

Relational and Restorative Practice in Education

The goal of all schools should be to establish the best possible climate for learning for students. Students learn best when they feel safe, not just physically but also emotionally. Feeling safe means feeling valued, respected, and included in school life.¹

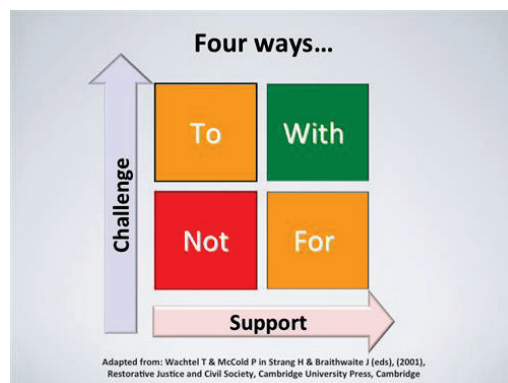
Restorative practice provides a framework for creating and sustaining a school climate where teaching and learning can take place effectively and where students and adults can thrive as they learn from each other.

Creating a relational and restorative school is a deliberate act of design that flows through structure, policies, procedures, and everyday interactions.

Relational practice describes a way of being, an underpinning ethos, which enables us to build and maintain healthy relationships. It provides a strong framework within which we can promote a whole-school ethos founded on the importance of relationships. This includes a range of approaches to managing conflict and tensions in a way that repairs harm and mends relationships if and when these relationships do break down.

Although its roots are clearly in restorative justice - as a way of repairing harm - restorative practice has the bolder ambition of proactively developing the sense of community and seeking to increase the social capital between and across the school and, from there into the wider community.²

High Challenge, High Support



The underlying premise of Restorative Practices rests with the belief that people will make positive changes when those in positions of authority work *with* them, rather than doing things *to* them or *for* them. This is achieved by providing a combination of high challenge and high support. "Challenge" does not mean confrontation, but setting, rules, limits, and expectations. There are consequences to actions, concerns are outlined openly and honestly, and responsibility and accountability are encouraged. "Support" includes ensuring people have the tools to meet the expectations and are shown empathy,

encouragement, compassion, kindness and respect.

RP in Portsmouth

Trafalgar School (part of Salterns Academy Trust), have exemplified what can be achieved through relational practice and by taking the whole-school approach, with one clear measurable impact being extremely low suspensions, underlined by the fact that in 2020/21 the school recorded just two suspensions and the same in 2021/22 compared to mainstream secondary school averages of 95 and 120 respectively. From January 2022, a number of schools in Portsmouth have been working

¹ <https://www.euforumrj.org/en/restorative-schools>

² *Restorative Practice*, Mark Finnis, 2021, independent thinking press

with Trafalgar school as the first "wave" (on behalf of the PEP) to further develop relational and restorative practice in their settings.

Funding has been secured to work with other schools in the city (as waves two and three) over the next three years to support the culture shift that is required. The aim is that developing a whole school relational culture and ethos and establishing practices to build, maintain and repair relationships, should become, "the way we do things in Portsmouth".

Relational Practice is not a "programme" or an "intervention". It is an embedded cultural mindset rather than a model. Leaders, staff and pupils will explore values and principles as well as skills, strategies and techniques that will support the culture and ethos needed to build, maintain and repair relationships.

For your school this could include:

- Visits to Trafalgar for Head teachers to explore 'What does it *feel* like to be in a restorative school'
- Development sessions in small groups with Head teachers and their pastoral leaders
- 3-day course for 2-3 pastoral leads from each school
- Bespoke outreach support for schools, for example whole staff training, working with pastoral staff, TAs or midday assistants, reviewing policies and action plans
- Reflective circles and networking between and within schools
- continuing to access multiagency training via the PSCP available [here](#).

Working towards becoming more relational and restorative does not preclude schools from participating in other programmes and opportunities. On the contrary it is a way of being that is complementary to other strands of work delivered by the SEMH partnership (including the EP Team, MABs, MHST, and the ND in Schools Project)

This work with schools is part of the broader strategic commitment to Relational and Restorative practice within the children's workforce as set out in the Children's Trust Plan.

Terminology - Relational and Restorative Practice

We used the term "relational and restorative" practice to emphasise that the focus of the work in schools is on the *whole school ethos of building and maintaining relationships*. The term "restorative practices" includes a whole spectrum of ways of being and of working from building to maintaining relationships to, when needed, restoring them. One important part of this spectrum is the use of questions (often five) to enable others to share their perspective, express emotions, understand impact and find a solution.

- What happened?
- What were you thinking/ feeling?
- Who is affected?
- How are they affected?
- What needs to happen to make it better?

These questions (or variations of them) are a key part of the relational and restorative "toolkit". However, there is often a misunderstanding that bringing people together for conversation after something has gone wrong is the essence of restorative practice in schools. We hope that by referring to "Relational and Restorative Practice" it makes the focus on the proactive work slightly more explicit.

Participating schools

Wave One 11 schools, ongoing:

ALNS	Cumberland	Milton Park Primary
Ark Ayrton	Flying Bull	Priory
Ark Dickens	Langstone Juniors	Wimborne
Craneswater	Meon Juniors	

Wave Two Schools - further schools still tbc:

Beacon View	Moorings Way	St Jude's
Cottage Grove	New Horizons	St Paul's
Highbury Primary	Solent Infant School	Mayfield
Manor Infants	Solent Junior School	The Portsmouth Academy
Medina	Southsea Infants	Cliffdale
Meon Infants	St George's	

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