



## Restorative Approaches in Schools

*"...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.

*"Restorative action has allowed us to have a purposeful and open dialogue, with a tremendous positive impact on the relationship between the school and our families. The team were efficient, impartial and utterly dedicated to helping all parties resolve the issue and reach a satisfactory outcome for all concerned."*

**Deputy Headteacher, St Anne's Park Primary**

## The Bristol Project

The Bristol RAiS project was established in partnership with The 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.

Restorative Solutions is now ready to offer training and support to the following institutions wishing to implement restorative approaches.:

- All Secondary Schools and Colleges
- Special Schools, Short Stay Schools and Residential Care Homes
- Primary Schools and Children's Centres

*"Introducing RAiS has supported our efforts in improving attendance and reducing fixed-term exclusions."* **Lynette Newman, Deputy Headteacher & RAiS Champion**

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# Does RAiS Work?

## The Research Findings

A team from King's College London have evaluated the RAiS project. Key findings include:

### Implementation

- Managers in those RAiS schools evaluated, expressed that restorative approaches provided their school with the framework, direction and momentum to achieve their objectives
- Two different approaches to implementing RAiS were evaluated: a 'whole school approach' and 'pockets of restorative approaches' and the success is consistently marked in schools using the whole school model
- The 'triad' model (involving Year heads, Family Support Workers and Learning Support Mentors regularly meeting with the restorative approaches Champion to deal with pupil and family problems) was an essential element in successfully implementing the programme
- Support staff could be used more effectively in delivering RAiS, thus addressing staff concerns about not having enough time to implement the programme
- Across all the schools, restorative conferencing was employed 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

- Schools employing a whole school implementation of restorative approaches are likely to have a bigger and more sustainable impact on the climate for learning
- Restorative approaches consolidated existing practices but staff could be resistant including concerns that removing conventional sanctions took away their authority
- Restorative approaches impacted on the climate for learning because they:
  - (i) Were perceived as better and fairer than conventional forms of conflict resolution
  - (ii) Improved staff/pupil communication and relationships
  - (iii) Contributed to a better atmosphere
  - (iv) Improved emotional literacy of both staff and pupils, particularly in the pupils' ability to empathise and to take responsibility for their actions

### Impact on Attendance Rates

- Staff and pupils reported that restorative approaches helped increase the attendance rate as a result of the reduction in conflicts and victimisation that may have previously kept pupils at home

- The quantitative analysis confirmed perceptions about the benefits on attendance rates

### Impact on Fixed-term Exclusions & Attainment

- 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 the RAiS schools
- Staff believed that restorative approaches impacted on fixed-term exclusions either directly or indirectly
- Difficulties with the LA 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 reached a similar conclusion in their research (2005.)
- 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 significant promise over time in reducing fixed-term exclusions
- Teachers felt that restorative approaches were likely to improve attainment by increasing pupils' capacity for learning and their ability to concentrate by creating a calmer learning environment

### RAiS Added Value

Research clearly suggests that when implemented on a whole school basis, RAiS adds value to the life of the school:

- Significant cost-saving potential for the school and LA in financial impact of exclusions and use of Short Stay Schools
- The climate for learning is improved
- Communication skills and relationships between pupils and staff are enhanced
- Emotional intelligence across the whole school community is developed
- Methods for dealing with abusive behaviour, bullying, fighting, poor attendance and other disputes to the benefit of those directly involved as well as to the wider school community

# Making RAiS Happen

## Seven Steps to Success

### Step 1

Full, informed backing and support from the Headteacher, the senior learning team and the school governors

### Step 2

Designate a school champion for RAiS, preferably a senior member of staff who must be keen and well-informed

### Step 3

Set-up structure and processes for using restorative approaches appropriate to the establishment, including writing RAiS into behavioral policies and processes and setting up a monitoring system

### Step 4

Whole school training day to raise awareness, including training for all in using restorative approaches to deal with less serious incidents and head teacher explaining how RAiS will work in the establishment

### Step 5

Two days training course in facilitating restorative conferences for the key staff teams who deal with serious behaviour problems

### Step 6

'Training the Trainers' course for experienced RAiS facilitators to build in-house capacity to train new members of staff and to increase the pool of conference facilitators

### Step 7

Review progress, publish case studies and celebrate successes

*"Our core values of trust and respect are reflected fully within the methodology and practice associated with restorative approaches. The impact on student behaviour and their wellbeing has been dramatic."* **John Matthews, Headteacher, Brislington Enterprise College**

## How does RAiS fit in the staff structure?

When restorative approaches are adopted by the whole school, our experience suggests these methods can create a much calmer school environment. By encouraging all staff to take part, including lunch supervisors, support staff and site staff, restorative approaches provides a much more unified approach, not just in the classroom, but in the corridors, the dining room and in the playground.

In secondary schools, the capacity to facilitate full restorative conferences targeting serious incidents and situations, can be dealt with by a 'triad' for each year group comprising the Year head, the learning mentor and the family support worker. Other models may apply but what is essential is that those directly involved in dealing with problems and incidents are equipped to use restorative approaches.

In primary schools and other educational establishments, restorative approaches can be implemented by the Headteacher, class teachers and support workers with the culture being developed throughout the school.

# About Restorative Solutions CIC

## Working together for communities

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.

## Training & Support Services

### Level 1

Training for all school personnel that enables staff to deal with minor, inappropriate behaviour as they happen and in a restorative manner

### Level 2

Training is intended for school personnel tasked to deal with more serious incidents that could lead to the pupil being excluded (either temporarily or permanently) or subject to a managed move to another school

### Training the Trainers

Offers schools the opportunity to build their capacity by training those regularly using restorative conferences in their work to train colleagues to Levels 1 & 2. We also provide a full 'Training for Trainers' package complete with resource materials

### Call Down Service

Provides schools with conferencing facilitation for particularly difficult cases or to assist newly trained staff conduct their first cases

### Student Training

Provides students with training in 'Instant restorative approaches' for use in resolving interpersonal disputes. This training has direct curriculum synergies with peer mentoring and citizenship development

### Call Down Consultancy

Restorative Solutions also provide 'as and when needed' technical and implementation advice to school management teams about the introduction, implementation and revitalisation of restorative approaches

### Contact details

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