

**An Evaluation of the
Restorative Practices Pilot Project
in St Columba's High School
2006-2007**

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1. Introduction

(a) Background

There is growing recognition that the development and maintenance of positive, healthy and respectful relationships is fundamentally important for effective learning to take place (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2004a). Recent research has indicated that young people are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour when they have a sense of belonging to their school community (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). In light of this, and in line with recent recommendations made by the Discipline Task Group, *Better Behaviour – Better Learning* (Scottish Executive, 2001), West Dunbartonshire Council aims to support the needs of young people by promoting positive relationships.

According to Thorsborne and Vinegrad (2004a), traditional disciplinary approaches within education need to be challenged if schools are to promote positive relationships and reduce exclusions given the complexity of social issues that exist within the school community. They argue that disciplinary approaches for dealing with challenging behaviour and conflict in schools only serve to alienate and stigmatise individuals who break the rules and, although such outcomes are never intended, they are in direct conflict with the promotion of well-being, resilience and connectedness in schools (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2004b).

Hopkins (2003) also argued that disciplinary approaches rarely meet the needs of the individuals involved, particularly those who have been harmed or distressed by the wrongdoing. Neither do they consider the desirability of repairing relationships between people who are still likely to be seeing each other regularly in their community and at school. According to Karp and Breslin (2001), this is because they effectively deny the individuals involved a meaningful role in the decision-making process. Without having a participatory role, the resolution is “much less likely to become a learning experience for the offender and an opportunity for him or her to develop a sense of personal responsibility” (p. 253).

An alternative strategy that has recently been identified by researchers as being potentially useful for dealing with behaviour problems within schools and for promoting positive relationships involves using restorative practices. Much of the research literature uses the term ‘restorative justice’, as the approach originated in the criminal justice system as a form of mediation between victims and offenders (McCold & Watchel, 2003). Restorative justice moves away from a disciplinary approach to

wrongdoing and puts repairing harm done to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment (Wright, 1999). Effectively, it challenges the notion that “those who do wrong deserve to be punished, that punishment will change behaviour, and that the threat of punishment is required to ensure that potential wrongdoers comply with society’s rules” (Hopkins, 2004, p. 30).

By focusing on repairing harm, this approach provides opportunities for individuals to share their feelings, build relationships, problem-solve, and play an active role in helping to put things right (Hopkins, 2004). It aims to meet the needs of those who have been harmed and also the needs of those who have caused the harm. In contrast to the disciplinary approach, the person harmed is engaged in the decision-making process and the person responsible is held accountable for their actions, which helps to prevent similar actions happening again in the future (Stinchcomb, Bazemore & Riestenberg, 2006). Restorative practices therefore require a shift away from the primacy of assigning blame and punishment to an alternative means of preventing and managing behaviour by finding a mutually agreeable way forward (Wearmouth, McKinney & Glynn, 2007). Table 1 illustrates how the restorative approach works in comparison to the traditional approach to discipline.

Table 1 Comparison of restorative and traditional approaches to discipline

	Traditional	Restorative
Approach	<p><i>What happened?</i></p> <p><i>Who is to blame?</i></p> <p><i>What is the appropriate punishment?</i></p>	<p><i>What happened?</i></p> <p><i>Who has been affected and how?</i></p> <p><i>How can we put it right?</i></p> <p><i>What have we all learned so as to make different choices the next time?</i></p>
Emphasis	<p>Inadequate focus on those harmed or affected by the wrongdoing</p> <p>Decides what must be done to the wrongdoer</p> <p>Focus on broken rules</p> <p>Separates wrongdoer and victim</p> <p>Focus on punishment and blame</p>	<p>Greater consideration of the feelings of those harmed</p> <p>Involves the wrongdoer</p> <p>Focus on responsibility</p> <p>Brings everyone together</p> <p>Focus on reasons, causes, feelings</p>

(Scottish Executive, 2004)

It can be seen from Table 1 that the process of asking restorative questions puts the onus for problem solving between the two or more people involved. The use of the term “we” is therefore crucial, as it implies that all those affected by what happened play an important role in resolving the situation and repairing the harm caused (Hopkins, 2004). Essentially, the restorative approach is designed to make sure that those involved in a conflict own the solution. In addition to repairing the harm, the restorative approach also aims to reintegrate those affected by wrongdoing back into the school community as more responsible members (Morrison, 2002).

Overall, the restorative approach values the effects of negative behaviour on the feelings and emotions of the people harmed and can encompass prevention, response and intervention, and reparation of relationships where harm has been caused (Better Behaviour Scotland, 2005). It involves an ethos that emphasises trust, mutual respect and tolerance and therefore offers a theoretical framework within which existing good practice can build and develop (Stinchcomb et al., 2006). The approach is also complimentary to other recent initiatives, such as Staged Intervention, and adds a new dimension to thinking and practice for Inclusion (Better Behaviour Scotland, 2005).

(b) Outline of Restorative Practices

Restorative practices in schools encompass a range of interventions and initiatives from informal restorative questioning to formal restorative conferencing. Many schools already use some of these approaches and adhere to the ethos associated with the underlying principles of restorative practices. However the distinguishing feature of schools associated with restorative practices is the use of conferencing. Regardless of the format, every restorative process aims to provide a safe place, where all those involved in an incident that has caused harm can speak openly and honestly about what happened, how they have been affected by it, how they are currently feeling about the situation and what they want to do to repair the harm caused (Hopkins, 2004).

Restorative Conferences

Restorative conferences are generally used to deal with incidents involving harm where the person or people have accepted responsibility for the harmful behaviour and agree to meet with the person or people they have affected. Each conference follows a structured framework consisting of restorative questions to establish: **the facts** (i.e. *what happened?*); **the consequences** (i.e. *how has the incident affected people?*); and **the future** (i.e. *what can the person responsible for the incident do to make amends?*). Conferences include the people who were involved in the incident working together with a neutral facilitator to resolve conflict, repair relationships and move forward. Support people may be included in the process (e.g. family members, social workers, members of staff). However, it may be unnecessary or unhelpful to include support people therefore the meeting would only be attended by the facilitator and the individuals directly involved in the incident.

Restorative conferences may provide the ideal opportunity for meeting the needs of both the person harmed and the person responsible. People who have been harmed need to be given the chance to talk about what happened to them and for someone to listen to their story. They also need to receive an apology from the person responsible in order to receive reparation for the harm that was done and to feel safe again. Restorative conferences also address the needs of the person responsible, not only by giving them the opportunity to tell their side of the story, but to encourage them to take responsibility for what happened and to understand the consequences of their actions. People responsible for causing harm to others then need to take steps to repair the harm and commit to doing the right thing in the future (Hopkins, 2004).

Shuttle Mediation

The shuttle mediation process is similar to a restorative conference but is used in cases where the people involved cannot or do not want to meet one another face-to-face. The facilitator acts as a ‘go-between’ and coordinates a constructive dialogue between the person harmed and the person responsible. This process still allows the person responsible to apologise for the harm caused to the other person and includes drawing up an action plan with the facilitator. This is aimed at repairing the harm done and considers what can be done in the future to ensure the incident doesn’t happen again.

Restorative Circles

Circles are congruent with the whole school approach to restorative justice and can be useful in classroom settings where there has been a problem that needs to be discussed as a group. Circle-time is an inclusive process that develops a sense of belonging and encourages the use of many restorative skills and values, such as mutual respect, empathy, active listening, impartiality, and non-judgemental acceptance of difference (Transforming Conflict, 2001). According to Hopkins (2004), circles can help to resolve conflict in situations where a whole group of people have been affected and are a practical and effective tool for creating a positive classroom community. The emphasis is on a solution focused approach which also helps to promote team building, problem-solving and conflict-management skills and enables groups to get to know each other better whilst developing respect, trust and concern for others (Transforming Conflict, 2001).

According to Tew (2004), circle-time in general is a much neglected resource in secondary schools. Primary school children regularly participate in circle-time and therefore develop an understanding of the value of the individual and know they can speak out and be heard. The underlying principles of circle-time within primary schools essentially incorporate the same values as restorative practices, that is; trust, mutual respect, and tolerance. However, if young people do not experience an environment in which they feel valued and trusted when they make the transition into secondary school, they can often feel powerless and disconnected. Research has shown that this is a risk factor for adolescent health, as young people who do not feel connected to their school are more likely to engage in substance abuse, violent behaviour, or initiate sexual activity at an early age. When pupils feel cared for by their school community they report higher levels of emotional well-being (Resnick, Bearman & Blum, 1997).

Restorative Conversation

Restorative conversations can be used as a response to challenging behaviour or to help those harmed by others' actions. In response to challenging behaviour, restorative conversations usually involve a brief dialogue between a teacher and a pupil who has broken a minor rule. This approach is normally used where an incident has indirectly harmed others, for example by causing disruption to their learning. The teacher helps the person responsible to think through the reasons for their behaviour, how it might have affected others, and alternative ways of behaving in the future. It is quite different from other restorative practices in that it is a relatively quick reactive approach, and so rarely involves any preparation. The types of questions involved in restorative conversations are outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2 **Restorative Questions**

To help those harmed by others' actions	To respond to challenging behaviour
<i>What did you think when you realised what had happened?</i>	<i>What happened?</i>
<i>What have your thoughts been since?</i>	<i>What were you thinking about <u>at the time</u>?</i>
<i>How has this affected you and others?</i>	<i>What have your thoughts been <u>since</u>?</i>
<i>What has been the hardest thing for you?</i>	<i>Who has been affected by what you did?</i>
<i>What do you think needs to happen to make things right?</i>	<i>In what way have they been affected?</i>
	<i>What do you think needs to happen to make things right?</i>

(International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2007)

Principles of Restorative Practices

In summary, restorative approaches in education are seen to involve a set of principles, strategies, and skills. The underpinning principles include:

- The importance of fostering social relationships in a school community of mutual agreement
- Responsibility and accountability for one's own actions and their impact on others
- Respect for other people, their views and feelings
- Empathy with the feelings of others affected by one's own actions
- Active involvement of everyone in school with decisions about their own lives
- A willingness to create opportunities for reflective change in pupils and staff

(c) Research Evidence

The practice of restorative justice in schools has flourished since conferences were first introduced in Australian schools in 1994 (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). One of the first studies to evaluate the effectiveness of restorative conferencing involved 119 schools from within various different regions of Queensland, Australia (Education Queensland, 1998). A total of 89 conferences were conducted during the study and the majority of the conferences were in response to assaults and serious victimisation, followed by property damage and theft. Conferences were also used to address incidents involving drugs, damaging the reputation of the school, truanting, verbal abuse, and persistent disruption in class (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001).

The findings of the study indicated that participants were highly satisfied with the process and its outcomes and that the majority of the conference participants had improved relationships with other conference participants after the process. The majority of offenders felt they were more accepted after conferencing. Moreover, the majority of victims felt safer and more able to manage similar situations after participating in a conference. The findings of this study also demonstrated low rates of re-offending and high compliance rates with the terms of the agreement by the person(s) responsible for the harm. Senior management in the schools felt that conferencing reinforced their school values and that, by taking part in the study, they had changed their thinking about managing behaviour from a punitive to a more restorative approach (Education Queensland, 1998).

Several studies have since been carried out in Australia (Shaw & Wierenga, 2002), Canada (Calhoun, 2000), England and Wales (Youth Justice Board, 2004), and the United States (Ierley and Ivker, 2002; Minnesota Department of Children, Family, and Learning, 2002; O'Brien, 2005) and the evidence demonstrated that restorative justice conferencing can be a highly effective process for responding to inappropriate behaviour of a serious nature in schools.

In the national evaluation carried out by The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (2004), 26 schools (20 secondary and 6 primary schools) implemented various approaches to the introduction of restorative practices. 625 conferences were conducted during the 4-year pilot period, which involved 1,434 pupils and 220 supporters. 92% of conferences resulted in an agreement between the parties involved, ranging from apologies, repaired relationships, stopping the behaviour that had led to the conference in the first place, and maintaining distance between the parties, through to formal reparation. Only 6% of conferences failed to reach a satisfactory agreement. Researchers followed up

conference participants 2-3 months after the conference and it appeared that 96% of the agreements had been maintained, with only 4% being broken. 89% of pupils reported that they were still satisfied with the outcome of the conference, with 93% reporting that they thought the process was fair and that justice had been done. Participants also reported that the most important part of the process was being given the opportunity to be listened to and heard.

In addition to formal conferencing, a variety of other restorative interventions were also implemented during the national evaluation, including restorative conversation, circle-time, and peer mediation. No empirical evidence was collected on peer mediation however staff commented about the success of the schemes and reported that they provided a way of increasing pupil responsibility and gave pupils more choices as to how to resolve their difficulties. Circle-time was also considered as a useful way of resolving matters within the classroom.

The national evaluation study also carried out pupil and teacher surveys in order to determine if there were any significant improvements in the school environment following the introduction of restorative practices. The pupil surveys identified no significant effects on attitudes but there were some important improvements in pupils' attitudes in the schools that had implemented restorative practices in a way that involved the whole school. The results from the teachers' survey indicated that the majority of staff believed that their school had benefited from using restorative practices and that there had been significant improvements in pupil behaviour. These results were also stronger for schools that had implemented restorative approaches across the whole school.

While there is mounting evidence of the potential effectiveness of restorative justice conferencing in response to harmful behaviour, what is clear from the research is that the use of conferencing itself is not enough to achieve positive changes to school behaviour management policy and practice (Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) pointed out various implementation issues that were highlighted in the two years following the Education Queensland (1998) study. The main issue primarily involved tensions between existing philosophies and practices in managing behaviour and the use of restorative practices. The authors argued that, whilst restorative conferencing could be very useful in addition to existing behaviour management practices, it has limited potential unless the tensions between different philosophies are addressed.

The introduction of restorative practices challenges deeply held beliefs around notions of discipline and authority (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005) therefore implementing it in school settings is not simply a case of overlaying the justice model of conferencing and achieving sustained outcomes (Morrison et al., 2005). Thorsborne and Vinegrad (2004a) argued that “restorative practices cannot be viewed as isolated interventions or tools that a school uses only when required” (p. 7). Embedding the practice of restorative justice in schools requires a pedagogical shift from the punitive to the relational and therefore has an impact on the school community that needs to be managed effectively for successful and sustainable implementation to occur (Morrison et al., 2005).

Current research has shown that what is needed is broader organisational support in the form of a culture shift that supports the process (Ritchie & O’Connell, 2001). By embracing a whole school approach, restorative practices can help schools to develop an environment that is not only respectful of relationships but one that encourages responsible citizenship, understanding, tolerance, openness, negotiation and above all else, one that is firm and fair in terms of its expectations of those within the school community (Morrison et al., 2005). In summary, the restorative approach can be beneficial for all staff and pupils and not just for those who have broken the rules or caused harm (Better Behaviour Scotland, 2005).

(d) Aims of present study

In light of the research evidence presented above, the current pilot study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of using restorative practices within a West Dunbartonshire secondary school. The study consisted of two distinct parts: (i) the *Individual Conference* element and (ii) the *Whole School* element. The aims of the two core elements are outlined below.

(i) Individual Conference Aims

This part of the restorative practices pilot project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of using restorative conferences to deal with incidents involving a significant amount of harm and therefore set out to:

- Help the person responsible for the incident to repair the harm done to people and relationships
- Help the person responsible to take responsibility for their actions
- Reduce the likelihood of the person responsible repeating the harm to the person harmed or another person
- Leave each conference member feeling satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference, both immediately after the conference and 4-6 weeks following the conference
- Ensure that the school felt satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference

(ii) Whole School Aims

The second part of the pilot project aimed to evaluate how well restorative practices had been established into the school ethos. The main aims were therefore to:

- Increase knowledge and expertise of staff in the area of Restorative Practices
- Enable some staff members to implement restorative practices within their work
- Reduce the levels of incidents causing harm to others, for example it was hoped that the approach would have some impact on the levels of bullying, victimisation, and vandalism experienced in the school
- Increase the levels of confidence amongst staff and pupils that incidents causing harm would be dealt with in an effective manner
- Consider sustainability and long term future for restorative practices

2. Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to produce an evaluative account of the Restorative Practices Pilot Project in St Columba's High School. The evaluation will be achieved by reporting on the outcomes and process of (i) the *Individual Conference* element of the project and (ii) the *Whole School* element of the project. The following research questions for each part of the study were developed from the aims set out above.

(i) Individual Conference

1. *Did each conference member feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference, both immediately after the conference and in the 4-6 weeks following the conference?*
2. *Did the person responsible for the incident take responsibility for his/her actions?*
3. *Did the person responsible re-harm the person harmed or another person after the conference?*
4. *Did the school feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference?*

(ii) Whole School

1. *Did the level of knowledge about the restorative practices approach amongst school staff increase?*
2. *Did any staff use the approach in school following training? If so, how effective did they find it?*
3. *At the end of the initiative, did staff view the behaviour of pupils in the school any differently?*
4. *By the end of the initiative, were staff and pupils any more confident that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils had caused a significant amount of harm to other pupils/members of staff?*
5. *Did staff who had knowledge of restorative practices think that the approach was more helpful than other strategies the school used to deal with incidents where pupils had caused harm to another person?*
6. *Did the restorative practices initiative have any impact on the levels of incidents causing harm to others across S2 and S3 pupils in the school (e.g. bullying)?*

3. Methodology

(a) Individual Conference

Participants

Three cases were referred by the school to the Restorative Justice Co-ordinator, who organised and facilitated each restorative process. In the first case, a 3rd year male pupil and his class teacher participated in a face-to-face restorative conference. The second case involved a 1st year male pupil who participated in a shuttle-dialogue process with a pupil from a nearby primary school and both of his parents. The third case involved five pupils who acted as a positive peer group to support a vulnerable female pupil who had been affected by ongoing bullying.

Materials and Procedure

Incidents where it was considered that a significant amount of harm had occurred to another person were referred to the Restorative Practices Service by the school. The school contacted the individuals involved to advise them that the case had been referred and explained that the purpose of the restorative practices service was to find ways in which young people could make amends for the damage or hurt caused by their actions. The school emphasised that involvement in a restorative process was voluntary and that they would be contacted by the restorative practices service in due course. Details of the referral procedures are provided in Appendix I.

A trained restorative practices facilitator prepared all participants prior to any communication to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the process. Both the person responsible and the person harmed were given detailed information about what to expect from the restorative process during the initial meeting with the facilitator. This included being given a preparation booklet which contained questions for them to consider before meeting with the other person. A further meeting was arranged for each individual to go over their responses to the questions in the preparation booklet to ensure that they were fully prepared and understood what would happen during the process. See Thorsborne and Vinegrad (2004a) for more detailed information regarding conference preparation.

During the two restorative processes used in this study (i.e. the face-to-face meeting used in Case 1 and the shuttle-dialogue used in Case 2), the facilitator emphasised the importance of all parties having mutual respect for one another. In Case 1, the person responsible explained what happened and why

(i.e. the facts). The person harmed was then given the opportunity to express how they were affected by what happened (i.e. the consequences). Discussion then took place about how the person responsible could help to repair the harm caused by their actions and once this was agreed, both parties signed an action plan (i.e. the future). After the meeting, the facilitator helped the person responsible to follow the action plan to ensure the harm was repaired using the methods agreed during the restorative process (e.g. agreeing to write a letter of apology to the person harmed). The procedure for Case 2 followed a slightly different format, as the person harmed was not willing to participate in a face-to-face meeting. A shuttle-dialogue took place where the facilitator acted as a 'go-between' and talked to both parties separately.

All participants were given a debriefing session with the facilitator one week after the restorative process took place. This provided them with the opportunity to express how they felt about taking part in the process and to discuss any outstanding thoughts or feelings they had about it. At this stage, participants were asked to complete the 12-item *Conference Evaluation* questionnaire (see Appendix II). This was designed by Psychological Services to establish the extent to which each person involved felt satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference. The items included how each participant felt about the experience, such as, '*Did you feel that you were able to tell your side of what happened at the conference?*' and '*Did you feel that you were treated fairly at the conference?*' The questionnaire also required each conference member to indicate how happy they felt about the agreement that was made at the conference.

Participants were then re-interviewed 4-6 weeks after the conference and were asked to complete the *Follow-up Conference Evaluation* questionnaire (Appendix III). This questionnaire was also designed by Psychological Services and consisted of four items that aimed to establish how satisfied the participants were with the restorative process in the longer term and whether or not they felt that the conference was an effective strategy for dealing with their situation.

(b) Whole School

Participants

(i) Staff

34 members of staff attended introductory training sessions to raise awareness about using restorative practices in schools and a further 5 members of staff attended Restorative Practices Facilitator Training

62 members of teaching staff voluntarily participated in the questionnaire-based survey that was carried out at the beginning of the initiative and 44 members of staff completed the same measure again at the end of the initiative. Full teaching staff for the school was approximately 72 therefore the response rate for the pre-test measure was around 86% and the post-test response rate was around 58%. Details of the staff who took part in the surveys are provided below in Table 3.

Table 3 Staff Evaluation Questionnaires completed and returned at the beginning (pre-test) and at the end (post-test) of the Restorative Practices initiative

	Number of pre-test questionnaires returned	Number of post-test questionnaires returned
Teachers	50	34
Senior Management Team	4	2
Learning Support	1	2
Pastoral Care	4	3
Other	3	3

(ii) Pupils

S1 and S2 pupils (n = 235) voluntarily completed questionnaires at the beginning of the initiative and the same cohort of pupils (n = 192) completed and returned the questionnaire again at the end of the initiative.

Materials and Procedure

(i) Awareness Raising

Awareness raising training was delivered during September and October 2006. This consisted of a basic introduction to restorative practices, using a combination of presentation material, group work, discussion/reflection, activities and exercises and DVD training material. Staff were introduced to different components of restorative work, including the use of circles and restorative conversations, and

were given opportunities to practice and explore the skills involved. The training was delivered over 3 twilight sessions (3.30-5.00pm) to encourage participants to adopt the approach in class and share their experiences with the other members of staff at the next training event.

Facilitator's training was provided over a period of 4 days in June 2006 and covered the practice of facilitating restorative conferences. The process and benefits of using restorative conferences was also covered and staff were given the opportunity to participate in role-play scenarios. A support network was set up to help trained facilitators develop and retain their skills.

Some members of staff provided feedback on the awareness raising training by completing open ended questions on an evaluation form designed by the training providers. Forms were completed and returned at the end of the session and the results are included in the whole school results section of the evaluation.

(ii) Staff evaluation Questionnaire

In order to assess the level of knowledge about restorative practices among school staff and whether or not knowledge and awareness had increased as a result of the initiative, members of staff were asked to complete the *Staff Evaluation Questionnaire*, which was designed by Psychological Services to address the research questions relating to the whole school element of the study (see Appendix IV).

The questionnaire was distributed to staff during an in-service training day in May 2006 when the majority of staff were available. The questionnaire was distributed again to members of staff at the end of pilot period in December 2006. This was done through the school and the return rate relied on staff completing the questionnaire and returning it to the Guidance Base to be collected by Psychological Services. The opportunity for receiving the same level of questionnaires at the end of the initiative was therefore reduced.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 items containing both quantitative and qualitative questions and was administered at the beginning and at the end of the initiative as a pre- and post-intervention measure. Details of the items included in the questionnaire are summarised below (see Appendix IV for full details):-

Staff were asked to rate the behaviour of the majority (50% +) of the pupils most of the time and whether they considered pupil behaviour to have '*improved*', '*remained the same*', or '*got worse*' over the past year. They were also asked to identify the number of times a pupil had been verbally aggressive towards them and the number of times a pupil had been physically aggressive towards them. The questionnaire referred to the school's behaviour policy and asked staff how confident they felt that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils had caused a significant amount of harm to other pupils/members of staff. They were also asked how effective they thought exclusions were for dealing with behaviour problems and whether or not they considered exclusions to be the best way to deal with such issues.

Staff were asked about their knowledge of restorative practices, if they had attended any training on the subject and if so, did they find the training useful to them. Participants were required to indicate if they had used restorative practices in their work and if so, they were asked to provide qualitative information of situations where they used the approach. They were then asked to reflect on their experiences and consider how effective they thought this approach was in dealing with incidents where pupils had caused harm to another person (e.g. through bullying/vandalism/victimisation/theft/classroom disruption etc.) and whether or not they found it to be more helpful than other strategies.

The questionnaire also considered the average percentage of time that teachers spent dealing with behaviour problems during lesson time and the number of times they had to send a pupil out of class during the previous month.

(iii) My Life in School Checklist

The *My Life in School Checklist* (Arora & Thompson, 1987) was distributed to S1 and S2 pupils in May 2006 and was completed again by the same year group in December 2006, by which time the pupils had progressed into S2 and S3 (see Appendix V for details). For convenience, the questionnaire was completed in registration classes. Pupils were given verbal instructions by the registration teacher and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed.

The purpose of this checklist was to measure the impact of the restorative practices initiative on levels of aggressive and bullying behaviour among pupils. The 40-item questionnaire consisted of statements describing positive and negative events that may have occurred during the week the questionnaire was

completed. The items described various bullying behaviour, friendly behaviour, and aggressive behaviour that the pupil may have experienced from another pupil.

Positive statements included ‘*Another pupil was very nice to me*’ or ‘*Another pupil helped me with my homework*’. Examples of negative statements were ‘*Another pupil tried to kick me*’ or ‘*Another pupil tried to break something of mine*’. Pupils were required to indicate whether they had experienced each event ‘*not at all*’, ‘*only once*’, or ‘*more than once*’ during that week.

The checklist enables a *Bullying* score and a *General Aggression* score to be calculated for groups of 40 pupils or more. Details of the key items used to calculate the two scores are provided below in Table 4.

Table 4 **Items on the *My Life in Schools Checklist* used for calculating ‘Bullying’ and ‘General Aggression’ scores**

Item	Statement (“ <i>Another pupil ...</i> ”)
5	<i>Tried to kick me</i>
9	<i>Threatened to hurt me</i>
11	<i>Demanded money from me</i>
25	<i>Tried to hurt me</i>
38	<i>Tried to break something of mine</i>
40	<i>Tried to hit me</i>

The Bullying score was calculated by summing the percentage of pupils who responded ‘*more than once*’ for each of the six items and then dividing the total sum by six. To calculate the General Aggression score, the sum of the percentage of pupils who responded ‘*once*’ for each of the six items was added to the six percentages used to calculate the Bullying score and divided by 12.

Psychological Services included three additional items at the end of the standardised questionnaire to incorporate pupils’ perceptions of whether or not the school was effective in dealing with incidents that caused harm to others. The items required a yes/no response to whether or not they thought that the school did a good job of stopping bullying, vandalism, and pupils disrupting class lessons.

4. Results

The results are divided into two sections. Firstly, the results from the *Individual Conference* element are presented followed by the findings from the staff and pupil surveys for the *Whole School* element of the study. All of the findings are presented in relation to the relevant research questions for each part of the evaluation.

(a) *Individual Conference Results*

There were three pieces of work carried out by the Restorative Justice Co-ordinator. The first case involved a restorative conference between a class teacher (person harmed) and a 3rd year male pupil (Case 1). The second case (Case 2) involved a shuttle-dialogue between the person harmed (primary school boy) and the person responsible (1st year pupil). Evaluation questionnaires were completed for both of these cases and the results are presented below in relation to the research questions for the individual conference element of the evaluation. The third case involved a restorative circle, which was designed to engage a group of pupils in supporting another pupil who was experiencing ongoing bullying (Case 3). No evaluation forms were completed by any of the individuals involved in this case therefore the evidence presented below was gathered via verbal feedback from the school.

(i) *Restorative Conference*

CASE 1

A 3rd year male pupil had been verbally abusive to his class teacher in front of a 1st year class, which resulted in a 5-day exclusion from school. Both the pupil and the teacher, who had been significantly affected by the aggression shown during the incident, agreed to take part in a restorative process. The preparation process took place when the pupil returned to school after the exclusion and a face-to-face meeting was organised for the following week.

1. *Did each conference member feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference, both immediately after the conference and 4-6 weeks later?*

The person harmed did not complete the *Conference Evaluation* questionnaire immediately after the conference however feedback was gathered verbally and the DVD provided detailed information about

her experience during an interview with the Depute Head Teacher. The brief *Follow-up Evaluation* questionnaire was completed by the teacher 4-6 weeks after the conference took place. Details of the verbal data gathered immediately after the conference and the data from the evaluation questionnaire completed at the follow-up period are provided below in Table 5.

Table 5 **Person harmed: Evaluation of face-to-face restorative conference**

<p>Conference Evaluation</p>	<p>The feedback gathered immediately after the conference demonstrated that the person harmed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Was initially sceptical about the conference but was willing to try it</i> ➤ <i>Believed it was very important for her to be able to say how she felt about the incident</i> ➤ <i>Found it to be a “powerful experience”</i> ➤ <i>Was surprised at how hard she found the conference and how upset she was when she started trying to talk to the pupil about the incident.</i> ➤ <i>Was “pleasantly surprised with the outcome”, which was “really positive”</i> ➤ <i>Felt “very happy” with the agreement that was made at the conference</i> ➤ <i>Considered the restorative conference to be a “very positive experience”</i>
<p>Follow-up Evaluation</p>	<p>Feedback 4-6 weeks after the conference indicated that the person harmed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Still felt “very happy” with the agreement made at the conference</i> ➤ <i>Believed that the process helped to sort the situation out</i> ➤ <i>Would encourage other people in similar situations to use restorative conferences to help sort things out</i> ➤ <i>Did not believe that having a conference was “more helpful” than other strategies the school used to sort out situations like the one she was involved in but she thought that it was “one of several helpful strategies in place”</i>

The person responsible (3rd year pupil) completed the *Conference Evaluation* immediately after the conference and the brief *Follow-up Evaluation* was completed 4-6 weeks after the conference took place. Details from both questionnaires are summarised below in Table 6.

Table 6**Person responsible: Evaluation of face-to-face restorative conference**

Conference Evaluation	<p>The data collected from the questionnaire indicated that the person responsible:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Was aware of the reason for having the conference and felt that it was “to sort things out with my teacher so that she knows I’m sorry – I think she knows this now”</i> ➤ <i>Believed that both he and someone else were responsible for starting the situation</i> ➤ <i>Thought that the right people came to the conference</i> ➤ <i>Was “not nervous” about coming to the conference but felt it was “something I had to do” and “felt I wanted to”</i> ➤ <i>Felt that he was able to tell his side of what happened at the conference</i> ➤ <i>Felt that he was listened to at the conference</i> ➤ <i>Believed he was treated fairly at the conference</i> ➤ <i>Understood how the person harmed felt about what happened</i> ➤ <i>Felt “happy” about the agreement that was made at the end of the conference between the people involved in the situation</i> ➤ <i>Did not think there was anything that would have made the conference better for him</i>
Follow-up Evaluation	<p>Feedback 4-6 weeks after the conference indicated that the person responsible:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Still felt “happy” about the agreement that was made at the conference</i> ➤ <i>Thought that the conference helped to sort the situation out</i> ➤ <i>Would encourage other people who have been in a similar situation to use a conference to help sort things out</i> ➤ <i>Thought that having a restorative conference was more helpful than other approaches the school used to sort out situations like the one he was involved in</i>

2. *Did the person responsible for the incident take responsibility for his/her actions?*

The pupil involved was sincere in taking responsibility for his actions and listened intently as the teacher conveyed the consequences of his behaviour to him. He apologised sincerely for what he had done and for the effect he had on both the teacher and the 1st year pupils in the class. He discussed an action plan and agreed to further work with the facilitator regarding the impact of his actions. He also agreed to write a letter of apology to the pupils who witnessed the incident. Once this was agreed, the tension between the pupil and the teacher seemed to disappear, indicating that they would now be comfortable being in the same classroom as each other.

3. *Did the person responsible re-harm anyone after the conference?*

The pupil maintained his improved behaviour and positive relationship with the teacher after the conference, although he did struggle to maintain this level of behaviour in all classes. He was also involved in an incident at college along with other individuals however, according to written communication from the college, he was the only person who admitted responsibility and offered a sincere apology for his actions.

4. *Did the school feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference?*

There was very positive feedback from the class teacher harmed by the incident and the Head Teacher one week after the conference had taken place. The class teacher had witnessed major changes in the attitude and behaviour of the pupil in her class. After the conference, he was very polite, helpful and respectful towards her and he tried very hard to manage his behaviour in situations where he would normally have lost control. Both the class teacher and the Head Teacher were satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference and reported that the harm had been repaired to a large degree.

(ii) *Restorative Shuttle-Mediation*

CASE 2

A 1st year pupil sprayed a 9-year old male pupil from a nearby primary school with a pungent 'fast' gas. The boy harmed and his parents were very frightened as they did not know what the gas was. While the boy responsible felt he was only carrying on, it would have resulted in an assault charge had the police become involved. The parents of the boy harmed conveyed their feelings of how they had been affected through various discussions with the Restorative Justice Co-ordinator. They had missed important medical appointments and the boy's father had lost earnings through taking time off work because their son was too scared to walk to school alone. Emotionally, it hit everyone in the household very hard. The referral was made to the Restorative Justice Co-ordinator to help the pupil take responsibility for his behaviour and hopefully to reduce the number of incidents he was involved in. Neither boy wanted to meet face-to-face therefore a shuttle-mediation process was organised to try and repair the harm done

1. *Did each member feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of the shuttle-mediation, both immediately after and 4-6 weeks later?*

The parents of the boy harmed were very angry about what had happened but the fact that somebody was prepared to listen to this anger helped them greatly. The boy’s mother felt that the process had been “*excellent*”. Indeed, the restorative process was a very therapeutic experience for the whole family and proved to be highly beneficial. It removed fear, got questions answered and allowed them to move on. The family conveyed sincere thanks for the restorative work that was carried out and were grateful to St Columba’s High School for taking the matter seriously.

Data was gathered from the boy who was harmed after the shuttle-mediation process was complete however there was no follow-up data collected 4-6 weeks later. The results of the *Conference Evaluation* are provided in Table 7

Table 7 Person harmed: Evaluation of restorative shuttle-mediation

Conference Evaluation	<p>The data collected from the questionnaire indicated that the person harmed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Was aware of the reason for the restorative process and felt that it was “trying to help me feel better after the boy sprayed me”</i> ➤ <i>Thought that the right people were involved in the shuttle dialogue</i> ➤ <i>Believed that the boy who sprayed him was responsible</i> ➤ <i>Felt “a bit scared at first” about taking part but he was “happy about it”</i> ➤ <i>Felt that he was able to tell his side of what happened</i> ➤ <i>Felt that he was listened to during the process</i> ➤ <i>Believed he was treated fairly</i> ➤ <i>Understood how the person responsible felt about what happened</i> ➤ <i>Felt “very happy” about the agreement that was made at the end of the process</i> ➤ <i>Did not think there was anything that would have made the shuttle dialogue process better for him</i> ➤ <i>Reported “it’s been fine”</i>
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The person responsible for the incident also completed the *Conference Evaluation* questionnaire when the shuttle-mediation process ended and the brief *Follow-up Evaluation* was completed 4-6 weeks later. The findings from both questionnaires are summarised below in Table 8.

Table 8 **Person responsible: Evaluation of restorative shuttle-dialogue**

<p>Conference Evaluation</p>	<p>The data collected from the questionnaire indicated that the person responsible:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Thought that the reason for having the dialogue was “to help all involved” and “to help me to behave in future”</i> ➤ <i>Agreed that the right people were involved in the restorative process</i> ➤ <i>Believed that he was solely responsible for starting the situation</i> ➤ <i>Felt “good” about taking part in the shuttle dialogue</i> ➤ <i>Felt that the process helped him and commented “It will help to stop me from doing this again”</i> ➤ <i>Felt that he was able to tell his side of what happened</i> ➤ <i>Felt that he was listened to during the shuttle dialogue</i> ➤ <i>Believed that he was treated fairly during the process</i> ➤ <i>Understood how the person harmed felt about what happened</i> ➤ <i>Felt “happy” about the agreement that was made at the end of the process</i> ➤ <i>Did not think there was anything that would have made the process better for him</i> <p>Brief comments on the questionnaire from the boys’ mum included that she:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Was “willing to try anything” to help her son take responsibility for his actions.</i> ➤ <i>Felt that the process had “helped him to understand the effect on others”</i> ➤ <i>Believed the process had been “good for him”</i>
<p>Follow-up Evaluation</p>	<p>Feedback 4-6 weeks after the dialogue indicated that the person responsible:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Felt “a bit happy” about the agreement that was made at the end of the process</i> ➤ <i>Thought that the shuttle-mediation had helped to sort the situation out</i> ➤ <i>Would encourage other people who have been in a similar situation to use the same process to help sort things out</i> ➤ <i>Thought the process was more helpful than other approaches the school used to sort out situations like the one he was involved in</i>

2. *Did the person responsible for the incident take responsibility for his/her actions?*

The boy responsible was made aware of how the incident had caused the boy harmed to be too scared to walk to school alone and how the parents had missed important medical appointments and lost money through taking time off work to support their son. The boy responsible was able to see the domino effect of his actions and he offered to write an apology to the family. He managed to do this very well using his own initiative and reassured them that an incident like this would never happen again. The letter was given to the boy harmed, who was pleased with the outcome and stated that he now felt safe enough to start walking to school again.

3. *Did the person responsible re-harm anyone after the conference?*

The boy responsible agreed in the action plan never to bother the other boy again and there have been no further incidents involving significant harm to another person.

4. *Did the school feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference?*

All feedback regarding the shuttle-mediation was positive. The process of repairing the harm done was successful in this case and it was considered by all of the staff involved in the process to be a very rewarding piece of work.

(ii) *Restorative Circle: Peer Support Group*

CASE 3

The school requested assistance from the Restorative Justice Co-ordinator in dealing with an ongoing bullying situation using a restorative approach. The situation involved a female pupil who was vulnerable and isolated and suffered harassment from other pupils e.g. name calling and nasty remarks. There were many small but accumulative incidents that the school had tried to deal with as and when they arose and when the person harmed was able to identify the person(s) responsible. However other individuals were ready to step in and keep the bullying going and attempts to deal with the situation by the school had limited effect.

The person harmed did not want to engage in a restorative process which involved meeting the people responsible face-to-face. However she did agree for the school to engage a positive peer group to assist and support her. Five pupils who were considered to be supportive to the person harmed were identified by members of staff.

The Restorative Justice Co-ordinator held a meeting with the pupils to identify the problem and to discuss ways of supporting the person harmed. The meeting ran as a circle and the group proved to be very insightful in terms of identifying possible causes of the problem and suggesting potential solutions. The pupils supported the person harmed by walking with her, being kind to her, and influencing some of the people responsible when this presented no risk to them.

Engaging pupils as a support network to try and stop the name calling, nasty remarks and isolation felt by the person harmed appeared to have positive outcomes. One of the benefits was the reaction of the young people who were involved in identifying and addressing the problem. While initially apprehensive about the meeting, they gained a great deal of confidence and sense of self-worth from being asked to help sort things out. The Restorative Justice Co-ordinator wrote to all of the pupils thanking them for their invaluable contribution and explained how their ideas and suggestions were very helpful and would never have been thought of by members of staff would never have come up with such ideas . This was a step towards involving pupils in resolving conflict and preventing harm in the school.

Due to the nature of this piece of work, no data was gathered from the person harmed or from those responsible in relation to the *Conference Evaluation* and the *Follow-up Evaluation* questionnaires.

(b) Whole School Results

The findings from the staff and pupil surveys that were carried out at the beginning of the initiative and at the end of the initiative are presented below in relation to the relevant research questions for the whole school element of the study. This section includes qualitative data generated from the school DVD and feedback provided from members of staff who attended one of the training sessions.

1. Did the level of knowledge about restorative practices increase amongst school staff?

In order to evaluate the level of knowledge about restorative practices and whether or not it increased by the end of the pilot period, the staff evaluation survey considered the number of teachers who attended training and asked each respondent how much knowledge they had about the approach.

Training

Of the 62 members of staff who completed the questionnaire at the beginning of the initiative 10 people responded that they had received training on restorative practices. Of the 44 members of staff who completed the questionnaire at the end of the initiative, 24 individuals had attended training, indicating that the percentage of staff who had received training on restorative practices increased from 16% at the beginning of the initiative to 55% by the end of the initiative.

By the end of the initiative, 34 people in total attended training. 90% (n = 31) of teachers who attended training considered it to be useful to them while the remaining 10% (n = 3) said it was not useful. Members of staff completed an evaluation form at the end of one of the training sessions (n = 9). The feedback regarding the content and relevance of the training was positive and the following comments were taken directly from the completed evaluation forms:

- *Very informative – a good learning experience*
- *A practical insight into the values, skills and processes of restorative practices*
- *An opportunity to implement a powerful and positive strategy to nourish professional and personal relationships*
- *Best alternative to exclusion – to date*
- *Very interesting and thought-provoking – making me evaluate how I respond to others in all kinds of situations.*
- *Interesting, informative and extremely useful for future work. I hope to take this new way of thinking forward in a variety of contexts*
- *Excellent. I will hopefully be able to use it in the context of pastoral and classroom situations and have already started looking at some situations in a ‘restorative’ way*
- *I found it concise and relevant to my day-to-day experience as a teacher*
- *A different and more helpful way of dealing with situations. I have tried to practice some of the suggested techniques and found them to be extremely effective*
- *Very helpful and positive*

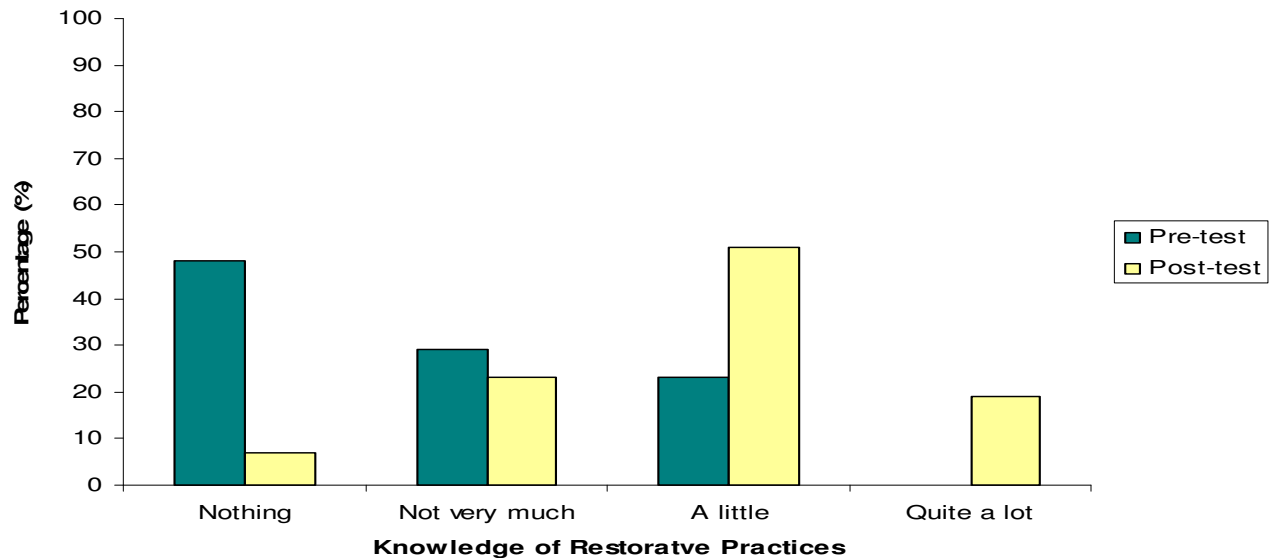
It can be seen from the above that a greater number of staff had received training on restorative practices by the end of the initiative and the majority considered the training to be useful. As a result of the training and increased awareness of restorative practices it was therefore hypothesised that the level of knowledge about the approach would increase by the end of the pilot period.

Knowledge

In order to measure how much knowledge staff had about restorative practices, the survey required respondents to indicate whether they knew ‘nothing’, ‘not very much’, ‘a little’ or ‘quite a lot’ about the approach. The findings are illustrated below in Figure 1, where the pre-test results refer to the

baseline data collected at the beginning of the pilot study and the post-test results refer to the data collected during the second survey.

Figure 1 Teachers' self-reported knowledge about restorative practices



It can be seen from Figure 1 that 48% (n = 30) of teachers said they knew nothing about restorative practices at the beginning of the initiative compared with 7% (n = 3) at the end of the initiative. The percentage of staff who didn't know very much about the approach decreased from 29% (n = 18) to 23% (n = 10) and the percentage of teachers responding that they had a little knowledge increased from 23% (n = 15) to 50% (n = 22). None of the participants reported having quite a lot of knowledge about restorative practices at the beginning of the study however this increased to 19% (n = 8) at the end.

Overall, the above findings demonstrated that, as a result of the training provided throughout the pilot project, the level of knowledge about using restorative practices in school increased amongst staff during this period.

2. Did staff use the approach in school following training? If so, how effective did they find it?

Of the 15 people who said they had knowledge of restorative practices at the beginning of the initiative, 12 members of staff (80%) said they had used the approach in their work. Of the 30 members of staff who said they had knowledge about restorative practices at the end of the initiative, 73% (n = 22) said

they used the approach in their work while 27% (n = 8) said they did not. The findings demonstrated that the number of staff with knowledge of restorative practices doubled by the end of the initiative. Moreover, the number of staff using the approach in their work also increased from 12 members of staff at the beginning of the study to 22 by the end of the study. However, despite there being an overall increase in the number of staff using restorative practices in their work at the end of the pilot period, there was also a greater proportion of staff who reported having knowledge of the approach and yet they had never used it in their work.

Using Restorative Conversations

The examples gathered from the staff evaluation questionnaires indicated that members of staff predominantly used restorative conversations as a form of mediation to try and resolve conflict among pupils however many did not indicate how frequently they used the approach. Through restorative conversations staff reported that they encouraged pupils to realise the impact of their behaviour on others whilst specifically trying to emphasise the harm caused (e.g. in bullying incidents). One teacher indicated that the use of restorative questions had helped him to build more trusting relationships with pupils and, through the values and processes he had learned from the training, he felt that he was able to handle situations in a more personal way by focusing on the person and the relationship rather than what the pupil had done wrong. As a result of this approach, pupils admitted their behaviour was wrong and were able to explore the details of what they had done and why it was wrong, leading them on to identify the consequences of their actions and the impact their behaviour had on other people. This teacher further emphasised that restorative conversations gave pupils the opportunity to put measures in place to rectify the situation and to ensure that the behaviour would not re-occur therefore allowing them to take responsibility for their actions.

Using Restorative Circles

Several teachers also reported using restorative circles on a regular basis. The main reasons that were identified for using circle time was to resolve classroom disputes where disruptive behaviour was having a detrimental effect on the class as a whole. The examples provided below in Table 9 were taken from the school DVD and were provided by class teachers who reported using regular restorative circles for pupils to share their feelings about the class in an attempt to improve behaviour. The examples are detailed in relation to: (1) the identified need for having the circle; (2) the process involved; (3) the outcomes of using the circle to resolve conflict in the classroom.

Table 9

Teachers’ perceptions of using restorative circles in the classroom

	Identified Need	Process	Outcomes
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disruptive 3rd year class ○ No learning taking place ○ No progress being made with class work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The circle only took seconds to set up ○ Pupils agreed the rules ○ Teacher & pupils expressed their feelings about the class ○ Pupils felt that the behaviour of one pupil in particular had a detrimental effect on the class as a whole ○ The whole process took less than 10 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All pupils seemed to respond well to the circle ○ Outcomes were positive ○ Behaviour of the pupil disrupting the class was completely different after the circle – he seemed to respond to the fact that the other pupils didn’t appreciate the way he was behaving
	Identified Need	Process	Outcomes
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disruptive 2nd year class ○ No learning taking place ○ Pupils’ behaviour towards one another could be nasty at times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Circles didn’t take up too much class time ○ Teacher & pupils agreed the class was not going very well & discussed what could be done to make the class ‘better, calmer, and more enjoyable’ ○ Pupils were very keen to express their opinions and listened to others & suggested listening to calm music at the beginning of each class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pupils gave very positive feedback afterwards ○ Behaviour improved after regular circles ○ More learning was taking place ○ Improved behaviour continued in other classes ○ Pupils entered the classroom more calmly and had more helpful attitudes ○ Calm music and the calmness of the class had been ‘very good’ and ‘positive’ – the pupils ‘looked forward to it’
	Identified Need	Process	Outcomes
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pupils constantly arguing with one another ○ Behaviour had a negative effect on the whole class ○ Conflict made group work very difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Circles took about 10 minutes ○ Teacher emphasised the impact of the arguing on the whole class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class worked more smoothly ○ Pupils got on with work a lot better ○ Teacher intended to use it regularly

The examples provided in Table 9 highlighted that circles did not take up too much teaching time and had beneficial effects for resolving classroom conflict and disruptive behaviour among the pupils. In addition to the positive outcomes gained for the teachers, they appeared to have a positive impact on the behaviour of each class as a whole, with improvements in some pupils' attitudes and behaviour continuing into other classes. Moreover, the teachers reported that more effective learning had taken place as a result of the improved classroom environment.

In addition to the data gathered from teachers who reported using circles regularly, the school DVD also included feedback from 2nd year pupils who had been involved in a circle. The responses detailed in Table 10 were taken from the DVD and provide qualitative data from the perspective of the pupils.

Table 10 Pupils' perceptions of restorative circles

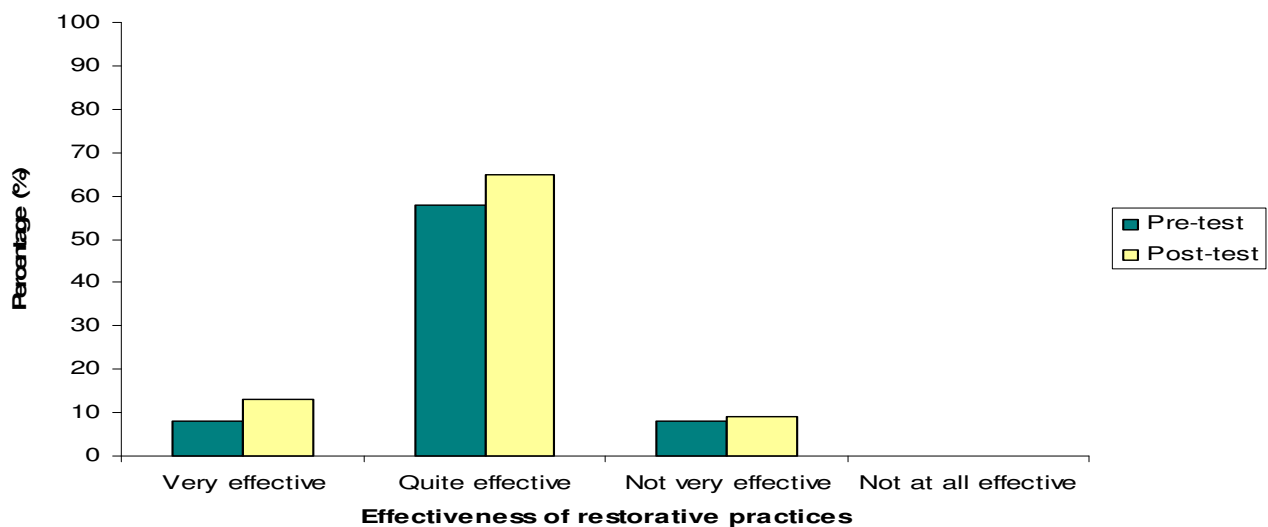
<p>Why do you think the class needed a circle?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>To improve behaviour</i> ➤ <i>Problems needed to be addressed in a safe and controlled way where everybody could be heard</i> ➤ <i>Some of us are not getting an education because of the behaviour of the class</i> ➤ <i>The majority are punished because of the minority</i>
<p>What is good about circle time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>It helps people to feel better about themselves</i> ➤ <i>It helps to stop the behaviour and stops people disrupting the class</i> ➤ <i>It is a good thing because it helps people to talk about what they think and to speak their mind</i> ➤ <i>I think it is good because you get to say what you feel without being worried about getting bullied after school for what you said</i> ➤ <i>It gives you a chance to think about all the wrong things you are doing in class and how you can improve</i>
<p>What difference do you think circle time makes to your class as a community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>It helps people to understand what they have done wrong</i> ➤ <i>Should do more of it so people can realise their behaviour is wrong</i> ➤ <i>We should do it in every class to help improve behaviour in all classes</i> ➤ <i>It helped people to stop misbehaving</i>

The above comments indicated that circles had a positive impact on the pupils and provided them with the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings about the behaviour of the class within a safe environment. The pupils emphasised how important it was for them to be able to talk about their opinions and to feel like their opinions were being listened to by everyone else in the class. Moreover, the pupils considered circle time to be good for helping to stop disruptive behaviour in the class, as individuals became more aware of the impact of their behaviour on others.

Effectiveness of restorative practices

Members of staff who reported using restorative practices in their work were required to indicate on the evaluation questionnaire how effective they found the approach for dealing with incidents where pupils had caused harm to another person, for example through bullying, vandalism, victimisation, theft, or classroom disruption. The findings are illustrated below in Figure 2, where the pre-test results refer to the baseline data collected at the beginning of the study and the post-test results refer to the data generated from the second survey.

Figure 2 Effectiveness of using restorative practices



It can be seen from Figure 2 that there was a greater percentage of teachers at the second survey who considered restorative practices to be effective for dealing with incidents involving harm. Of the 12 members of staff who reported using restorative practices in their work at the beginning of the study, 66% (n = 8) thought it was an effective strategy with 8% (n = 1) responding that it was very effective and 58% (n = 7) saying it was quite effective.

In comparison, the percentage of teachers reporting that restorative practices was an effective approach at the second survey increased to 78% (n = 18), with 13% (n = 3) reporting it was very effective and 65% (n = 15) responding that it was quite effective. 8% (n = 1) of teachers thought it was not very effective at the beginning of the initiative compared with 9% (n = 2) at the end and there were no responses for 'not at all effective' from both the pre- and post-test data.

At the beginning of the initiative, 2 members of staff felt that they were unable to comment on how effective the approach was because they had not been given the chance to use it before completing the questionnaire and a further 2 members of staff commented that the effectiveness of the strategy varied depending on the circumstances. The following comments were taken from the data generated at the second survey:-

- *Don't use it very often, not enough time*
- *In my opinion there are some pupils nothing works – sorry*
- *Depends on the pupils how well different strategies work*
- *Can be very effective – but depends on the pupil*

Overall, the results indicated that there was a 12% increase in the percentage of staff who thought restorative practices were effective for dealing with incidents where a pupil had caused harm to another person. In addition to this, the qualitative data generated from the school DVD provided examples of how restorative circles and restorative conversations in particular were effective for resolving classroom disruption and repairing relationships between pupils and members of staff.

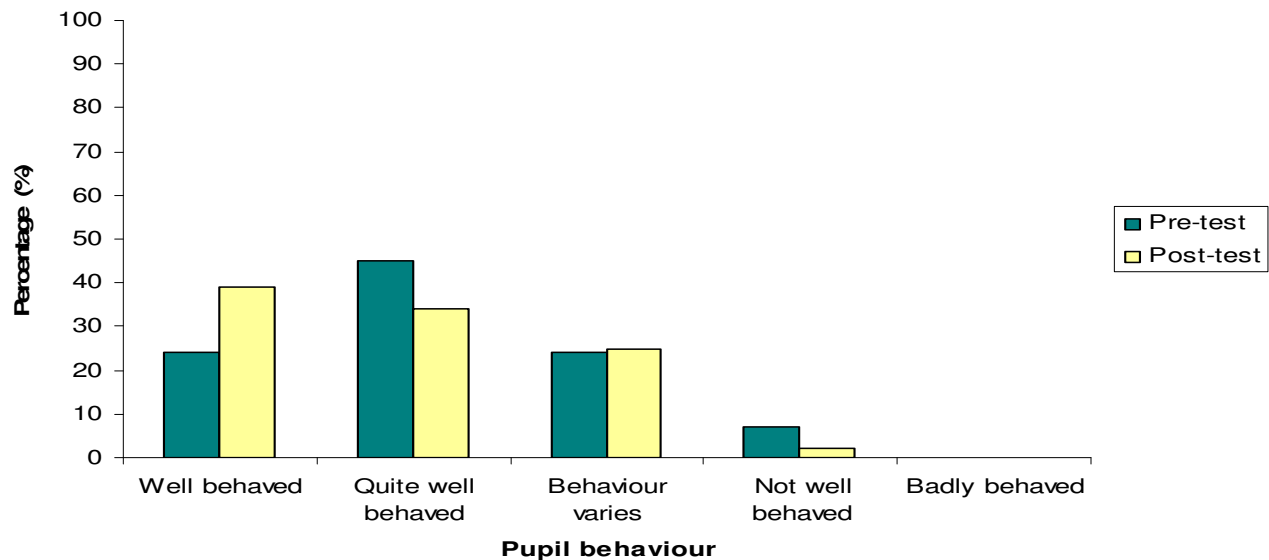
3. At the end of the initiative, did staff view the behaviour of pupils in the school any differently?

Staff were asked to rate the behaviour of the majority of pupils and indicate the number of times pupils had been verbally and physically aggressive towards them within the previous month. They were also asked to indicate how much of their teaching time was lost dealing with behaviour problems, the number of times they had sent a pupil out of class in the previous month, and whether or not they considered pupil behaviour in general to have improved, remained the same or deteriorated over the last year. The findings are presented below in relation to each item from the evaluation questionnaire.

Staff views on pupil behaviour in general

Staff were asked to rate the behaviour of the majority of pupils (50%+) most of the time. The results are illustrated below in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Staff views on the behaviour of the majority of pupils



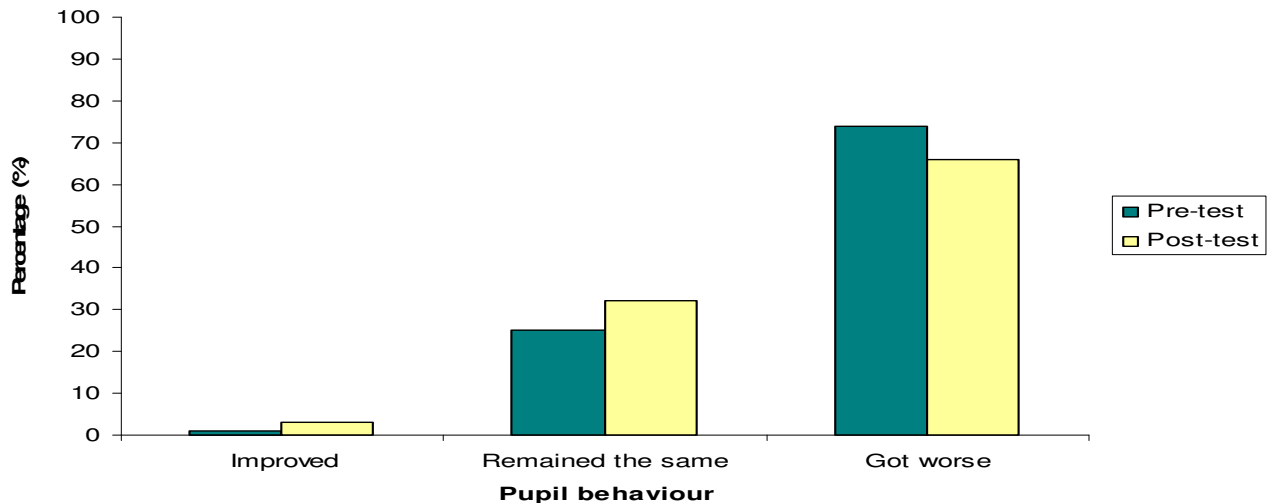
It can be seen from Figure 3 that 69% of staff (n = 43) thought that pupils were either well behaved or quite well behaved at the baseline survey (pre-test data) compared with 73% (n = 32) of staff at the second survey (post-test data). Approximately the same percentage of staff thought that pupil behaviour varied, with 24% (n = 15) at the baseline survey and 25% (n = 11) at the second survey. The percentage of teachers who thought that the majority of pupils were not well behaved decreased from 7% (n = 4) to 2% (n = 1). None of the staff who participated in the baseline survey or the second survey regarded the majority of pupils to be badly behaved.

Overall, the findings suggested that the majority of staff considered pupils to be relatively well behaved both at the beginning and at the end of the pilot study, indicating that staff views on pupil behaviour in general did not change significantly as a result of the restorative practices initiative.

Staff views on pupil behaviour over the last year

Staff were asked to consider the behaviour of pupils over the last year and to indicate if they thought that pupil behaviour had improved, remained the same, or got worse during this period. The findings are illustrated below in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Staff views on pupil behaviour over the last year



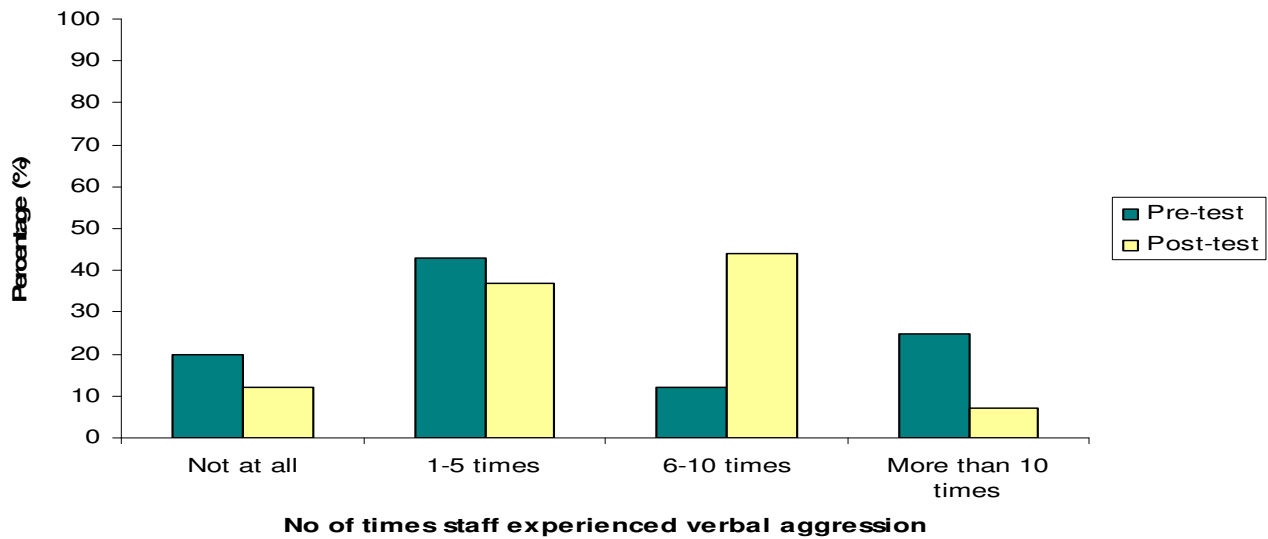
It can be seen from the findings presented above that the majority of staff thought that pupil behaviour had deteriorated over the last year, with 74% of staff (n = 45) at the beginning of the initiative and 66% (n = 27) at the end of the initiative reporting that pupil behaviour had got worse. The pre-test data indicated that 25% of staff (n = 15) thought that pupil behaviour had remained the same compared with 32% (n = 13) at the end of the initiative. Only one member of staff at both surveys (pre-test = 1%; post-test = 2%) considered pupil behaviour to have improved over the last year.

Overall, the results of both surveys suggested that very few members of staff thought that pupil behaviour had improved over the last year. The majority of staff reported that pupil behaviour had deteriorated and the remainder considered it to have remained the same, indicating that staff views on pupil behaviour did not change significantly by the end of the restorative practices initiative.

Frequency of verbal and physical aggression towards teachers

Members of staff were asked to comment on the number of times they had experienced verbal and physical aggression from pupils within the previous month. The results in relation to how frequently staff experienced pupils being rude to them or swearing at them are provided below in Figure 5. The findings in relation to how frequently they experienced physically aggressive behaviour are detailed in Figure 6.

Figure 5 Staff self-report about the frequency of pupils being rude to them



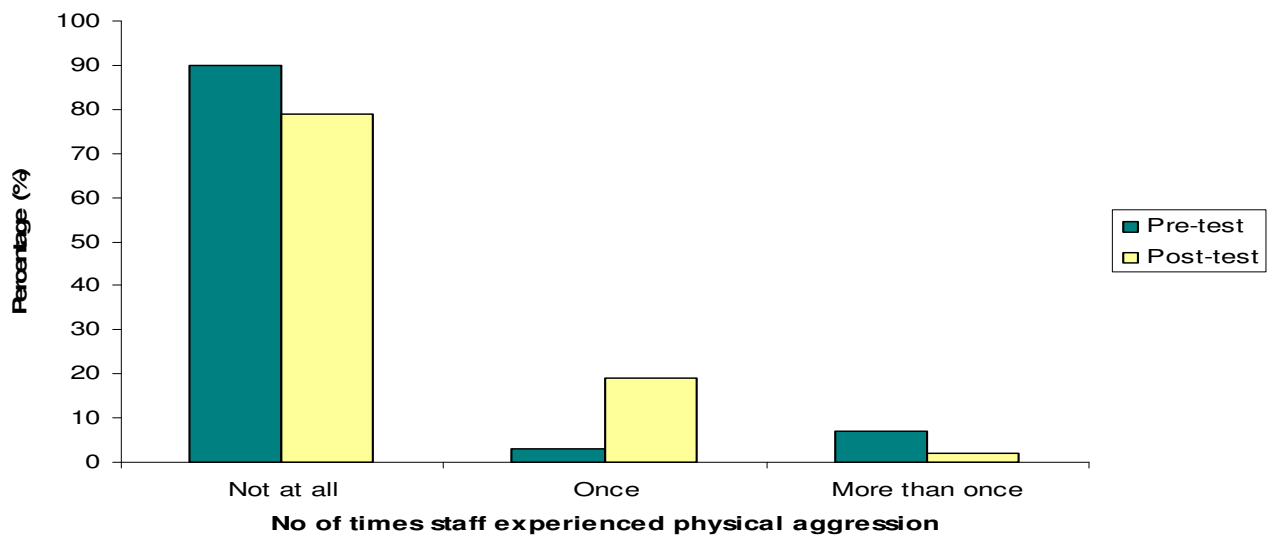
It can be seen from Figure 5 that the frequency of verbal aggression towards teachers appeared to increase. The majority of staff (n = 22) reported that they had experienced this kind of behaviour from pupils 1-5 times at the beginning of the initiative whilst the majority of staff (n = 18) reported they had experienced it 6-10 times at the end of the initiative. However, the percentage of staff who reported verbal aggression more than 10 times decreased significantly from 25% (n = 13) to 7% (n = 3) by the end of the initiative.

An average score was calculated for the number of times staff experienced verbal aggression during the month prior to completing the questionnaire and the results demonstrated that staff experienced pupils being rude to them or swearing at them approximately 8 times in the month before the beginning of the restorative practices initiative and approximately 6 times in the month prior to the end of the initiative.

Analysis of the individual responses to this question identified one member of staff who completed an evaluation questionnaire at the beginning of the initiative and reported that pupils had been verbally aggressive 100 times in the previous month. The same member of staff did not complete a questionnaire at the second survey therefore the pre-test results may have been skewed by the response of this particular member of staff. By eliminating this response from the data, members of staff experienced verbally aggressive behaviour approximately 6 times within the month before the two surveys were carried out, indicating that this kind of pupil behaviour did not change significantly over the course of the restorative practices initiative.

The evaluation questionnaire also asked members of staff to indicate the number of times a pupil had been physically aggressive towards them in the month prior to completing the questionnaire and the responses are detailed below in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Frequency of pupils being physically aggressive towards staff



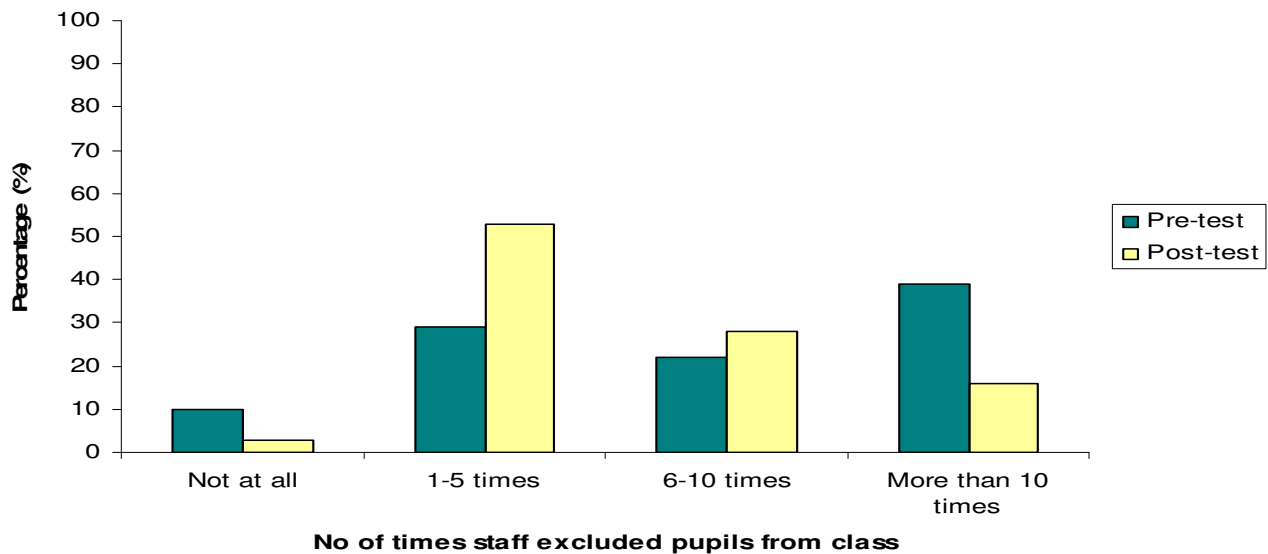
The results demonstrated that the majority of staff who completed both the pre-test questionnaire and the post-test questionnaire did not experience physically aggressive behaviour from pupils during the previous month. 90% of staff (n = 56) did not experience physical aggression from pupils at the beginning of the initiative however the results of the second survey indicated that this had reduced to 79% of staff (n = 34) by the end of the initiative, with the percentage of staff reporting that they had experienced this kind of behaviour ‘once’ increasing from 3% (n = 2) to 19% (n = 8). 7% of staff (n = 4) said that pupils had been physically aggressive towards them at the beginning of the initiative

compared with 2% (n = 1) at the end of the study. Overall, the findings suggested that there were more incidents of physical aggression towards teachers at the end of the restorative practices initiative, with the percentage of teachers reporting that a pupil had been physically aggressive towards them within the previous month increasing by 11%.

Frequency of class exclusions

Members of staff were asked to indicate the number of times they had to send a pupil out of class in the month prior to completing the questionnaire. The findings are illustrated below in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Staff self-report about frequency of removing pupils from class



According to the findings presented in Figure 7, the percentage of teachers who did not exclude any pupils from their class in the previous month decreased by 7% over the pilot period, with 10% of staff (n = 6) reporting that they did not send any pupils out of their class at the beginning of the study compared with 3% (n = 1) at the end of the study. However the overall pattern shows that the frequency of pupils being excluded from class actually reduced by the end of the restorative practices initiative, with a 23% reduction in the percentage of staff who said they had sent a pupil out of class more than 10 times. Moreover, the majority of staff (n = 22) reported that pupils were excluded from class more than 10 times at the beginning of the initiative whereas the majority of staff (n = 20) at the end of the initiative only sent pupils out of class between 1 and 5 times.

Further analysis of the data identified that staff removed pupils from class an average of 11 times in the month prior to completing the baseline questionnaire whereas staff removed pupils from class, on average, 7 times by the end of the study. Overall, the findings suggested that there was a reduction in the frequency of pupils being removed from class over the course of the restorative practices initiative.

Effects of disruptive behaviour on teaching time

Further analysis of pupil behaviour included the average percentage of lesson time that teachers felt they lost having to deal with disruptive pupil behaviour. The findings from the baseline survey were compared with the data generated at the second survey and are presented below in Table 11.

Table 11 Percentage of teaching time lost dealing with behaviour problems

On average, what % of your teaching time would you say is lost in dealing with behaviour problems during lesson time?	Baseline (%)	Second survey (%)
Less than 10	14	16
Between 10 and 30	76	70
Between 31 and 50	7	8
More than 50	3	5

It can be seen from the results of both surveys that the majority of teachers reported losing between 10% and 30% of their teaching time dealing with disruptive behaviour. 76% of staff (n = 44) reported losing this amount of time at the beginning of the study compared with 70% of staff (n = 28) at the end of the study.

Average scores were calculated based on the teachers’ estimations and the results indicated that approximately 18% of teaching time was lost at the beginning of the study and 22% of teaching time was lost at the second survey. Although there was a slight increase in the average score, the findings suggested that there were no significant differences in the amount of time lost dealing with behaviour problems by the end of the restorative practices initiative.

4. *By the end of the initiative, were staff and pupils more confident that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils had caused harm to another person?*

Table 12 provides details of the findings in relation to the level of understanding staff had about the school's behaviour policy.

Table 12 Understanding of school's behaviour policy amongst staff

Are you clear about the school's behaviour policy?	Baseline (%)	Second survey (%)
Very clear	34	45
Quite clear	47	36
Not very clear	16	18
Not at all clear	3	-

It can be seen from the findings presented in Table 12 that the majority of staff had a clear understanding of the school's behaviour policy both at the baseline survey (81%) and at the second survey (81%) and the percentage of staff who were not clear about the behaviour policy remained about the same. Indeed the percentage of staff who reported being *very clear* about the behaviour policy increased by 11% and no members of staff reported being *not at all clear* at the second survey. Overall, the results suggested that staff had a clearer understanding of the school's behaviour policy by the end of the restorative practices initiative.

Staff were also asked to rate how confident they felt about the school having adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils caused harm to another person. The results of this item on the questionnaire are detailed below in Table 13.

Table 13 Confidence amongst staff that school has adequate strategies

How confident are you that the school has adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils have caused harm to another person?	Baseline (%)	Second survey (%)
Very confident	3	7
Quite confident	24	51
Not very confident	61	30
Not at all confident	12	12

It can be seen from Table 13 that 73% of staff (n = 45) who completed the baseline survey were not confident that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils had caused harm to another person, with the majority reporting that they were *not very confident* (n = 38). In comparison, 42% of staff (n = 18) did not feel confident at the second survey and the majority of staff reported feeling *quite confident* (n = 22).

Overall, the findings suggested that staff confidence in the school having adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils had harmed another person had increased by the end of the restorative practices initiative.

Staff were also asked to rate how effective they thought exclusions were for dealing with behaviour problems (see Table 14) and whether or not exclusions were the best way to deal with such problems (see Figure 8).

Table 14 Staff views about effectiveness of exclusions for dealing with behaviour problems

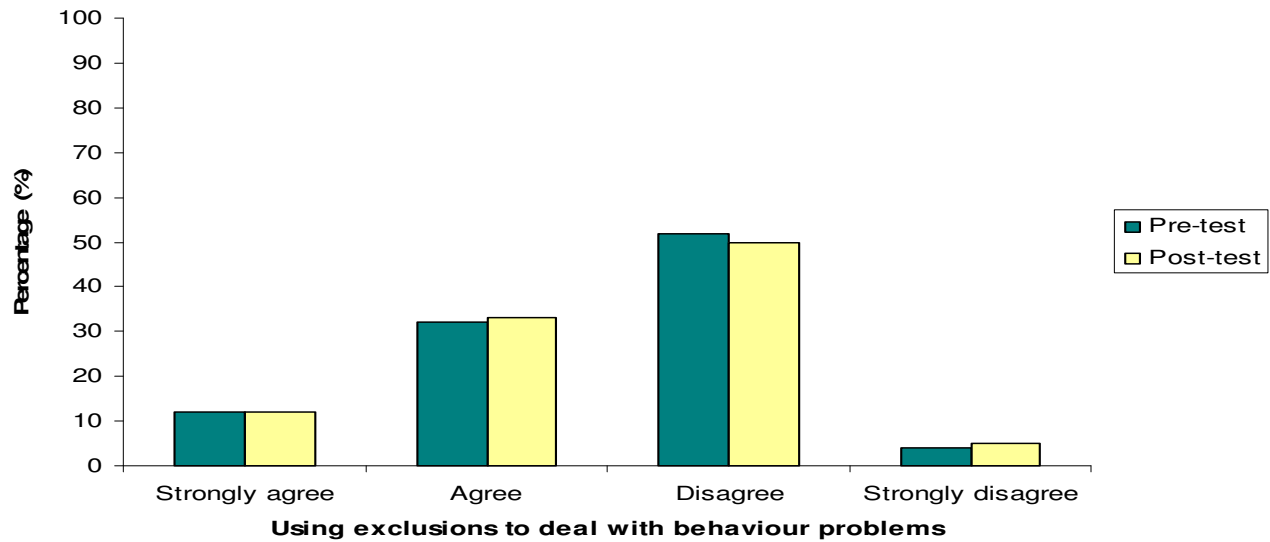
How effective are exclusions for dealing with behaviour problems?	Baseline (%)	Second survey (%)
Very effective	1	-
Quite effective	21	31
Not very effective	60	55
Not at all effective	18	14

It can be seen from Table 14 that there was a slight increase from 21% (n = 13) to 31% (n = 13) of staff who considered exclusions to be quite effective for dealing with behaviour problems. Only 1% (n = 1) considered the strategy to be very effective at the beginning of the initiative. Despite the slight increase in the percentage of staff who thought exclusions were effective, the majority of staff considered exclusions to be ineffective both at the beginning (n = 48) and at the end (n = 29) of the restorative practices initiative.

In addition to being asked about the effectiveness of exclusions, members of staff were also asked if they agreed or disagreed that exclusions were the best way to deal with behaviour problems. The findings are presented below in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Staff views on exclusions for dealing with behaviour problems



The majority of staff disagreed that exclusions are the best strategy, however this was not a significant majority and only represented 56% of staff (n = 34) at the beginning of the study and 55% (n = 22) at the end of the study. The remainder agreed that exclusions were the best way to deal with behaviour problems, with 12% reporting that they strongly agreed with this approach both at the beginning (n = 7) and at the end (n = 5) of the restorative practices initiative. Overall, staff views on whether or not exclusions are the best way to deal with behaviour problems remained fairly static

The findings in relation to pupil confidence in the school having adequate strategies to deal with incidents where harm had been caused to another person are presented below. Table 15 provides details of the pupils’ responses to the added items on the pupil questionnaire.

Table 15 Pupil confidence in the school having adequate strategies for dealing with incidents involving harm to another person

Do you think that this school does a good job at stopping ...	Yes (%)		No (%)	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Bullying	53	37	41	45
Vandalism	37	27	58	55
Pupils disrupting class lessons	45	32	48	50

A greater percentage of pupils (53%) thought the school did a good job of stopping bullying at the beginning of the restorative practices initiative. However this decreased by the end of the initiative and the majority of pupils (45%) said they did not think the school effectively stopped bullying behaviour. Moreover, the majority of pupils did not think the school were effective in stopping vandalism and pupils disrupting class lessons both at the beginning and at the end of the restorative practices initiative.

Overall, these results suggested that the majority of pupils in S2 and S3 were not confident that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with situations involving harm however the percentages were not significantly greater than those who thought the school did do a good job at stopping such behaviour.

5. Did staff who had knowledge of restorative practices think that the approach was more helpful than other strategies the school used to deal with incidents where pupils had caused harm to another person?

10 out of the 12 people who had used the approach in their work at the beginning of the initiative responded to this item on the questionnaire. 8 people thought the approach was more helpful than other strategies and 2 people said it was not more helpful. Of the 23 people who said they used restorative practices in their work at the end of the initiative, 19 people responded to this question. 15 people considered the restorative approach to be more helpful than other strategies.

The findings indicated that the majority of staff found the approach to be more helpful than other strategies that were used in the school. However, several members of staff made additional comments highlighting that the helpfulness of the approach was dependent on the situation and should be considered as part of a range of strategies available for dealing with situations involving harm.

The findings from the pupil surveys are presented below in relation to the relevant research questions from the whole school element of the evaluation.

6. *Did the restorative practices initiative have any impact on the levels of incidents causing harm to others across S2 and S3 pupils in the school?*

Bullying and *General Aggression* scores were calculated as pre- and post-test measures of bullying behaviour within the school using the percentages of pupils who had experienced various kinds of bullying behaviour during the week they completed each questionnaire. Table 16 provides pre- and post-test details of S2 and S3 pupil responses to each of the key items on the *My Life in School Checklist* that were used to calculate the scores.

Table 16 Percentages of pupils reporting bullying behaviour at the baseline survey (n = 235) and at the second survey (n = 192)

	Once (%)		More than Once (%)		Both (%)	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
<i>Tried to kick me</i>	13	15	11	18	24	33
<i>Threatened to hurt me</i>	11	8	4	15	15	23
<i>Demanded money from me</i>	4	1	2	5	6	6
<i>Tried to hurt me</i>	14	8	9	11	23	19
<i>Tried to break something of mine</i>	4	4	4	8	8	12
<i>Tried to hit me</i>	17	11	12	17	29	28

It can be seen from the results that the majority of bullying behaviour identified at the beginning and at the end of the study involved pupils experiencing another pupil trying to kick or hit them. In fact, the percentage of pupils reporting that another pupil had tried to kick them increased by 9% at the end of the study, while the percentage reporting that another pupil had tried to hit them remained approximately the same. The percentage of pupils who reported that another pupil had threatened to hurt them also increased by 8% by the end of the study.

Based on the percentages illustrated in Table 16 the *Bullying* and *General Aggression* scores were calculated in order to measure the overall bullying behaviour among S2 and S3 pupils, details of which are provided below in Table 17.

Table 17**Pre- and Post-test scores for bullying and general aggression**

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
General Aggression	8.83	10.05
Bullying	6.88	12.32

It can be seen from the figures presented in the above table that the post-test scores for both *General Aggression* and *Bullying* were greater than the pre-test scores. The greatest increase occurred for the bullying score, with the results suggesting that there was a 79% increase in bullying behaviour at the end of the restorative practices initiative compared with the beginning of the initiative. The general aggression score also increased over this period by 14%. Overall, the results suggested that there was a significant increase in bullying behaviour among S2 and S3 pupils at the end of the restorative practices initiative.

5. Summary of Findings

A summary of the results from the two core elements of the study are now presented in relation to the research questions.

Individual Conference Results

1. *Did each conference member feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of the conference, both immediately after the conference and in the 4-6 weeks following the conference?*

All conference members felt satisfied with the process and outcomes of the restorative process in which they were involved, both immediately after the process ended and 4-6 weeks later. They felt satisfied with the agreements that were made and believed that the process helped to resolve the situation. Moreover, they would encourage other people to use restorative processes to help resolve situations similar to the one they were involved in.

2. *Did the person responsible for the incident take responsibility for his/her actions?*

In both cases, the person responsible realised the impact of their behaviour on the person harmed. They both took responsibility for their actions by agreeing on an action plan to rectify the situation and repair the harm they had caused.

3. *Did the person responsible re-harm the person harmed or another person after the conference?*

In both cases the person responsible did not re-harm the individuals involved in the restorative process and there was no evidence that they caused significant harm to anyone else.

4. *Did the school feel satisfied with the process and outcomes of each conference?*

The school was satisfied with the process and outcomes of the restorative conference and the shuttle-mediation. According to the Head Teacher, the young people responsible for causing the harm were extremely remorseful and keen to repair the harm they had caused. As a result, their relationships with the people involved in the restorative process improved. The school was also satisfied with the positive impact that each restorative process had on the people harmed.

Whole School Results

1. Did the level of knowledge about the restorative practices approach amongst school staff increase?

The number of teachers trained in using restorative practices increased by 39% by the end of the pilot study and the majority of staff considered the training to be useful. As a result of the training, the level of knowledge about using restorative practices in school increased amongst staff by the end of the project.

2. Did any staff use the approach in school following training? If so, how effective did they find it?

The number of staff using restorative practices in their work almost doubled over the course of the pilot study. However, at the end of the initiative, there was a greater proportion of staff that had attended the training but reported that they had not put the approach into practice. Staff reported using restorative conversations to encourage pupils to realise the impact of negative behaviour on others, particularly in cases of bullying. Several staff also used circles to resolve classroom disputes where disruptive behaviour was having a detrimental effect on the learning environment.

The majority of staff thought that the restorative approach was effective for dealing with incidents where a pupil had caused harm to another person. Restorative conversations and circles were also considered to be effective for resolving classroom disruption and repairing relationships between pupils and members of staff.

3. At the end of the initiative, did staff view the behaviour of pupils in the school any differently?

The majority of staff considered pupils to be relatively well behaved both at the beginning and at the end of the restorative practices initiative. However, the majority of staff also thought that pupil behaviour had got worse over the last year. This did not change significantly over the course of the pilot study.

Incidents of verbal aggression towards teachers remained similar throughout the initiative however physical aggression increased by 11%. Nevertheless, there was a reduction in the frequency of pupils being removed from class by the end of the study. There were no significant differences in the amount of teaching time lost dealing with behaviour problems.

4. *By the end of the initiative, were staff and pupils any more confident that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils had caused a significant amount of harm to other pupils/members of staff?*

Staff had a clearer understanding of the school's behaviour policy by the end of the initiative. Confidence in the school having adequate strategies for dealing with incidents where pupils had harmed another person also increased. The majority of staff considered exclusions to be ineffective for dealing with behaviour problems both at the beginning and at the end of the initiative. However just under half agreed that exclusions were the best way to deal with behaviour problems at both surveys.

The majority of pupils thought that the school did a good job of stopping bullying behaviour at the baseline survey however this decreased by 16% by the end of the initiative. The majority of pupils did not think that the school did a good job at stopping vandalism and pupils disrupting class lessons at both surveys. Overall, the majority of pupils who participated in the study were not confident that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with situations involving harm.

5. *Did staff who had knowledge of restorative practices think that the approach was more helpful than other strategies the school used to deal with incidents where pupils had caused harm to another person?*

The majority of staff who had used restorative practices in their work considered the approach to be more helpful than other strategies used by the school to deal with incidents involving harm. However several members of staff emphasised that each situation was different and that restorative practices should be considered in line with a range of alternative strategies.

6. *Did the restorative practices initiative have any impact on the levels of incidents causing harm to others across S2 and S3 pupils in the school (e.g. bullying)?*

General aggression and bullying behaviour among pupils increased by the end of the initiative, with bullying behaviour in particular increasing significantly by 79%. This suggested that the restorative practices initiative did not have a positive impact on reducing the levels of incidents involving harm across S2/S3 pupils. The limitations of this aspect of the study are discussed in the discussion section of this report.

6. Discussion

Individual Conference

The findings from this study demonstrated that the aims of the *Individual Conference* element were achieved. Although there were fewer referrals than expected, formal restorative processes, such as conferences, face-to-face meetings, and shuttle-mediations, did have benefits for both the people harmed and those responsible for causing the harm. The restorative processes gave the individuals who were harmed the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about what happened and how they had been affected by it. By including them in the decision-making process and asking them how they thought the harm could be repaired, the people harmed felt that they had been listened to and had been taken seriously. By receiving an apology from the person responsible, both individuals were satisfied that the harm had been repaired and felt safer at the end of the process.

The restorative conference and shuttle-mediation also helped the persons responsible to understand the consequences of their behaviour and provided them with the opportunity to develop a sense of person responsibility. Both individuals were eager to repair the harm they had caused and believed that the restorative process was more helpful than other strategies the school used. It was important for them to tell their side of the story and they felt satisfied that they were treated fairly and that they had been listened to. This encouraged them to take positive steps to rectify the situation and repair the harm they had caused.

In addition to feeling listened to, the pupils who were responsible for causing harm developed more positive relationships with the staff involved in the restorative process and demonstrated improvements in their attitude towards these members of staff in general. However, they were not able to transfer the positive behaviour to other similar situations. It was therefore necessary for the Restorative Justice Co-ordinator to engage in substantial follow-up work to help the pupils maintain positive behavioural changes. This involved reinforcing the values of restorative practices, such as mutual respect and tolerance, and emphasising the impact of negative behaviour on others. Discussions about anger management also took place and the pupils were encouraged to make better choices and decisions in the future.

The whole restorative process can therefore be very time consuming. For example, Case 1 involved 9 hours of direct contact time and Case 2 involved almost 11 hours of direct contact time. Case 2 was more time consuming as the facilitator had to act as a go-between during the shuttle-mediation process. However, the head teacher reported that the time commitments were not excessive when the benefits of repairing the harm were taken into consideration. Nevertheless, this work would have been difficult for teaching staff to carry out therefore appropriate support frameworks within the wider school context need to be put in place to address any issues that may arise in the aftermath of a restorative process.

The results from the individual conference evaluation also provided brief details of a situation where a peer group was engaged to provide support for a pupil experiencing ongoing bullying. Although there were no evaluation forms completed by the individuals involved, the feedback was very positive and the process was useful in raising awareness of bullying situations amongst the participating pupils. The ideas and suggestions made by the support group provided members of staff with invaluable insight into the situation and was a step towards involving pupils in resolving conflict and preventing harm in the school. Further thought should be given to how other incidents could be approached using this model where appropriate.

Overall, both the school and the individuals involved in a formal restorative process were satisfied with the process and the outcomes. Moreover, the person responsible took responsibility for their actions and did not re-harm anyone significantly after the process, although restorative practices alone will not prevent young people being involved in further incidents of harm. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in Case 1, where the person responsible voluntarily took responsibility for his involvement in an incident at college, demonstrated that an element of learning had taken place and he was willing to face up to the consequences of his actions.

Whole School

The aims of the *Whole School* element of the study were also achieved in terms of more staff being trained and the levels of knowledge and awareness about restorative practices increasing by the end of the initiative. Overall, more teachers were using restorative practices in their work but, surprisingly, a greater proportion of staff had not used restorative practices in their work at the end of the initiative, despite being trained. However it was not possible to gain a fuller understanding of the reasons for this, as the questionnaire did not ask staff to specify why they had not put their training into practice. This may also have been a reflection of the reduced response rate at the second survey. Despite this,

the examples included in this report provided evidence that using restorative conversation, either individually or in group circles, can lead to positive outcomes for resolving conflict.

Restorative Conversations

More teachers used restorative conversations, which helped to improve teacher-pupil relationships. A non-judgemental ear can encourage young people to restore their own sense of well-being and enable them to make different choices in the future and adults can develop young people's self-esteem and problem-solving skills if they use this approach as much as possible (Hopkins, 2003).

However, Brookes and McDonough (2006) emphasised that restorative conversations should always be focused on an incident that has caused harm and that the facilitator or teacher should not have been directly involved in the situation. They argued that a fundamental difference exists between conversations focusing on *harm* and conversations that are focused on resolving conflict, disagreement or a misunderstanding. Many situations may involve a dispute where all parties have contributed in some way to the problem. If the teacher was involved, a restorative conversation may not be suitable, as the pupil would inevitably consider the dialogue to be unfair and one-sided. A restorative conference or face-to-face meeting with a neutral facilitator might be more appropriate, as the pupil would be more likely to engage in the process.

This highlights the fact that restorative conversations are not just about memorising a set of scripted questions but involve a range of skills to enable teachers to identify the situations that would benefit from such an approach. As Brookes and McDonough (2006) pointed out, using an approach that is specifically designed for repairing harm in situations that demand an alternative approach could have “potentially harmful consequences for those involved” (p. 10).

Restorative Circles

The examples of using restorative circles in the classroom provided evidence that, in addition to improving relationships and resolving conflict for one-off incidents, using circles regularly had a positive impact on the behaviour of the class as a whole. Feedback from pupils was positive and they found circles to be helpful for stopping disruptive behaviour in the classroom and teachers explained how the overall class environment improved, which resulted in more effective learning taking place.

These findings were in line with other research suggesting that, when teachers are empathetic, consistent, encourage self-management, and allow students to make decisions; the classroom climate improves (Freiberg, Stein, & Huang, 1995). The apparent success of using regular circle-time also provides evidence to support Tew's (2004) argument that circle-time should be introduced into secondary schools to improve relationships and build self-esteem. As many theories of self-esteem point out, "if an individual becomes part of a group they trust and feel safe in, then the group can open up to that individual a new, more positive view of their self (p. 156).

Effectiveness of restorative practices

Overall, the majority of staff considered restorative practices to be effective for dealing with incidents where a pupil had caused harm to another person. Indeed, the majority of staff also considered it to be more helpful than other strategies used by the school to deal with incidents involving harm. There were various comments made however emphasising that every individual and situation is different and that restorative practices may not be the only way to deal with such incidents. Indeed, Stinchcomb et al. (2006) have suggested that more punitive approaches should not be disregarded completely and argued that there is no reason why traditional and restorative practices cannot productively coexist. Their study emphasised that, even in schools where restorative processes were used to hold pupils accountable for their actions, it was not to the exclusion of traditional options and many teachers used a combination of punitive and restorative measures.

However many researchers suggest that successful implementation and sustainability of a restorative philosophy is the realisation that this means organisational and cultural change (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Wearmouth et al., 2007; Morrison et al., 2005). Such a paradigm shift requires "intellectual and organisational leadership, commitment and energy, and must be focused at all levels within education" (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001p. 11). In other words, introducing restorative practices in schools involves shifting the mindsets of those delivering educational services, both at policy level and in practice, away from punishment to an approach that is clearly focused on building and sustaining positive relationships within school communities. The focus is on prevention as well as cure, and the involvement of the whole school community is therefore paramount. However it remains to be seen whether the two approaches are compatible or indeed if it is feasible to replace the current retributive system with a fully restorative one.

It is important to emphasise here that the restorative approach to inappropriate behaviour is not the soft option that some people believe and the difference between a punitive response and a restorative response is that the former can stigmatise, isolate, and alienate someone who may already feel disconnected, whilst the latter has the ultimate goal of re-integrating the wrongdoer back into the school community (Hopkins, 2004). Restorative justice is about building communities of care around individuals while not condoning harmful behaviour; in other words, holding individuals accountable for their actions within systems of support (Morrison, 2002). However, developing initiatives that involve culture change inevitably demand an investment of time and effort (Stinchcomb et al., 2006). It is clear that further research is required in order to expand on the current evidence and build teachers' confidence in using a restorative approach for managing difficult behaviour.

Pupil Behaviour

The present findings indicated that the majority of staff considered pupils to be well behaved however these results appeared to be somewhat ambiguous considering the majority of staff also thought that behaviour had got worse over the past year. Although incidents involving pupils being rude to teachers or swearing at them did not change significantly throughout the pilot study staff reported more incidents of physical aggression. Indeed, the findings from the pupil survey also demonstrated that aggressive and bullying behaviour among pupils also increased over the course of the pilot period and pupils were not confident that the school had adequate strategies for dealing with incidents involving harm. However the reliability of this data is questionable and highlights various limitations of the study.

Firstly, the measures of verbal and physical aggression towards teachers were based solely on teachers' perceptions of the number of times they had experienced these kinds of behaviours in the month prior to completing the questionnaire. Numerous variables could influence such responses and the reduced response rate from the second staff survey may have skewed the results somewhat. More accurate measurements would need to be considered in future studies investigating the levels of verbal and physical aggression directed at teachers by pupils.

Secondly, many of the pupil questionnaires were incomplete raising the question of whether or not the pupils had completed the checklist accurately. The time frame available in registration classes may also have been too short for pupils to complete the 43 items. Also, none of the items reflecting positive behaviour were analysed, which may have demonstrated comparable rates of positive behaviour.

Another factor to consider was that the first survey was carried out in May 2006 and the second survey was administered in the final week of term prior to the Christmas holiday period in December 2006. Taking into consideration the summer holiday period, the data was therefore compared over a period of five months and awareness raising and restorative practices training amongst staff was still ongoing. It would be unrealistic to expect major changes in pupils' behaviour and/or their perceptions of how good a job they thought the school did of stopping bullying, vandalism, and disruption in the classroom, particularly when the restorative practices initiative was still in the early stages of being embedded into the school ethos.

The fact that pupil behaviour appeared to have deteriorated does not necessarily reflect a failing in the restorative practices approach. Many young people in the school were not yet involved significantly in restorative processes. Indeed the lower level restorative work, such as circles and conversations, must be consistently applied throughout the whole school to sustain improved pupil and teacher-pupil relationships. Once these restorative practices are fully embedded in the school over a longer period of time evaluative data may provide more reliable data that better informs whether or not a restorative philosophy has a positive impact on particular problematic behaviour and attitudinal change.

Consideration was given to setting up a control school at the beginning of the pilot project in order to allow comparisons to be made. Due to the large range of other behaviour-related initiatives taking place in other similar schools in the authority (e.g. Solution Oriented Schools) it was concluded that comparisons may not have been valid. However it would have been beneficial to compare the scores with another secondary school to establish if the increase in bullying and aggression scores identified a possible trend in such behaviour and was therefore not indicative of the pilot school in particular. Interestingly, there have been seasonal variations in levels of bullying behaviour reported. For example, bullying behaviour can be higher in the autumn term (September to December) and this period is often favoured for research purposes (Sharp, 1999). It was at the end of this term (December 2006) that the second survey was carried out in the pilot study therefore there may already have been a tendency for bullying to be higher at this point of year. Further research should consider collecting data at the same point each year in order to gather similar comparison data for bullying behaviour.

Despite the apparent increase in negative behaviour among pupils, fewer pupils were excluded from class at the end of the initiative. A greater percentage of staff felt more confident that the school had

adequate strategies in place for dealing with incidents involving harm, with the majority of staff considering exclusions to be ineffective for dealing with such incidents. However just under half agreed that exclusions were the best way to deal with behaviour problems in general. This clearly emphasises the need for further awareness-raising in order for all members of staff to adopt consistent restorative approaches on a daily basis. Cultural change will not happen quickly though, as a long term strategic approach must be taken for school communities to work their way through the necessary stages of implementation. According to Morrison et al. (2005), schools should be prepared for a 3-5 year overall implementation timeframe to consolidate the change process. The fact that the current pilot project did not identify major changes in staff attitudes towards exclusions and pupil behaviour was therefore not surprising.

Nevertheless, the evidence presented in this report highlighted that an increasing number of staff are trying to embed restorative practices in their everyday work. The ongoing problems of bullying and aggressive behaviour in schools reflect complex difficulties in society and reinforce the need for a sensitive and effective response to harm and wrongdoing. The findings from this evaluation clearly suggest that the adoption of restorative practices can contribute greatly to this.

Restorative practices can offer a range of significant benefits for schools. For the whole school: positive relationships, constructive climate/ethos, and prevention of conflict and harm. When difficulties arise: conflict effectively resolved; learning and progress out of difficulty; relationships maintained. Restorative practices can address the differences of all stakeholders and be supportive for both staff and pupils.

“It may not be the whole answer to managing challenging behaviour but it is a powerful tool”

[Head Teacher, St Columba’s High School]

7. Recommendations

1. Consideration should be given to the continued use of restorative conferences and shuttle dialogues in St Columba's High School.
2. Senior Management and Pastoral Care staff at St Columba's should ensure that all staff in the school are aware of the opportunity to request restorative conferences and the types of cases that would benefit from this intervention.
3. Senior Management at St Columba's High School should consider training more staff in restorative conferencing, particularly pupil and family support workers who have the most flexible time to provide a follow-up service to those involved.
4. A structure should be developed to support pupils and to address any other additional support needs after the conference has taken place. Consideration should be given to using existing structures and services as identified in the Authority's staged intervention model, including pastoral care, pupil support and JAT.
5. Consideration should be given to extending the training of staff in the school in the use of circles:
 - (a) The use of trained facilitators to help other staff members develop skills in this area should be explored.
 - (b) Further opportunities for subject teachers to have specific training in running circles should be explored.
6. Staff at St Columba's High School should have regular opportunities to attend the 'Awareness Raising Training/Basic Skills' workshops, consisting of several sessions, with the opportunity to try out the techniques between training sessions.
7. Consideration should be given to the setting-up of an Authority-wide Restorative Practices Network for further training of trainers, training of staff and consolidation of the experience of working using Restorative Practices in any establishment in the Authority.
8. Further research should be carried out to evaluate the longer term impact of Restorative Practices in St Columba's High School, following the suggestions made in this evaluation.
9. Given the success of the introduction of Restorative Practices in St Columba's High School, consideration should be given to extending it to other schools in West Dunbartonshire.

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