THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Moray House School of Education

©iStock.com/omgimages

Restorative Approaches in Education

Moray House School of Education Election Briefings

Education from early years to 18
Research and Practice Contributing to Policy

14 April 2016

Restorative Approaches in Education

Scotland has received international recognition for its successful commitment to Restorative Approaches in education. The Scottish research (Kane et al. 2007), representing the most comprehensive study to date internationally, found that the use of Restorative Approaches contributed to significant improvement in key areas of school discipline and staff and pupil relationships. It has subsequently become central to national policy on behaviour and relationships in schools and helped to reduce overall levels of disciplinary exclusion. No other Scottish initiative designed to support behaviour and relationships has sought the views of so many staff and pupils and been found to be so widely effective. It now has a major contribution to make to tackling disadvantage in education.

What do we mean by Restorative Approaches?
Restorative Approaches in an educational context are defined as:

> *restoring good relationships when there has been conflict or harm, and developing school ethos, policies and procedures to reduce the possibility of such conflict and harm arising.*

This definition was developed by the research team at Moray House School of Education, in collaboration with schools. The underpinning principles of Restorative Approaches emphasise the importance of:

- fostering positive social relationships in a school community of mutual engagement
- taking responsibility and accountability for one's own actions and their impact on others
- respecting other people, their views and feelings
- empathy with the feelings of others
- fairness
- commitment to equitable process
- active involvement of everyone in school in making decisions about their own lives
- issues of conflict and difficulty being retained by the participants, rather than the behaviour pathologised, and
- a willingness to create opportunities for reflective change in pupils and staff.

To deliver these aims, Restorative Approaches employ a variety of strategies and practices. These include but are not limited to: restorative ethos building; a curriculum focus on relationships/conflict prevention; use of restorative language and scripts; restorative group work; mediation; and formal conferences.

Background
The data for this paper is drawn from key Restorative Approaches research, all led by Moray House School of Education; including the national evaluation (2007), its follow up (2009) and recent snapshot survey data (2014). The national evaluation looked at implementation processes and outcomes, across a wide range of schools, involving around 400 individual interviews with school staff, over 200 direct meetings with children and young people in primary, secondary and special schools and more than 30 meetings with parents, over the two years of the evaluation. A targeted follow up in 2009 gathered views from key officers in

8 local authorities and staff in 25 schools. The brief survey in 2014 presented a recent perspective, involving around 50 practitioners. The robust nature of this body of research and the success of Restorative Approaches in Scottish schools, has resulted in regular invitations to colleagues from Moray House School of Education to speak and train practitioners internationally, in for example, USA, Canada and Australia and Spain.

Why is this an educational priority now?

Education is complex, with increasingly wider demands being placed on schools in a diverse and changing world, and where the work of teachers and support staff is often challenging and stressful. Restorative Approaches offer solutions particularly helpful in a time of austerity. Many schools have made very good progress in using Restorative Approaches with children and young people, but it is clear that with relatively modest renewed investment, it has the potential to do much more. Restorative Approaches have a unique contribution to make to the aims of GIRFEC; HGOIS 4; Raising Attainment for All (2014) and the National Improvement Framework (2016), by addressing the following key challenges:

- How can we take full account of equality issues and support disadvantaged individuals and groups in education?
- How can we work with parents much more closely?
- How can we ensure that relationships between and among staff are positive so that all staff feel valued?
- How can we model the positive relationships we want children and young people to learn?

Conclusions / recommendations

Scottish Government and Education Scotland should continue to work together to ensure development of:

- National guidance on working restoratively to tackle disadvantage in schools
- Direct support to schools to build capacity and expertise at local level in schools and partner agencies in engaging restoratively with parents and families
- A dedicated professional development framework for head teachers, teachers and support staff to build on Education Scotland's good work in raising skills levels in addressing areas of conflict for *all* members of the school community
- A Government short life Taskforce to examine the synergies between using Restorative Approaches and closing the attainment gap.

References

Kane, J., Lloyd, G., McCluskey, G**.**, Riddell, S., Stead, J. and Weedon, E. (2007) *Restorative Practices in Three Scottish Councils: Final Report of the Evaluation of the First Two Years of the Pilot Projects 2004 – 2006* Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Lloyd, G. and McCluskey, G. **(**2009) *Restorative Practice Pilots and Approaches in Scotland - Follow Up* Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

McCluskey, G (2014) *Restorative Approaches in education: are we nearly there yet?* Practitioner survey. CREID, http://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/centres-groups/creid University of Edinburgh.

Further information

Dr Gillean McCluskey
Co-Depute Director, Centre for Education, Inclusion
and Diversity (CREID)

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 6637
Email: Gillean.McCluskey@ed.ac.uk

www.ed.ac.uk/education