



Restorative  
Thinking



# Change Starts With ... Restorative Practice

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Thinking

## A short introduction from the Anti-Bullying Alliance

Our literature review for Anti-Bullying Week 2019 showed that restorative practice can be effective when trying to address bullying. This short guide has been written to support the Anti-Bullying Week 2019 theme, Change Starts With Us, and aims to provide schools with more information about what restorative practice is and to dispel some of the myths about restorative practice in response to bullying incidence.

This report has been written by Mrs Lesley Parkinson and Mr. Chris Straker, [Restorative Thinking](#). You can read our report with recommendations written by young people [here](#).



## Change Starts With Us - Restorative Thinking

Restorative Practice and ways of thinking are developing and growing in many primary, secondary and special schools across the UK. As a **proactive school strategy**, restorative practice can have a very positive impact on improving and sustaining positive behaviour, attendance, attainment and progress and creating a safe and caring environment. At the heart of this is strong leadership to challenge and support staff and pupils through the changes to practice, policies, behaviour and relationships throughout the school so that restorative practice becomes 'the way we do things round here.'

Restorative practice can have a profound impact on schools, families and most importantly on the development of pro-social skills and resilience in children. Pupils who are taught and experience this way of being and behaving become more able to manage their own behaviour; more able to reflect on the impact of their actions and more able to empathise with others. They understand what needs to happen where there is any harmful behaviour and they feel empowered to put things right. Pupils also carry these transferable skills beyond the school gates and into their families and communities.

**The aim of restorative practice is to develop community and to manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and building relationships.**

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A school making a conscious decision to become restorative also opens a door to a new mindset and culture shift. It focuses on positive relationships and collaborative teaching and learning, with classrooms developing as communities. It means that teachers and students commit to looking at positive alternatives to reactive punitive behaviour solutions (e.g. exclusions), because they are confident that the matter is being dealt with in a collaborative and explicit way, understood and endorsed by all.

Equally, school improvement strategies are enhanced by the use of restorative practice, not least through the fundamental drive of restorative work to build relationships and community amongst the adults in addition to the pupils.

Building, maintaining and repairing community are essential for all healthy relationships between people, both at an individual and school level, in the development of a context for good learning and good behaviour.



## Myth-busters!

- **Myth 1: Restorative practice is a soft option!** Restorative practice is sometimes perceived as a 'soft' option. In reality, restorative practice provides a challenging framework to guide relationships and accountability between all staff, pupils, parents, governors.
- **Myth 2: Restorative practice replaces existing sanctions!** Restorative practice runs alongside existing behaviour strategies and school sanctions; planned and delivered well, restorative practice is threaded through existing strategies and improvement plans.
- **Myth 3: Restorative practice is only used when things go wrong!** It's true that restorative practice provides a series of ways to resolve conflict. However, restorative practice is equally effective as a proactive strategy, to develop emotional literacy, accountability, empathy, a strong sense of community and safety; to prevent bullying.

# Change Starts With ... Restorative Practice

## Explicitly, within schools, restorative practice can:

- Engage children in school communities, building social capital, accountability and relationships for better school environments;
- Manage relationships in schools proactively to help prevent problems in the future;
- Engage children more effectively in learning;
- Engage families in learning and supporting the school;
- Improve pupil attainment through restorative school communities providing a culture of high challenge and high support;
- Manage behaviour in school and reduce school exclusions;
- Improve children's self-esteem, self-control and personal sense of responsibility;
- Reduce the incidence and fear of bullying;
- Allow flexibility for different students, needs, and situations.

Put simply, the whole school implementation of restorative practice is a strategic approach to create a restorative culture in a school, which will underpin everything else happening in the school's achievement agenda. This means that when schools sign up to whole school restorative practice, they sign up to change!

Find out more about Restorative Thinking and their work at <https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/restorative-practice>

