how it was. This is how your actions, this is how they impacted on me". Senior Manger, School 2.

However, a few pupils discussed how conferences did not resolve all bullying issues; some worried about the bullies re-victimising them after the conference, whilst for others this was a reality.

Implications of the findings

1. Traditional disciplinary mechanisms co-existed alongside RAs, particularly in schools that implemented RAiS in pockets, as has been found in previous research (see Sherman and Strang, 2007). However, there was also support for such traditional approaches, amongst staff and pupils, to be used as a measure of last resort (e.g. for serious incidents or when RAs failed).

2. RAs challenged at least some pupil's and staff's perceptions of the meaning of punishment in school, showing that they had grasped some of the central tenets of RAs in schools, after only two years.

3. There remained a minority of staff and pupils who were resistant to RAs (e.g. pupils who saw RAs as 'getting off lightly' and staff that were described as having punitive attitudes towards pupils. This minority may undermine the possibility of the programme being implemented on a truly whole-school basis.

4. The research has shown that local authority data may not be up to the task of discerning the impact of complex and subtle changes to the climate of the school on individual pupils (e.g. because the data are not collected for this purpose).

5. For disengaged pupils (e.g. who had a number of detentions, exclusions and viewed RAs as a waste of time) RAs may not tackle the underlying causes of their behaviour. Nevertheless, the promise shown by RAiS (e.g. in terms of the impact on attendance) suggests that there are still reasons to try and that RAs may be beneficial for the majority who do not resist RAs.

6. The interviews showed the importance of procedural fairness of RAs to pupils (e.g. because it gave harmers and the harmed a voice). This suggests that an under-explored mechanism, which may contribute to the success of RAs in schools, is the potential for enhancing the legitimacy of the school in the eyes of pupils.

Principal Funders

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-making foundations in the UK. Our aim is to improve the quality of life for people and communities in the UK both now and in the future. Our primary interests are in the cultural life of the UK, education and learning, the natural environment and enabling disadvantaged people to participate fully in society.
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Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Paul Hamlyn Foundation is an independent grant-making foundation supporting charitable activity in the areas of education, learning, social justice and the arts in the UK, enabling individuals, especially children and young people, to experience a better quality of life. Within our Education and learning Programme, we aim to develop and support new approaches across multiple areas in education that will achieve better outcomes for learners and which are likely to lead to significant and long-term impact.

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Supporters

Safer Bristol

Established in 2004, Safer Bristol is a partnership of key public agencies and voluntary agencies focused on tackling crime and drug issues working together with local people to create safer communities. As a partnership, we are responsible for formulating strategy and running a number of joint initiatives to help tackle crime and drugs problems in Bristol

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Bristol Children and Young People's Service

Bristol Children and Young People's Service work to offer the best possible outcomes for Bristol's children, young people and families through the best possible partnership arrangements. That means:

- High achievement for all, especially in the basics
- Everyone valued and included
- Confident parents, carers and families
- Inspirational schools, settings and resources for learning
- Safe neighbourhoods where people get on well together
- Excellent services, tailored to meet the needs of the individual

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restorative
solutions

making things better

Facilitation, Consultancy and Training

Restorative Solutions provides bespoke training to suit the specific needs of your school

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 own staff to maintain school skills using Restorative Solutions resources).

Seminar: Awareness for Governors and Senior Managers

www.restorativesolutions.org.uk

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Key Findings of the Bristol RAiS Research
Report Commissioned by Restorative Solutions CIC
July 2009