

What are restorative practices?

Restorative practices describe a range of approaches to prevent and repair conflict in schools. These practices range from:

- Developing a restorative climate in schools with activities such as circle time and peer support
- 'Restorative conversations', when teachers or peer mediators intervene in a situation
- Formal restorative conferencing involving all those affected by an incident, including families where appropriate.

School ethos, policies and procedures need to be developed to support this work. The focus is on prevention and the involvement of the whole school community is paramount. It is a framework within which existing good practice can develop.

The approach supports other initiatives such as staged intervention, emotional literacy/empathy development and solution-focused planning approaches.

- **Key principles of restorative practices**
- Fostering social relationships in a school community of mutual engagement.
- Being responsible for one's own actions and their impact on others.
- Respecting other people, their views and feelings.
- Empathising with the feelings of others.
- Being fair.
- Being committed to equitable processes.
- Everyone in school being actively involved in decisions about their own lives.
- Returning issues of conflict to the participants rather than pathologising behaviour.
- Willingness to create opportunities for reflective change in pupils and staff.

Why use restorative practices?

Pupils seek fairness from adults who are dealing with disciplinary issues. Whether they are a perpetrator or a victim, their focus is not on winning or losing, but on trusting in a fair process. Restorative practices help teachers ensure that pupils, staff and parents can be part of a fair process, while helping all involved to understand the impact of their behaviour on others.

Restorative practices can:

- Manage the varied expectations of behaviour standards which exist among all school staff
- Help develop a whole school positive ethos
- Encourage members of the school community to effectively resolve and learn from conflict in a way which maintains relationships, or terminates them in a positive way
- Support any necessary sanctions by processes of learning and reconciliation.

How can restorative practices be used?

Restorative practices can be used at different levels in school:

- As preventative - to promote positive relationships within the whole school community
- As responsive - and repairing when difficulties arise
- As part of support and intervention for more long-term and persistent difficulties.

The approach involves including the wrongdoer in finding a solution to the problem. Instead of asking 'who's to blame and how are we going to punish them?' focus is put on reasons, causes, responsibilities and feelings. Those involved are asked questions such as 'who has been affected and how?' and 'how can we put it right and learn from this experience?'