

## Why use restorative approaches?

Some people may believe that children and young people who bully others must be punished for their behaviour. This type of response can be ineffective, dangerous, breed resentment and make situations worse as a child or young person can be resentful of punishment rather than reflective of their actions. Children and young people require the opportunity to hear about and face up to the harm and distress they have caused others. Restorative approaches are built on values which separate the person from the behaviour. They promote accountability and seek to repair any harm caused in a situation.

## What are restorative approaches?

Schools may use restorative approaches as part of a planned response to relationship and/or discipline difficulties. This is a more effective response than traditional punishments. Restorative approaches can change the emotional atmosphere in a school and lead to more positive relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff.

A restorative approach may include having a 'restorative conversation'. These conversations may happen during the school day and practitioners will use restorative language and questions to allow children and young people to understand the impact of their behaviours.

## Examples of questions used in a formal meeting include:

- What happened?
- What were your thoughts at the time?
- What have been your thoughts since?
- Who has been affected by what happened?
- How have they been affected?
- What do you need to happen now?

Appropriate training is available for adults to support the restorative approach. This will include developing listening skills, empathy, use of language including body language and understanding situations from another person's point of view.

Through the help of trained practitioners who facilitate the process in a carefully scripted approach, pupils accept responsibility for their actions, recognise the harm and upset caused and are supported to find restorative responses to harmful actions. Developing positive, supportive relationships is key and these can be developed through activities such as circle time and peer support.

As part of the restorative approach, schools will decide on an appropriate timescale to review incidents, check that issues have been resolved and that children and young people are happy and progressing well.

## Peer mediation?

Many incidents in schools are low level and do not necessarily require the intervention of an adult. Peer mediation is a process where children and young people are offered the opportunity to act as peer mediators. The peer mediator takes responsibility for supporting younger children in the school to find a solution to their issue. Children or young people who volunteer to become a peer mediator will receive appropriate training and support. They will learn invaluable skills and contribute to more positive relationships between pupils.

## How can I help?

If your child's school is using restorative approaches you can support them by:

- talking to your child about how their school manages pupils' behaviour
- understanding that children learn developmentally, including how they behave and how their behaviour affects others
- understanding that everyone learns best when they feel good about themselves. Punishments, whether right or wrong, can make children feel bad about themselves. This can hinder their ability to engage in their learning, including about their behaviour encouraging your child to see things from other people's points of view
- encouraging your child to be a good friend

- working with your child's school to help resolve situations in the best interest of your child
- supporting your child to be a peer mediator
- learning more about children's rights, including their right to human dignity, regardless of their behaviour
- learning more about shame and the impact of shame on children's readiness to learn

Although appropriate action will be taken by practitioners, it is important that parents work with their child's school to help resolve situations in the best interests of their child or young person.

#### Useful websites

<https://transformingconflict.org/>

<https://childrenofthecode.org/>

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

EAST staff are happy to deliver CLPL training for staff teams. Training dates can be found on EAC Training Gateway.

#### For further information please contact:

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**EAST AYRSHIRE SUPPORT TEAM**

**Information Leaflet**

# Restorative Approaches in East Ayrshire