

Creating a Positive Climate for Learning

A positive classroom climate stems from an ethos and culture reflecting a commitment to children's rights and positive relationships. *"The learning environment is built on positive, nurturing and appropriately challenging relationships which lead to high-quality learning outcomes"* (How Good Is Our School? 4, Scottish Government). In other words, in order to maximise, learning, progress, achievement and attainment, we need to ensure a positive climate for learning across our school.

From time to time a positive climate for learning in classrooms and other learning spaces can be interrupted. The teacher will use a series of staged interventions to restore this positive climate for learning. This could be, for example, a reminder of the expectations for a positive classroom environment, differentiated support to help the pupil remain "on task", or changing the seating arrangements.

In a more serious, prolonged, or repeated situation, a pupil may be asked to step outside the classroom for some thinking and reflection time (normally a few minutes) and a short restorative conversation may then take place, following which the pupil will generally return to the lesson. Where the thinking and reflection time has not resulted in a meaningful restorative conversation, the pupil will not be able to return to the lesson and will be required to sit in another supervised space, for example, with the Faculty Head.

FAQs: Restorative Practice

1. Why have a "restorative conversation"?

Our top priority is the effective delivery of learning and teaching for all in order to maximise learning and progress. Restorative practice is about improving and maintaining positive relationships for all involved. Pupils are given space and time to reflect, think and move forward positively. A Department for Education paper, *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* from 2014 recognised restorative approaches as improving in several measures including attendance and exclusion rates. (TES 4th March 2022) Likewise, schools adopting restorative approaches have been proven to have the highest effectiveness rate in preventing bullying.,

2. What happens when a pupil is asked to step outside of a lesson?

The pupil is normally given a minute or two of thinking and reflection time, after which the teacher and pupil discuss how the choices made, which have resulted in the pupil being outside of class, have impacted on themselves, the teacher, and their peers. The pupil is encouraged to consider how they could have made different choices and how they could avoid finding themselves in

the same situation again. A decision is made about whether the pupil is ready to move on and return to the lesson – this is usually the case. The flowchart available to view here outlines the process.

3. What is the impact on my child's learning if teachers are spending class time having restorative conversations outside the classroom?

These conversations are intended to be brief and therefore should have minimal impact on learning and teaching. These short conversations should enable all pupils to move forward with the lesson. It is important for other members of the class to see that actions and choices that are not conducive to a positive Climate for Learning are being recognised and challenged by the teacher. If a longer conversation is required, this would take place at a later time, out with the lesson time.

4. Does a restorative system mean that there are no consequences? If there are consequences, what might they be and why are they put in place?

A restorative system is not punitive or based on sanctions. "Restorative practice is an underpinning ethos that builds and maintains healthy relationships" (TES 4th March 2022).

There will be consequences to a pupil's actions, whether this be having to work away from others, explaining their actions and the impact of these in detail, apologising, time spent having further restorative conversations etc. until all parties are satisfied that the situation has been resolved.

5. Why not use traditional "disciplinary" methods such as punishment exercises and detentions?

Restorative practice is all about maintaining positive relationships. Disciplinary methods do not help to build positive relationships and the pupil does not necessarily reflect on their part in what has happened or have the chance to take responsibility for poor choices and actions. This means that the chances of those choices and actions recurring are higher because the pupil has not been supported to learn from the experience.

There are still consequences, but the focus is not on punishment, rather on understanding how others have been affected by poor choices or actions, taking responsibility and being accountable, and moving forwards with a focus on repairing the damage done to the relationships involved.

6. What happens if a pupil's behaviour continues to disrupt in subsequent lessons?

All incidents are recorded and these records, along with tracking reports, are monitored by Faculty Heads, Pupil Support and Attainment Team leaders (Guidance Teachers) and SLT links. Parental meetings may take place to discuss the best way forward. Pupils may spend some time working in a different location until it is felt by all parties that progress has been made.

7. What happens next when no progress is made throughout the Restorative Practice?

On the very rare occasions when all steps have been followed, there are further interventions that can be put in place to support the individual pupil depending on their needs. For example, time spent with a teacher or senior pupil or volunteer mentor; a school counsellor; a pupil support worker; the school nurse, etc.

8. Why has my child told me that they have been "in isolation"?

"Isolation" is not a term that we use as a school, as our aim is for all pupils to be included and engaged in learning within lessons. Unfortunately, this is a term employed by some of our pupils and this is something we are seeking to address by being more consistent about the terminology we as staff use so that pupils are clear about the reasoning behind actions taken.

Occasionally when things have gone wrong or conflict has arisen, some pupils benefit from having some space away from other pupils and distractions. The reasons for the above are first and foremost to keep them and those around them safe and to minimise the risk of the situation for all concerned, escalating. Time and space can also help prevent other young people from feeding an already difficult and sensitive situation. It allows pupils thinking time to reflect on the choices they have made and actions they have taken, and lastly as a preventative measure in case the aftermath of this incident manifests in other unwelcome behaviours in classes and causes more issues.