

Key Messages from Restorative Practice Training in Schools... the journey so far.

Context

As we know, restorative Practice is well evidenced as an approach that improves children's ability to function and learn at school, it has strong outcomes in reducing and resolving issues related to bullying and enables children to address difficult issues together.

This training is part of our system wide approach to supporting children and young people's mental health (in line with the national priorities for improving children and young people's mental health outcomes (Future in Mind)).

We have recently undertaken the first phase of our training in schools and this is our journey so far.

The Agreed Aims of the Training

- Build on school's restorative ethos and relationships within the whole school community
- Further develop restorative skills within staff group/consolidate existing knowledge
- Develop children's ability to resolve conflict/manage difficult situations
- Develop listening and communication skills in children
- Build self-esteem and confidence
- Support children to understand impact of behavior on others; understand own and feelings of others; understand own and other's needs
- Support children to understand when to refer to adults for support
- Improve long-term mental health of children by providing strategies for self-management
- Engage parents/carers in supporting their children

Our Training Offer

We have devised and delivered a bespoke package of training to St Greg's the Great primary school to a cohort of year 4/5 children, the teaching staff and parents/carers.

The training was delivered in two groups;

Group 1

Four boys identified as requiring a more intensive level of support and input than their peers.

Group 2

Mixed group of twelve children and four staff members who were trained alongside the children.

Parents/Carers

Were invited to join the group for a session at the end of the training to learn about the project and understand how to support children at home with a view to continuing the learning at home over the summer holiday period.

The Training Programme

The training programme was based around Protective Behaviours, assertiveness and Peaceful Problem Solving (from SEAL programme). The aim was to support and embed conflict resolution and restorative approaches within the school, including a focus on self-management and empowering children to understand and develop strategies for managing their own behavior.

A summary of Peaceful Problem-Solving approach and scripts was provided to staff as part of the training with the children.

Design and provision of an age appropriate support/reflection workbook/diary for the children to support development of self-awareness and conflict management skills. It is anticipated that this would help to maintain what the children have learned over the summer holiday period. The workbook/diary importantly provides an opportunity for parents/carers to support and feedback.

An additional school inset for all teaching staff in September to support embedding the approach more widely within the school as part of their existing work on collaborative curriculum, this will include a focus on the Peaceful Problem-Solving.

Key Messages from the Training

Strengthening of relationships - working with and alongside each other.

Meaningful Engagement - all participants in the sessions demonstrated by reflective contribution and the development of an action plan.

Commitment – support to continue to use what has been learned.

Recognition of Impact - children supported to understand the impact of their behaviour on those around them and on themselves.

Develop the ability to manage conflict/difficult situations – children supported to think about how they will manage difficult and conflict situations such as seeking out support of the grownups around them and using of coping and communication strategies.

Empathy and emotional literacy – children supported to think and develop awareness of others needs and feelings by placing themselves in the other persons shoes.

Be confident – to develop confidence in their own ability to take responsibility

Development of ability to recognise situations – children to recognise when they are feeling worried or unsafe, such as feeling stressed, bullied or threatened; and explore practical ways to keep safe.

Feedback so far.....

I have learned how to be a good listener

I know the difference in being safe and unsafe

I learned about my emotions

The whole day was AMAZING!!

Remember the things that make you feel happy

We feel a lot when we are unsafe

I liked the games

Do stuff peacefully

All the bad things are on the outside. All the good things are on the inside

I will remember to breath in & out when I'm upset or angry to help me calm down

I learned how to win an argument peacefully

I learned how to cooperate

In an argument it's not always just the victim who is upset

Its important to be calm before I start to problem solve

It's important to use the right phrases when you talk to someone when you don't agree

Peaceful problem solving has told me how to solve problems

Its helpful if you put yourself in the other persons shoes

Being able to say everything and not hold it inside

Parents & Teachers can help because they know how to make you feel better

Be kind and respectful

I had fun and learned a lot

Telling us what listening is like was helpful

Words are powerful

Try & not flip and start shouting, better to stay calm, respect & be kind

Friends can help by just talking about normal stuff

I will practice the phrases in real conversations

Next Steps

1. Practical measures in place in school to support children to develop restorative skills;
 - space within the classroom
 - timer to practice resolving conflict before bringing in adult support
 - potential for children who have been trained to have a role at a later stage in disseminating skills to others
 - Teaching staff disseminating knowledge and skills in relation to agreed strategies and use of tools to colleagues.

2. Parents/carers to support children to use what they have learned and the reflection workbook/diary of the summer school break.

3. Review and refresh of what has been learned through the provision of;
 - Follow up session/s to the children, parents/carers and teaching staff (September)
 - Inset day for teaching staff

4. Regular follow up sessions to support embedding of the restorative approach within the school.

Shabnam Rathore
Interim Restorative Practice Lead
1st August 2019