



Powerstown Educate Together National School

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Restorative Justice Policy

This policy has been formulated by Powerstown ETNS to promote a positive atmosphere throughout the school. This policy promotes the notion of a school community where everything we do is based on mutual respect. ‘We sail our ship together’.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
1.1. Our vision	2
1.1.2. What is restorative justice?	2
1.2. Rationale	2
1.3. Aims and objectives	2
2.1. Board of Management	3
2.2. Principal	3
2.3. Teaching staff	4
2.4. Pupils	4
2.5. Parents and Guardians	4
3. Whole school implementation	4
3.1. What does ‘restorative practice’ mean for our school?	4
4. Curriculum integration	9
5. Reference to other policies	9
6. Review and ratification	10

1. Introduction

1.1. Our vision

Powerstown Educate Together National School is a multidenominational co-educational school catering for pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth Class under the patronage of Educate Together. We strive in co-operation with parents to provide a holistic education in a caring and secure environment where each child is encouraged to achieve to the best of his/her ability. An important part of our school approach to behaviour is the concept of 'Restorative Practices', a philosophy which stems from the concept of 'Restorative Justice'. Our Code of Behaviour is focused on the positive aspects of behaviour rather than on punishments or sanctions, although these are included in the appropriate section of our Code of Behaviour.

We promote the notion of a school community where everything we do is based on mutual respect. 'We sail our ship together'.

1.1.2. What is restorative justice?

Restorative Justice is a system of criminal justice which focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large. It looks at ways of dealing with victims and offenders by focusing on the harm caused by the crime and resolving the underlying problems that led to the crime instead of simply punishing the offender (*although restorative justice does not preclude incarcerations of offences or other sanctions*). It also focuses on finding ways that offenders can make things right for victims and others affected by crime.

1.2. Rationale

Pupils are expected firstly to respect themselves and then to treat each other and staff members with respect. Teachers and staff members are expected to treat children with respect. We take the view that pupils (other than some pupils with very special needs) choose their behaviour to a great degree – they always have an alternative. Therefore, they must take responsibility for their behaviour. If they treat others poorly, they may be acting out their own anger and frustrations, but they can also learn to choose differently and more positively. We ask children to treat others as they want to be treated themselves.

1.3. Aims and objectives

In school terms restorative justice may be offering something new, especially in development of behaviour management.

- It is about respect for everyone involved
- It is an innovative approach to both offending and/ or challenging behaviour which puts repairing harm done to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment. This context of '*putting things right*' means that the needs of as many people involved as possible have been addressed.

- Often times, both the victim and the offender feel completely removed from the situation once teachers become involved. Blame is assigned, the punishment is given out and the problem is (seemingly) over.
- As an initiative in schools it shares much in common with **Peer Mediation** and the positive language used in **Incredible Years** training. The only difference is that a restorative school takes a whole school community approach and involves everyone from senior management to the caretaker.

By implementing this policy and the appended school rules we hope:

- Everyone affected by a behaviour, a conflict situation or a problem, has the opportunity to talk about what has happened, explain how they have been affected by it, describe how they are currently feeling about the situation and what they want to do to repair the harm caused.
- Children take responsibility for their actions. The following ethos is encouraged *'If I become angry and hurt someone with my words or actions, I must try to make things right. I will do this by talking with the person I hurt, and I must be prepared to offer an apology, and I must be prepared to guarantee that I will not hurt that person again. I must try to realise myself what it feels like to be hurt with words or with actions and I must try to recognise the damage that my poor behaviour can do to others. In this way, I help myself to mend and I help my victim to mend.'*
- An important element of all this is that the intervention is *voluntary*. The success of the process depends largely on the willingness of people to take part and engage

1.3.1 The rules of anger are:

It's ok to be angry.

When I become angry:

- I don't hurt others
- I don't hurt myself
- I don't hurt (damage) property
- I talk about how I feel.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests, in varying ways as outlined below, with all the partners in our school's education task, i.e. the Board of Management, Principal and Teaching Staff, Pupils and their Parents or Guardians

2.1. Board of Management

- Ratify the Code
- Support the Principal and Staff in implementing the Code
- Ensure that the entire school community embraces the restorative ethos throughout their school life and beyond
- Provision of support to the principal and staff in the implementation of the code of Restorative Practices.

2.2. Principal

- Provide support for colleagues
- Provide training for teacher where necessary in restorative practices
- Promote a positive climate in the school

- Ensure that the Code of Restorative Practices is implemented in a fair and consistent manner and arrange for review of the Code, as required

2.3. Teaching staff

- Support and implement the school's Code of Restorative Practices
- The promotion of positive behaviour through effective teaching, an inclusive and engaging curriculum and well managed classrooms
- The use of a variety of classroom management techniques such as circle time and peer mediation script to sustain pupil participation and motivation and maximise restorative behaviour.
- Be courteous, consistent and fair and model same
- Deal appropriately with misbehavior using the restorative script and appropriate circles.
- Provide support for colleagues
- Communicate with parents when necessary and provide reports on matters of mutual concern
- Engaging with in-school reviews of restorative practices (e.g. at monthly staff meetings)

2.4. Pupils

- Participate with the class circles
- Adopt a restorative approach when dealing with conflict
- Use the dialogue in the Peer Mediation Script
- Listen to teachers and act on instructions / advice
- Show respect for all members of the school community
- Respect all school property and the property of other pupils
- Be courteous and mannered

2.5. Parents and Guardians

- Be familiar with the Code of Restorative Practices and support its implementation
- Be interested in, support and encourage their children's ethos
- Cooperate with teachers if their child's behaviour is causing difficulties for others
- Communicate with the school regarding any problems that may affect their child's progress or behaviour

3. Whole school implementation

3.1. What does 'restorative practice' mean for our school?

Restorative Practices is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offence and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible .

Restorative Practices:

- Create an ethos of respect, inclusion, accountability and taking responsibility
- Create a commitment to relationships, impartiality, being non-judgemental
- Encourage collaboration, empowerment and emotional articulacy

The basic premise of restorative practices is that people (students, teachers and staff) are happier and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things with them, rather than to them and for them.

An important element in Restorative Practice is Fair Process:

Expectations - everyone knows what is expected of them

Engagement - involves individuals in decisions/listens to views

Explanation - clarify how decisions are reached

3.2. What are restorative practices?

The restorative practices concept has its root in restorative justice. The most critical function of restorative practices is restoring and building relationships. Restorative practices include both specific dialogues and restorative circles.

People who have been harmed need:

- Someone to listen to my story
- Time to calm down
- A chance to ask – why me? What did I do to deserve that?
- The person concerned to understand and acknowledge the impact their behaviour has had on me
- A sincere spontaneous apology
- Things put right, if possible
- Reassurance it won't happen again

3.3. Restorative dialogue

Restorative dialogues have a list of two questions. One is for addressing challenging behaviour and the other for addressing someone who was harmed by the actions. Where two parties have mutually hurt one another, both lists of questions may be drawn from interchangeably.

Basic questions for responding to challenging behaviour:	Basic questions for helping someone that has been hurt by another's actions:
>What happened? >What were you thinking at the time? >What have you thought about since? >Who has been affected by what you did? In what way? >What do you think you need to do to make things right?	>What did you think when you realised what had happened? >What impact has this had on you and others? >What has been the hardest thing for you? >What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

These questions create a feedback loop, so that people can hear how their actions have affected others, and encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. They also pave the way for solutions to problems to be found. These questions separate people's behaviour from their intrinsic worth as a person, allowing them to admit their mistakes, right their wrongs and be reintegrated back into their class/ community.

The question '*Why did you do that?*' is not included because it tends to put people on the defensive and often people may not really know why they did what they did. Impulsive behaviour is usually impulsive and thoughtless.

3.4. Restorative skills needed

Certain skills are needed on the part of the facilitator/ mediator;

- ✓ Remain impartial and non-judgmental
- ✓ Facilitating dialogue and problem-solving
- ✓ Respect the perspective of all involved
- ✓ Actively and empathically listen
- ✓ Develop a rapport amongst participants
- ✓ Empower participants to come up with solutions rather than suggesting or imposing ideas
- ✓ Creative questioning
- ✓ Have warmth, compassion and patience.

3.5. How to start restorative practices in your class

However enthusiastic senior management are, the project will not be successful unless the majority of the school community is on board. This school community includes parents, staff, children, administrative staff, caretakers etc. Whole school involvement is at the heart of whole school improvement.

- ❖ Circle Time and Peer Mediation are *the start* to implementing restorative practices in the whole school.
- ❖ The next step is for the ethos and values of these two processes to be part of every aspect of school life, and for mediation to be a natural part of every adult's repertoire when dealing with conflict or inappropriate behaviour.

3.5.1. Running restorative circles in your class

In schools restorative practices will often take place in a circle, which is an important symbol. It implies community, connection, inclusion, equality and fairness. Meeting in a circle establishes a level playing field for all participants.

At first, when circles are new to you and your students, they may feel awkward. Students may seem shy and resistant. But once circles have been established as a normal part of the classroom routine, at the beginning of each class, at the beginning and end of each week, students will become very comfortable with the practice.

TALKING PIECE

Many circle facilitators find a 'talking piece' a useful tool for keeping students attention focused and maintaining a smoothly run circle. The primary rule of the talking piece is that whoever has it in their hands is the only one in the circle who is permitted to speak. It is a physical reminder that the person talking should receive the group's full attention.

TIPS FOR RUNNING RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

- ✓ It is best practice to start circles with an ice-breaker, a *simple quick go-around question* that gives children an opportunity to express something about themselves-an activity that doesn't feel threatening.
- ✓ Teachers should try and have a sense of occasion/ ceremony about the circle process to make it feel more special and worthwhile to the children.
- ✓ It's important to introduce circles *when things are going well* in class. Design an activity to familiarise students with the idea of circles, build confidence and enhance relationships.
- ✓ Be sure to present clear guidelines and goals for the circles so children know what they will be focusing on.
- ✓ Set a positive tone. If you are confident and upbeat, the students will follow your lead.
- ✓ Keep the focus. In a kind and supportive way, make sure the conversation sticks to the goal you have set
- ✓ *Explain what circles are about* (that they are a way for students to get to know each other, that they are a chance for students to get to know each other and a chance for people to support each other)
- ✓ Explain that students are expected to participate and take the circle seriously. Make the children your allies. For examples, you can tell several students before an upcoming circle, 'I'm counting on you to speak up today' and ask them to speak first.
- ✓ Children must not tease or laugh at one another. The circle is a place where children need to feel safe and share their ideas.
- ✓ Always sit in the circle with the students and participate fully.

3.5.2. Icebreaker circles

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS/ CIRCLE INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

<Where would you go if you had all the money in the world?

<What did you do at the weekend?

<What is one of your favourite ____?

<What makes a good friend?

*Link questions to curriculum subjects being studied too e.g.

>What is your favourite book/ author? (English)

>Where is the farthest place you've travelled? (Geography)
*A sentence starter, especially for younger students, can be a big help:
>I like it when my friend...
>The best thing about today is...
>My best memory from last year was when...
>I love playing games outside because

As you get to know your students and they get to know one another, questions become more personal and challenging. But it is very important to make students comfortable with the circle process first.

3.5.3. Check in and Check-out circles

Check In and Check Out circles are some of the most common type of circles used in schools. As the name implies they occur at the beginning and/ or end of a lesson/ activity.

There is no right or wrong way to use check-in and check-out circles. Some teachers use them every day, others on only certain days of the week.

Some examples of a <i>check-in</i> circle include:	Some examples of a <i>check-out</i> circle include:
>How are you feeling today? >What was a highlight or a low point of your weekend? >What's something you're looking forward to in school this week? >What was the biggest challenge for you in completing your homework? >What steps have you made in working on your project? >What's something you need to have a successful day, class, week etc? The check-in circle may also be used to follow up on agreements students have made about their behaviour and academic goals.	>What was your favourite thing about today? >What are you looking forward to for the rest of the day/ evening/ weekend? >Give a compliment to someone for something they did well this week >Talk about one of your academic goals and how you furthered that in class.

3.5.4. Dealing with bullying behaviour

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO LEAD INTO CIRCLES THAT DEAL WITH BULLYING

- What is something you like to do in your free time? (Non-threatening question)
- Who in your life has influenced you in a good way to help make you the person you are today?
(More personal but still positive question)
- How do kids treat each other in the classroom?
- How do you personally feel affected by this behaviour?
- Who is strong enough and courageous enough to admit they had a part in this?
- Who needs to say something to help make things right?

The circle should end with students making a commitment to each other to stop behaving in a bullying way.

3.5.5. School Conferencing

EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL GROUP CONFERENCES TO DEAL WITH ISSUES

- Offenders tell what they did
- Everyone talks about what impact this has had on them
- The group reaches a shared understanding of the harm that has been done
- The group negotiates an agreement about how to repair the damage and minimise further harm

4. Curriculum integration

The school views restorative practices as being fundamental to the holistic development of the children. Teachers are encouraged to nurture a respect for each other and their pupils through adopting a restorative approach in their day to day lives.

Restorative Practices link in to various subjects in the curriculum such as Oral Language, S.P.H.E., Anti-Bullying, Learn Together, S.E.S.E and teachers are encouraged to integrate Restorative practices wherever possible.

5. Reference to other policies

The following policies and plans are relevant to the proper implementation of the Restorative Practice Code.

- Learn Together Policy
- SPHE plan
- Anti-bullying policy
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6. Review and ratification

This policy was first ratified by the BOM

A copy of this policy is available to all families on our website. A copy of this policy is also available to parents in the office. Code of Restorative Practices is discussed annually at staff meetings. Feedback sheets will continue to be sent to parents at the end of the year and will allow them to give any feedback about their involvement with the Code of Behaviour during the year.

7. Further information

For more info:

Transforming Conflict: www.transformingconflict.org

Safer Saner Schools: <http://www.safersanerschools.org>

Restorative Practice: www.restorativepractice.org

Restorative Justice: www.scotland.org.uk/schools.htm