An evaluation of Bristol RAiS

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26 February 2009

Acknowledgements

With thanks to all the staff and pupils at Bedminster, Brislington, Hartcliffe and Hengrove who participated in the research. Their perspectives were vital to the success of the evaluation. We are grateful to the staff at the local authority, in particular, Graham Knight, but also Matt Dowse and Paul Taylor, for their invaluable assistance with collating the necessary data. We would also like to thank Janet Clark the RAiS Project Manager for the advice and information she provided throughout the life of the project. Thanks too, to Sir Charles Pollard, Graham Robb and Nigel Whiskin, of Restorative Solutions, for inviting us to mount the evaluation and for their support over its course. Finally we are very grateful to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, who funded the evaluation through Restorative Solutions.

Key findings

Implementation

- Senior Mangers in all four RAiS schools thought that restorative approaches (RAs) provided their school with a framework, more direction and gave momentum to things they were already trying to do.
- There were two different approaches to implementing RAiS (i) whole-school (ii) pockets of RAs.
- The quality of RAs was higher in schools using the whole-school approach in that there was greater adherence to the programme.
- The 'triad' model (involving three staff members of different ranks and roles, regularly meeting with the Champion) was an important part of the implementation process.
- Full use of support staff in the delivery of RAiS could be used to address staff concerns about not having enough time to implement the programme.
- Brislington and Hartcliffe convened a high number of conferences, whereas Bedminster and Hengrove convened a low number.
- Across all schools, conferences were used equally for boys and girls and mostly to deal with fights. There was little use of conferences for re-integration after exclusion.

Climate for learning

- RAs are likely to have the biggest impact on the climate for learning in schools employing a whole-school approach to implementation.
- RAs built on and consolidated existing practices, but staff could be resistant to changes to the school climate, such as the end of conventional forms of punishment, because they believed it would take away their power and authority.
- RAs impacted on the climate for learning because:
  - (i) They were perceived as better than conventional forms of punishment.
  - (ii) They were perceived as fairer.
  - (iii) They improved communication and relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils.
  - (iv) They partly contribute to a better atmosphere in school.
  - (v) Improved emotional literacy of staff, but particularly pupils (e.g. their ability to empathise and to take responsibility for their actions)
  - (vi) Improved well-being for staff and pupils (e.g. greater confidence).

Impact on attendance rates

- Staff and pupils reported that RAs helped increase the attendance rate because the reduced the likelihood of conflicts and victimization that may have, otherwise, kept pupils at home.
- The quantitative analysis confirmed staff and pupils perceptions about the benefits of RAiS for attendance rates.
- Analysis of mean attendance rates between high, low and non-RAiS schools and between 2005/6 and 2007/8 showed that attendance rates were significantly higher in RAiS schools compared to non-RAiS schools.
- The regression analysis confirmed this picture. It showed that attendance rates in 2007/8 were significantly predicted by a number of factors, including the type of school (High or low RAiS).
- Conference participation also significantly predicted attendance rates in 2007/8, but in the opposite direction to what was expected; conference participation reduced rather

than increased the attendance rate. This may have been because those participating in conferences had a lower attendance rate than those that did not, although this was not significantly so.

- We can conclude that RAiS offers a promising way of increasing the attendance rate.

Impact on fixed-term exclusions

- There were reductions in the absolute numbers of fixed-term exclusions in the RAiS and non-RAiS schools. This reduction was noted by staff in all four RAiS schools.
- Staff believed that RAs impacted on fixed-term exclusions either (i) directly or (ii) indirectly.
- Difficulties with the local authority data and limitations to the quantitative analysis meant that we could not detect a discernible impact from RAiS on the fixed-term exclusion rate. The YJB (2004) reached a similar conclusion in their research.
- However, it is likely that RAiS was a contributing factor to reductions in fixed-term exclusions, particularly in the schools where conferences were routinely and explicitly used as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions.
- Given that conferences were used for pupils with significantly higher levels of fixed-term exclusions, we tentatively conclude that RAiS has promise in reducing fixed-term exclusions in the longer-term.

Impact on educational attainment

- The analysis of the educational attainment data was limited because Key-Stage 3 data were not available for 2007/8. Based on Key-Stage 4 educational data alone, RAiS did not have a discernible impact on GCSE performance. However, this may have been because of the limitations of the data.
- Staff were also hesitant to conclude that RAs impacted on individual or whole-school attainment, saying that it was too early to say.
- However, some felt that RAs were likely to improve attainment by increasing pupils capacity for learning and their ability to concentrate and because they contributed to a less fractured and calmer learning environment.

Recommendations

We recommend that:

1. Schools implement RAs using a whole-school approach, rather than in pockets.
2. There needs to be a continuous dialogue between staff and the programme co-ordinators, as well as refresher training, time permitting, for example, to ensure adherence to the programme.
3. More is done to understand the perspectives of pupils and staff who were resistant to RAs so that RAs can be implemented on a truly whole-school basis.
4. Traditional sanctions, such as exclusions, could co-exist alongside a graduated response using RAs, but that they only be used as a measure of last resort for serious incidents and if RAs have not worked.
5. Staff be given greater encouragement to routinely use conferences, as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions.
6. Staff in schools remain in regular contact with those implementing the programme and continue to supply regular updates about conferences held in the schools.
7. Further research to examine whether any positive outcomes are maintained in the longer-term, as well as an assessment of the impacts of RAs in any other schools that have begun to implement the programme. It would also be of interest to explore aspects of the climate for learning, in more detail, such as improvements to emotional literacy and well-being, and perceptions of legitimacy.

8. Caution is exercised in how this programme is rolled-out in the future, paying attention to the contextual similarities and differences between the schools in South Bristol and any new schools.

Contents

Chapter one: Introduction

The basic tenet of restorative justice is that the response to harm should be to put right the harm, as far as possible, and not to inflict further harm on the offender. It emphasizes the responsibility and accountability of offenders to make amends for their actions, and focuses on providing support to the victims. Its objectives are healing the harm done and the reintegration of the victim and offender in their communities. The assumption is that institutional frameworks can either bring people together in terms of shared social identities (and collective goals) or they can disenfranchise people to the extent that individuals come to define themselves in terms of anti-institutional identities (Morrison et al. 2005). In the case of young people in schools, the theory that has developed is that restorative approaches offer an effective alternative to the use of traditional discipline (Malouf 1998, Krygier 1997, Cox 1995) enabling us to invest in the development of social capital in our schools (Morrison et al. 2005) as well as prevent crime; although in practice, traditional disciplinary approaches co-exist alongside restorative approaches (Sherman and Strang 2007)

Restorative justice came to be used in schools during the 1990s in pilot programmes in Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the US, the UK, South Africa, Scandinavia and elsewhere (Morrison 2003). Although criminal law and school rules may both involve disciplinary codes, the concept of restorative justice has developed within criminal justice and its terminology is thus not easily transferable to the school context (Shaw 2007, YJB 2004). In the school setting, there has thus been preference for the term 'restorative approach' or 'restorative practices' in place of 'restorative justice', and to 'fairness' in preference to 'justice'. And it has been acknowledged that in cases of restorative intervention the concepts of victim and offender are often not appropriate (i.e. those involved may be involved as both victims and offenders in an escalating conflict) (YJB 2004). Therefore, the use of restorative approaches in schools is founded on the principles of restorative justice, rather than embodying the concept in its entirety.

For the purpose of this report, we use the term 'restorative approaches' (RAs) to reflect the use of a set of approaches in the school setting, rather than a complete adoption of the concept of restorative justice as it is used in the criminal justice system. We also use the notion of harmer and harmed, rather than victim and offender.

Since April 2007, the programme, Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS), has been implemented in four schools in the South of the Bristol. The programme was set up by the community interest company, Restorative Solutions, with funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Trust and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, who also funded this independent evaluation. South Bristol was selected because of the high levels of deprivation in this area. As we describe in more detail in chapter three, implementation has been a staggered process with some schools beginning to implement the programme earlier than others. In addition, there have been varying degrees of participation in the programme indicated by the number of conferences conducted, as well as variation in approach has been implemented, namely, whether they implemented the programme as a 'whole-school' or in pockets.

Aims of the research

The aims of the evaluation were:

1. To describe how school leaders and teachers incorporate restorative approaches in the development of school policies and processes.
2. To examine to what extent the use of whole-school restorative approaches can produce positive changes in pupil and staff perceptions of the climate for learning.
3. To examine whether and how restorative processes impact on attendance levels of the pupils involved in restorative conferences or across the whole of the school.
4. To examine whether and how the use of restorative conferences can reduce school term exclusions (permanent and fixed-term).
5. To examine whether and how restorative processes impact on educational attainment levels of the pupils involved in restorative conferences or across the whole of the school.

The research-base

Two types of data were collected to meet these aims:

1. Quantitative data were provided by the local authority on attendance, exclusions and attainment in six south-Bristol schools (to meet aims 3, 4 and 5)
2. Qualitative interview data were collected by the researchers from staff and pupils in the RAiS schools (particularly to meet aims 1 and 2, and to a lesser extent 3, 4 and 5).

The collection and analysis of each of these types of data is now described in turn.

The quantitative data

The local authority routinely collects information from schools (managed by the local authority) on a variety of matters. The datasets are quantitative in that they count things like the number of children attending school, the number of school exclusions, the number of children passing SATs or GCSEs along with other important information about the ethnic make-up of the school or the number of children receiving free-school meals. The quantitative analysis used these data to examine the impact of RAiS on attendance, exclusions and educational attainment. Given that the data were not collected for the purposes of the research, they may not offer the most stable of measures of attendance, exclusions and attainment. However, they were readily available within the time-frames and time-constraints of the research.

The data included measures of attendance, exclusions and educational attainment for all pupils in six schools in South Bristol. Four of these schools Bedminster, Brislington, Hartcliffe and Hengrove implemented RAiS, but two schools, Ashton Park and Withywood, did not. Some of these schools have now changed their names due to them becoming Academies, but the old names are used in this progress report given that the data were collected before their change in status. Since the schools are all located in the same area of the city, we are assuming that these schools share a number of contextual similarities or at least more so than if they were drawn from different areas of the city. In other words, when we compare between the schools in the quantitative analysis, we have assumed that we are comparing ‘apples with apples, not with pears’.

Table 1.1 confirms that the schools were broadly similar on important contextual variables. It shows percentage frequencies for pupils that are eligible for free school-meals, those with special educational needs (indicated by school action or statement), those currently in care in the school census, males and black and minority ethnic (BME) pupils. There do not appear to be any large differences between the six schools in terms of these five variables, as might be expected given that the schools are all situated within one area of Bristol. However, independent t-tests enable us to compare means and to examine whether or not differences between them are significant. In 2005/6, the RAiS schools had significantly more pupils who were eligible for free school meals ($t=2.202$, $p<.01$), who were in care ($t=-2.058$, $p<.01$) and who has special educational needs ($t=-5.986$, $p<.01$), as well as significantly fewer BME pupils ($t=1.870$, $p<.01$). In 2007/8, the RAiS schools had significantly more BME pupils ($t=1.026$, $p<.05$) and significantly more pupils with special needs ($t=-6.534$, $p<.01$). This suggests that in 2005/6, the baseline year, the RAiS schools had more pupils with educational or personal difficulties, but this had slightly lessened by 2007/8.

Table 1.1 Percentage frequencies for contextual variables within the schools

Variable	Year	High		Low		None		All
		Hartcliffe	Brislington	Hengrove	Bedminster	Ashton Park	Withywood	
% Free school meal eligibility	05/06	21.17	18.66	30.63	13.72	14.59	35.22	21.04
	07/08	23.30	19.45	30.08	16.25	13.23	33.33	21.02
% Special educational needs	05/06	24.5	21.6	47.3	23.0	21.4	18.3	25.0
	07/08	9.8	22.3	46.5	22.1	17.3	15.0	21.2
% Currently in care	05/06	0.46	0.30	0.14	0.82	0.18	0.00	0.33
	07/08	0.39	0.71	0.33	1.09	0.76	0.58	0.69
% Male	05/06	52.59	54.38	47.53	50.97	50.53	47.72	51.05
	07/08	51.96	52.72	49.43	52.23	49.79	48.91	51.01
% BME	05/06	4.03	10.05	5.91	5.83	10.98	4.03	7.31
	07/08	11.78	10.26	6.67	5.15	12.38	4.08	8.78

For the outcome analysis, we used local authority data that were collected from all pupils at two points in time. Firstly, in 05/06, which was prior to the implementation of RAiS and, secondly, in 07/08, which was approximately 8-16 months after RAiS was implemented, depending on the school.[1] The only exception to this was for the educational attainment data. There were limits to the data that were available. The following was available:

- Key-stage 3 (Year 9 SATs) for 05/07 but not for 07/08. This was due to difficulties with standards of marking and the collection of a complete set of results from all local authorities.
- Key-stage 4 (Year 11 GCSEs) for 05/06 and 07/08.

These restrictions on the data available on educational attainment, has curtailed the analysis, as described in chapter five.

Quantitative design and analysis

A quasi-experimental design was considered for this research. This would have involved taking individuals as the cases in the research and matching those involved as a conference participant in a RAiS school with those with similar characteristics, but who did not

[1] Data were not included from 06/07 because it was unlikely that there would be any discernable impact, after only a few months of implementing RAiS.

participate in a conference, to create a comparison group. Therefore, it may have been possible to assume that any differences observed between these individuals in the experimental and the comparison groups, in terms of their attendance, exclusions and attainment, could be attributed to the influence of the programme rather than extraneous contextual factors. This would have been because any pre-existing variations between individuals would have been 'controlled' through the research design.

However, to be effective, the matching process has to ensure that the experimental group is as similar to the comparison group as possible. This is a complex process. For example, on which characteristics should participants have been matched? In addition, the comparison group would have had to have been drawn from either the same school or a similar school, given the likely impact of neighbourhood effects. Therefore, the matching of pupils who had/not participated in conferences would have taken considerable effort and may not even have been effective. Without random assignment, there would have been too many confounding variables – in contrast to RAIS effects – that might influence the outcome variables. In fact, even randomized controlled trials have rarely, if ever, been used to evaluate RAs in schools because they are viewed as too difficult to implement.

Therefore, it was decided best to use a simple before-and-after design in which we compared individuals pre- and post-programme implementation within each of the schools. However, given that the six schools were broadly similar and were all in South Bristol, we decided to add one group-level independent variable, the type of school to the analysis. We compared the four RAiS schools with two non-RAiS schools that had declined to participate in the programme. This meant we were able to tease out if there were differences between the schools, although it did not enable us to explore why those differences arose.

In terms of analysing the data, multi-level modelling was ruled out. Multi-level modelling allows researchers to explore the impact of predictor variables (e.g. participating in a RAiS conference) on an outcome variables (e.g. educational attainment) whilst adjusting for individual effects (e.g. prior exam performance) and group effects (e.g. being a pupil in a high performing school). That is, it enables researchers to separately examine individual-level and contextual effects, as well as the interactions between them and would, therefore, have been ideal for this kind of programme evaluation. However, multi-level modelling was not possible because, even if we had included all the schools in Bristol, there would not have been enough cases. Typically, multi-level modelling requires at least 20 cases (e.g. schools).

Instead, the data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations, as well as independent and paired-sample t-tests to explore differences pre- and post-test and between the schools. Step-wise multiple regression was used examine the factors that predicted the three key dependent variables of attendance, exclusions and attainment. Multiple regression enables researchers to examine the strength of any number of independent variables in predicting a dependent variable whilst controlling for the effects of the other independent variables included in the model. This was a two-stage process in which firstly bi-variate analysis was used to examine which independent variables were associated with the dependent variable. Secondly, the model was run entering the variables in blocks based on their theoretical importance. The model was run on several occasions to maximise, for example, the R Square value, that is, the amount of variance explained by the model and to ensure that there was as little co-linearity between the independent variables, as possible.

By using single-level regression analysis, it is accepted that differences between the schools, with respect to the three key dependent variables, could be identified, but that we could not fully explain why those differences arose, except by reference to the qualitative research. It is also vitally important to note that regression is based on correlations between variables meaning that it would be entirely spurious to claim that the relationship between any of the variables that predict the dependent variables is necessarily causal. The findings, therefore, should not be interpreted as such.

The qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted with staff and pupils at the four schools that had implemented RAs. These interviews were semi-structured. This meant that the researcher had a list of specific questions, whilst also probing for more information, clarifying questions or following-up on responses. The interview schedules can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. A total of thirty-four staff and twenty-six pupils were interviewed for the evaluation. Despite best efforts on the part of the researcher, the total number of teacher's focus group, support staff and pupil interviews held was not evenly distributed across the schools. This is due to difficulties encountered gaining access. A breakdown of the interviews conducted in each school is shown in Table 1.2:

Table 1.2 Qualitative Interviews

Schools	RA Champion	Head	Heads of Year	Teachers Focus Group	Support Staff	Pupils
Bedminster	1	1	1	1 (6)	2	6 (1, 1, 2, 2)
Brislington	1	1	1	1 (5)	0	5
Hartcliffe	1	1	1	1 (5)	4	2
Hengrove	1	1	1	0	0	13 (6, 1, 4, 2)
Total	4	4	4	16	6	26

In instances where group or pair interviews were conducted, the number of people in each interview is provided in brackets.

Access

Initial access to the schools was facilitated by the RaiS project manager, who had established relationships with the schools. She introduced the researcher to the four RA Champions in each of the schools. It was sometimes difficult to negotiate access to other staff and, later in the project, even to RA Champions. Weeks were spent telephoning staff who failed to return calls, and were either teaching, in a meeting, out of their office, somewhere in the corridor or not in on that day. Acquiring appointments for interviewing took considerable perseverance. In most cases, it was not that staff were unwilling or reluctant to take part in the research but that they genuinely had extremely busy timetables. Changes happening in the schools over the fieldwork period exacerbated this situation. For instance, one school moved into a new building and another was in the process of becoming an Academy. This meant that staff already had extra work that they would not normally have had.

Teachers, in particular, were difficult to access. RA Champions and Heads of Year advised the researcher that it was going to be difficult to get teachers to give up their free time to be interviewed. One RA Champion suggested that the researcher attend a meeting already arranged with Heads of Year and interview the teachers at the beginning of this meeting. This arrangement meant that the interview time was shortened to 30 minutes rather than an hour. The researcher thus had to adapt the interview schedule picking out only what seemed the most relevant questions for teachers. Due to the difficulties in arranging access to teachers this procedure was then followed in the other schools.

Access to pupils was mediated by staff and parents. Parental information sheets and consent forms were given to RA Champions who either selected pupils and contacted parents on the researcher's behalf or passed on the information to other members of staff to do the same. The busy timetables of staff made this difficult and it was a lengthy process. Copies of the information sheets and consent forms can be found in Appendix 4. Staff were briefed that the researcher wanted a range of pupils who had taken part in conferences for a broad range of reasons. It was hoped that there would be a balance of pupils who were perceived as the 'harmer', pupils who were seen as the 'harmed' and some who were both.

Staff Interviews

17 staff interviews were conducted with a total of 34 staff from the four schools. These included 4 Head Teachers/Deputy Head Teachers, 4 RA Champions, 3 Heads of Year, 3 Teacher Focus Groups (2 of which also consisted of 1 or 2 Heads of Year) 2 Support Staff and 1 Support Staff focus group. RA Champions had other roles such as Deputy Head, Bullying Co-ordinator or Support Worker. The interviews with staff took approximately one hour, whilst the teacher focus group interviews took 30 minutes. All the interviews were recorded. The busy working schedule of the staff meant that in several instances, the interviews were conducted in two half hour sittings. All the interviews took place in the schools.

At the start of the interview, all staff were provided with an information sheet and consent form, copies of which are included in Appendix 3. They were given an outline of what areas the interview would cover and informed that the interview was confidential. The majority of staff interviewed were happy about the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their thoughts on the implementation and impact of RAs. However, in one of the teacher focus groups there were two 'silent' participants. This is discussed in the section on *'Emerging Issues'*.

Pupil Interviews

15 pupil interviews were conducted with a total of 26 pupils. The interviews with pupils took approximately 30 minutes, although a few lasted an hour. Some pupils were interviewed by themselves, some in pairs and a few in groups. All the pairs and the group interviews comprised of young people who had been in conferences together and were now on speaking terms or friends. There was no particular rationale for this arrangement on the part of the researcher. Rather, one group interview was organised by an RA Champion who either misunderstood the researcher's request or thought it would be a good idea. Due to time constraints and the researcher feeling she must take what was given, the arrangement was repeated with one other group interview and several interviews of pupils in pairs. In the case of the interviews with pupils in pairs, the arrangement seemed to work well and pupils were confident and relaxed with another pupil present. At the same time, it was felt that some of the pupils may have been more open about their feelings if they had been interviewed on their own.

At the beginning of each interview, pupils were given an explanation of the research to ensure they had a clear understanding of the study and what their participation would involve. Pupils were assured that the interview was confidential and that no information they gave the researcher would be passed on to any of the school staff, unless it was perceived that they were in any danger. It was hoped that this assurance of confidentiality would help to facilitate trust. Several pupils, who complained about the behaviour of teachers requested reassurance half way through the interview that the teachers in question would not hear the interview or find out what they had said. This indicates that initial reassurances of confidentiality were vital to the research.

Ethical Issues

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines of the British Society of Criminology. It was important to ensure that the young people who participated in the interview gave their informed consent, as well as that of their parent or guardian. Parental consent was arranged through staff before the interviews took place. Prior to the interview the researcher also checked that pupils fully understood the research, what was expected of them in the interview, what they should expect and how the research would be used. The researcher talked the pupils through the information sheet and asked them if they had any questions. The pupils were then asked to sign a consent form.

Despite the researcher following the appropriate procedures, she found that on two occasions younger pupils in a group interview were still unclear about why they had been sent to talk to her. These pupils indicated that they thought they were either there to have another 'meeting' or to be de-briefed about a conference and whether the issues had really been sorted out. In response, the researcher stopped the tape and explained once again the purposes of the research and that it was not another restorative meeting. Informed consent with children can be problematic in that children can act as if they have been listening and have understood when, in fact, they have not.

Emerging Issues

Staff selection of pupils

The researcher was provided with a broadly balanced selection of pupils who either saw themselves as the harmer, the harmed or both. The researcher interviewed pupils who had been in a conference for all kinds of reasons, ranging from friendship breakdowns to bullying. However, it was not until the researcher began to reach the end of the scheduled interviews in the four schools that it occurred to her that perhaps there was a bias towards 'good' pupils in the sample. Only two out of twenty-six pupils in the sample had histories of detentions, fixed-term exclusions and truancy. This selection could have been down to who was available and who had recently been involved in a conference, but there may have been an element of staff wanting to protect the reputation of the school and/or make it appear as if they were making a success of RAs. The two pupils who had histories of detentions, fixed-term exclusions and truancy asserted they were seen as 'bad kids' and, significantly, they had a different perspective on RAs compared to many of the other pupils in some (but not all) respects. Given that the behaviour of these pupils was seen as the most challenging in schools and precisely the ones that supporters of RAs would wish to assist with, perhaps the evaluation should have included the perspective of more of these pupils. In future, the researcher would make a point of requesting to speak to some 'bad kids'.

The silent teachers

In one of the focus groups with teachers, two of the teachers did not sign consent forms and remained 'silent'. In this group interview, during the initial description of the research, one

of the teachers seemed to undermine the researcher with a series of negative statements and questions about the methods used and the validity of the research. The teacher's tone was overtly aggressive. When the researcher answered these questions, the teacher seemed dissatisfied. When the researcher passed round consent forms the teacher simply stated "I'm not signing anything" and was quiet. The teacher who was sat next to her also did not sign the consent form and was silent. The other 3 teachers seemed to be embarrassed and appeared to want to over-compensate for their colleague's behaviour.

At the time, given the time constraints (half an hour quickly diminishing to 25-20 minutes) the researcher decided to go ahead and conduct the interview with the willing participants in the presence of the non-participants. However, on reflection it was a shame that the 'silent' teachers were not coaxed into expressing their views about RAs. The next time the researcher saw the Head of Year who was present in the interview; she stated that the 'silent' teachers were ones who were opposed to RAs and commented wearily that this was the type of thing she was up against with the teachers in her year group.

The idea that there were a minority of teachers who resisted the use of RAs ran through the narratives of many of the staff and pupils. However, the research failed to collect the views of any of these teachers. Acquiring the views of these teachers is important in order to provide a more complete view of how the implementation and impact of RAs was experienced and understood. It may also provide information valuable to Trainers, Project Managers, Senior Managers, RA Champions and Heads of Year about how to deal with and overcome some of this resistance.

Analysis and writing

All the interviews were transcribed and then coded using the qualitative software package NVivo. During the coding process, the researcher looks for themes that are common to all the interviews. These themes were derived from the literature review, the interview guides and preliminary coding of a sample of the interviews. Once the researchers were satisfied that they had a reasonably complete list of themes (the coding schema), all the staff interviews were coded and analysed for an interim report. The same coding schema was used to code the pupil interviews, although it was also necessary to add to it to encompass some of the emerging themes. In the final analysis, the views of staff and pupils were compared and contrasted, on themes relevant to the research, to enable a better understanding of similarities and differences between them.

When writing up the data, where possible the school and role of the interviewee has been noted. However, in order to protect the anonymity of some interviewees, whose role was unique, such as RA Champions, the name of the school had to be omitted. In addition, in order to include the name of the schools, some interviewees have been grouped together. For instance, senior managers were grouped together to include Head-Teachers and Assistant Head-Teachers.

Data integration

In this evaluation, we have integrated the findings about the impacts of RAiS from the quantitative data and the qualitative data. This has been a difficult task. These two sources of data provide different perspectives on the same issues. In terms of the impact of RAiS, the qualitative interviews provided an insight into how interviewees *perceived* the impact of RAiS and, importantly, an insight into *how* and *why* that impact came about. This is because the interview data provided in-depth subjective interpretations of RAiS at one-point in time when the interview was conducted, drawing on participants' understandings and

experiences of working at or attending the schools participating in RAiS. For this reason they are invaluable because they give us a feel for what RAiS is really like on the ground and bring the research 'to life'.

However, we cannot rule out that these subjective interpretations may be biased in some way; for example, they may simply reflect how the interviewee happened to feel about RAiS on the day that they were interviewed. In addition, since interviews were not (and could not) be conducted with everyone in each of the schools this means that interviews cannot fully represent the views of all nor represent the breadth of the experiences of RAiS; for example, the views of resistant teachers and 'bad kids' are one notable omission. Furthermore, there may also be a difference between what people say or how they perceive things, and actual behaviour. Teachers or pupils may perceive that RAiS has impacted on attendance, school exclusions or educational attainment, but their subjective perceptions may be different to the reality.

By contrast, the quantitative data provides an insight into *whether* there has been an impact of RAiS on attendance, exclusions or educational attainment, but says nothing about why or how these impacts arose. This is because of the breadth of the local authority data. The data supplied by the local authority counts things for *all* pupils that attend the schools in the research. This data enables a broader, albeit less detailed, understanding of all the pupils in the RAiS schools. For this reason, the data also offer a more objective picture of attendance, school exclusions and educational attainment in schools in South Bristol. However, this is not to say that this data is entirely objective. This is partly due to the deficiencies with the data described above which may skew the data and raise questions about its reliability. In addition, the data is also constructed through a social process by those who decide what to collect and how to collect it, as well as by those who provide the data.

Given the different insights offered by the two sets of data on the impact of RAiS, there were contradictory findings and interpretations. The best we can do is to explain why those differences arose.

The shape of this report

Next we provide a brief review of the literature on practices, implementation issues and the success of RAs in schools. Then we turn to the findings from the research. Chapter three examines how RAiS was incorporated into school policies and procedures. Chapter four assesses the impact of RAiS on the school climate. Chapter five explores the impact of RAiS on attendance, fixed-term exclusions and educational attainment. Chapter five, the concluding chapter summarises the research, as well as exploring the implications of the research and providing some recommendations for the future.

Chapter two: A review of the literature on RAs in schools

Practices, skills and values

The restorative approach can be considered in three distinct ways: as a set of practices; as a set of skills; and as a set of values or a distinctive ethos (Hopkins 2002). The practices are the most public face of restorative approaches and range from formal (e.g. conferencing) to informal (e.g. any interaction that has as its intention to build, nurture or repair relationships). Practices include active listening, restorative enquiry, circle time, the 'no blame' approach, mediation, conflict resolution education, anger management, restorative justice conferences and peer mediation. These practices can operate along a continuum in relation to the gravity of rule breaking or the harm done. Some school processes that are now seen as examples of a restorative approach were not initially categorized that way (e.g. peer mediation). There is no clear evidence about what kind of intervention is best suited to different situations. However, it is argued that mediation, for example, works best with long-running conflicts, and with minor incidents and conferences in more serious cases including bullying and theft from a person that would normally be subject to an official response (e.g. exclusion) (YJB 2004).

These practices require certain skills on the part of facilitators and mediators and all those likely to be involved. The skills include: remaining impartial and non-judgmental, empathy, open-mindedness, conflict-management skills, actively and empathically listening, warmth, compassion, patience, empowering participants to come up with solutions rather than suggesting or imposing ideas, respecting the perspectives of all involved, creative questioning and developing rapport amongst participants. The skills needed to build, nurture and repair relationships are informed by certain values and principles that form an underlying restorative ethos or philosophy. These include mutual respect, openness, inclusion, collaboration, empowerment, honesty, integrity, valuing others, tolerance, congruence and trust (Hopkins 2002).

Restorative approaches in schools are usually focused on improving pupil behaviour including anti-social acts such as property damage or theft, reducing bullying, improving pupil's educational performance, reducing unauthorized absences and temporary and permanent exclusions, improving pupil and staff well-being. However, as Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) suggest, restorative practices aim to:

Focus our attention on relationships between all members of the school community and teach us the value of relationships in achieving quality outcomes for students (p.193).

Therefore, restorative approaches in schools are also concerned with attitudinal changes, interpersonal relationships as well as changes in the culture of the school environment (Morrison et al. 2006, Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2002, Johnstone 2002, Wachtel 1999).

Restorative approaches vary in how they tackle these different aspects of the school environment. Sherman and Strang (2007) identify three such aspects. Firstly, some programmes teach pupils conflict resolution; these programmes are preventative as pupils are taught, in advance, about how to deal with conflict. Such programmes help prevent incidents of inappropriate behaviour from arising in the first place (Blood and Thorsborne 2005). Secondly, some programmes simply respond to harmful incidents, which affect the whole of the school, using problem-solving circles, peer mediation and conferences. In fact,

restorative conferences in schools bear the most similarity to restorative justice in criminal justice settings. However, such programmes have been criticised for being merely reactive (Blood and Thorsborne 2005). Thirdly, programmes can be implemented on a whole-school basis; such programmes are likely to have a greater impact than incident-specific initiatives on pupil outcomes and contribute to a more satisfactory test of restorative justice. A whole-school approach is one that not only responds to conflict and inappropriate behaviour but builds and nurtures relationships in the school in the first place (Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2002, Johnstone 2002, Wachtel 1999). A strong underlying ethos that encompasses restorative values and principles is crucial in the development of a whole-school approach (Hopkins 2002) as is congruence with school policy and practice, a climate of professional learning and supportive and productive leadership (Shaw 2007).

Morrison, however, (2003) suggests it is useful to categorize restorative approaches on a spectrum running from primary interventions, secondary or "targeted" interventions and tertiary interventions. These categories are derived from the public health approach to crime prevention (cf. Home Office 2008). In the context of crime prevention, primary interventions are targeted at the general population. In the school context, primary interventions are comprehensive teaching programmes that assist members of a school community to improve their skills in resolving disputes, managing conflict, and communicating in ways that promote strong relationships (Moore 2005). Effective programmes tend to emphasize the importance of process in imparting skills of active listening, negotiation, facilitation and the appreciation of diversity. Common aims include a sense of supportive community by recognizing and valuing the role of each participant.

Secondary interventions are targeted at those ‘at risk’ of becoming involved in offending in the criminal justice system. Peer Mediation is the best known example of a secondary or targeted intervention in schools. Peer mediation programmes were first introduced to schools decades ago, and have now been widely adopted with many programmes in many countries (Moore 2005). Mediation is a form of conflict resolution in which a trained facilitator helps people in dispute to negotiate. The mediator encourages participants to explain their thoughts and feelings, talk directly, develop options, and reach a consensual settlement. In school peer mediation programs, the mediator is a fellow student (or students) trained in mediation.

In the criminal justice context, tertiary prevention is targeted at those already engaged in offending. Restorative Conferencing is a well known example of a tertiary intervention. Restorative Conferences have been called in schools in various countries for a range of reasons including bullying, assault, violent behaviour, name-calling, verbal abuse, family feuds, friendship/ relationship breakdowns, incidents involving teachers, gossip, abusive mobile text messages, racial abuse, gang fights, threats, truancy and possession of weapons. Conferences can be facilitated by a range of parties including school staff, staff from local mediation, police officers, trained volunteers and YOT staff. Conferences sometimes include parents, and involvement is usually seen as having a positive affect on the process (YJB 2004, p.32).

Implementation

There have been high hopes for restorative approaches in schools, but problems frequently arise in implementation. Traditional disciplinary approaches often continue to predominate (Sherman and Strang 2007). There is no one model of effective implementation for restorative approaches in schools (Kane et al. 2006). Blood and Thorsborne (2005) suggest a 5 stage model of implementation to assist schools. This is outlined as follows:

Stage 1: Gaining Commitment - Capturing Hearts and Minds
Stage 2: Developing a Shared Vision- Knowing where we are going and why
Stage 3: Developing Responsive and Effective Practice - Changing how we do things Stage 4: Developing a Whole-school Approach - Putting it all together
Stage 5: Professional Relationships - Walking the talk with each other
(Blood and Thorsborne 2005, p.6).

In practice, implementation does not tend to occur in a neat linear fashion suggested by the 'outline' above. As Blood and Thorsborne (2006) assert, these stages are not linear in their implementation and overlap (p.6). The level and success of the implementation of restorative approaches is dependent on various factors. These include:

1. The amount of funding available (e.g. for training, resources and employment).
2. The overall vision and expectations of the key stakeholders (e.g. Is implementation to be taken up on a whole-school basis, by a certain section of the school community or will particular restorative practices be integrated into an existing system? Will it provide an over arching ethos or be 'another tool in the box?').
3. The school culture (e.g. the existing attitudes and behaviours of staff, pupils and parents, the current level of staff and pupil wellbeing).
4. Pre-existing school policies and measures used to deal with pupil-pupil and staff-pupil conflict and the degree to which restorative approaches are integrated into or used to replace these.
5. How and by whom the training is administered and received.
6. Whether restorative practices (such as listening, empathy, being non-judgemental, and taking personal and civic responsibility) are incorporated into the curriculum.
7. The external school environment (e.g. Is conflict and fighting the norm in the immediate surrounding community?).
8. The time scale given for implementation.
9. The degree to which outside agents may be involved (e.g. parents, youth clubs and local businesses)
10. The commitment and continued presence of the key stakeholders.

A key factor, according to restorative educationalists, is concerning with the overall vision of the key stakeholders and the importance of restorative approaches being implemented on a whole-school rather than a partial basis (Blood 2005, Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2004). The successful implementation of a whole-school approach is generally agreed to take up to five years in order for the school to fully adapt to a more inclusive and less punitive culture (Blood 2005, Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2004). However, flexibility to do what fits with individual school needs is also highlighted as important (Kane et al. 2006).

Another factor highlighted in the literature is the importance of a leader with vision and commitment. Head teachers in particular are seen as key to implementation due to their influence on the school culture, ethos, the way resources are deployed and staff availability for training and co-ordination (Blood and Thorsborne 2005, YJB 2004).

One of the single most important factors in the introduction of the restorative approaches in schools is acceptance on the part of the Head Teacher (YJB 2005, p.92).

Changes in leadership are found to have a serious impact on how initiatives will progress (YJB 2004). However, Blood and Thorsborne (2005) argue that 'leadership can be found at many levels within the school community' and thus successful implementation is 'not so heavily dependent on one person' (p.5).

Staff training is emphasized as important to the successful implementation of a whole-school approach. However, there often remains a minority of staff resistant to restorative approaches (Kane et. al. p.2006). Restorative approaches may threaten some teachers with a perceived loss of power and control (Shaw 2007). In the assessment of the whole-school approach in 28 schools across England and Wales by the YJB (2004), at the end of the programme just under half (43 per cent) of all the staff reported that they knew either nothing or not very much about restorative justice. Seven per cent of those who reported they knew quite a lot were unable to correctly identify any of the key features (p.45). Making time for INSET on restorative approaches was identified as the single biggest barrier to implementation in the YJB (2004) study.

Empowerment lies at the heart of the restorative philosophy (Hopkins 2002). Initially a school may rely on external training to build its restorative strategy but for a sustainable whole-school approach, it will ultimately be looking to develop its own in-house training team and steering group comprised of teaching staff, support staff, students, parents and others (Hopkins 2006). There will also be opportunities for student involvement as leaders in restorative approaches as peer mediators or mentors, school counsellors, peer supporters or activities organizers (Hopkins 2006).

Inter-agency relationships

Parents, local agencies and community groups are potentially important sources of additional support for schools in addressing problematic pupil behaviour. Accessing additional support requires that schools are willing, open and responsive to building inter-agency relationships (Wearmouth et al. 2007, p.37). The building of inter-agency relationships is consistent with a whole-school approach as conversations are broadened to include the involvement of the local community (Blood and Thorsborne 2005). School staff tend to see running conferences as a time consuming activity that can only realistically be offered by staff who are external to the school (such as youth offending team (YOT) staff, police, mediation service or volunteers) or school staff who have time off teaching (e.g. learning mentors, heads of year, and inclusion/counselling staff (YJB 2004, p.53).

In the YJB (2004) evaluation more than half the schools (14 out of 26) were dependent on outsiders (YOT staff, police, mediation service staff, volunteers) to run conferences. However, there is a risk that where staff welcome outside support they may be left feeling that the skills of a mediator or external conference facilitator are too difficult for them to use themselves (Hopkins 2002). In the evaluation of restorative practices in three Scottish councils (Kane at al. 2006) inter-agency working was felt to be problematic in some schools but a real strength in others (p.42).

The YJB (2004) study proposes that implementing restorative conferences provides an excellent opportunity for improving inter-agency working (p.71). During the programme in the schools assessed by the YJB, YOTs worked more closely with schools, police had a constructive role in which to engage with young people and Connexions staff, mediation staff, school staff and volunteers worked together. This kind of joined up working is a requirement of the 'Every Child Matters' and 'Safer School Partnerships' agendas in the UK. The exposure, growing experience and confidence of practitioners such as police and YOT

staff engaged in restorative approaches in schools may also lead to increased restorative-focused work in other settings (YJB 2004, p.64).

Blood and Thorsborne (2005) cite various example of ways in which restorative programmes have involved work with local agencies (see p.15-16). These include a high school in Tazmania which in response to ongoing problems with student alcohol problems made a partnership agreement with the local hotel and liquor outlet; agreements being reached with local bus companies regarding the management of student behaviour on school buses; a high school in New Zealand which in partnership with a local health service has developed a programme for dealing with drug related issues restoratively.

Hopkins (2006) argues that restorative programmes will function more successfully if they are working in partnership with other schools in the local authority or district and if the authority has integrated restorative principles throughout its services and management structure (p.7). Such an authority would be comprised of agencies informed by restorative principles and practices. Hence agencies that schools typically draw on for support such as the police, the local mental health team, social services and the youth offending team would all deal with a young person in a consistent restorative way. Hopkins (2006) suggests:

Restorative justice can serve as an overarching umbrella within which all can function. In this way a young person, wherever he or she may be referred, will be dealt with restoratively (p.7).

Evidence of success

Restorative approaches have been extensively evaluated in a wide variety of countries, and evaluations have been broadly positive (Masters 2004). There is also increasing evidence from many countries about the success of the approach in schools (e.g. Kane et al. 2006, Dravery et al. 2006, YJB 2004, Ierley and Ivker 2002 cited in Morrison et al. (2005), Cameron and Thorsborne 2001, Calhoun 2000). For the purpose of this review, success is defined as having three dimensions: processes, outputs and outcomes. This section examines the evidence of success of restorative approaches in schools in terms of processes (e.g. pupil relationships, staff-pupil relationships and need for a whole-school approach), outputs (e.g. freeing staff capacity, number of conferences, number of peer mediators) and outcomes (e.g. improved educational performance, decreases in bullying, improved health outcomes etc).

Processes

The introduction of restorative approaches in schools inevitably involves changes in the processes and practices used to deal with issues that arise between pupils, between staff and pupils and if fully implemented, between staff and staff, staff and parents and so on. If the introduction of restorative approaches is successful, communication and relationships between members of the school community will be improved as they gradually learn to relate to each other in a different way. As Hopkins (2006) asserts, ‘acting restoratively starts at the individual level’ (p.8) and involves ‘a heart set’ as well as a ‘restorative mind set’ (p.2).

There have been some assessments of primary intervention programmes, ‘trying to prevent harm in as-yet-unharmed populations’ (Sherman and Strang 2007) in which students have learnt conflict management skills. A pre-post evaluation of a programme in Baltimore which aimed to develop mutual respect and understanding through a series of workshops indicated that fully participating students dealt more constructively with conflict (Woehrle 2000). Morrison's pre-post evaluation of primary intervention programmes (in North

America and Australia) also showed that students were significantly more likely to respond constructively and peacefully to conflict. Levels of respect, empathy and mutual support also increased amongst students (Morrison 2006, 2005, 2001). Effective programmes appear to widen students' circle of friendship, improve their relationship with their teachers; and assist students to address conflict in schools in its early stages (Moore 2005).

Evaluations of secondary or targeted intervention programmes including peer mediation and problem solving circles have shown some positive results for pupil-pupil relationships. For example, in an assessment of a problem solving circle programme in an Australian elementary school (Morrison and Martinez 2005 cited in Morrison 2005), teachers reported one of the benefits was better communication and support between students.

Studies in England and Wales (YJB 2004), the United States (O'Brien 2005, Minnesota Department of Children, Family and Learning 2002, Ierley and Ivker 2002 cited in Morrison et al. 2005), Australia (Shaw and Wierenga 2002) and Canada (Calhoun 2000) have demonstrated that conferences usually result in successful agreements between the parties. These range from apologies, repaired friendships/relationships, agreements to desist from the behaviour that led to the conference and agreements to maintain distance between the parties, through to formal reparation (YJB 2005). Evidence for pupil satisfaction with the process tends to be positive.

In the YJB (2004) study, positive aspects of conferences reported by pupils included feeling they had an opportunity to be listened to and heard, victims being more confident in themselves, the reduction of the potential for lying and shouting, not being told what to do, feeling they had been treated fairly and feeling respected. Restorative conferences helped harmers gain a better understanding of the full effects of their actions and take responsibility for them (p.68).

While there is of evidence of great benefit to individuals involved in conferences, an emerging story is that of schools in which the school community as a whole remains mostly unaffected and 'untouched by the process and the philosophy behind' the restorative approach (Hopkins 2002, p.147). This has been cited as the case in assessments of restorative programmes in the Thames Valley and Nottingham (Hopkins 2002). Developing restorative practices in a school is not simply about offering conferences in situations where harm has been caused. The success of any restorative programme and the accompanying changes in how school members relate to one another is ultimately dependent on how well restorative approaches are implemented throughout the school. This relates back to the issue of the importance of a whole-school approach.

A whole-school approach is generally viewed by researchers and educationalists as key to the success of restorative approaches (e.g. Hopkins 2005, Johnston 2002, Hopkins and Tyrrell 2001, Bitel 2001, Bitel and Rolls 2000, Cohen 1995, Quill and Wynne 1993). For instance, in the YJB (2004) study, it is stated:

Unless there is a commitment to adopting a whole-school approach, schools might do better to place their efforts elsewhere; halfway measures are likely to be ineffective (p.70).

Hopkins (2002) similarly states 'the project will not be successful unless the majority of the school community is on board' (p.147). Researchers point out that restorative approaches are most effective when a positive ethos is well established in the school and when one-to-one problem-solving skills (e.g. listening and responsibility) have been incorporated into the

mainstream curriculum, through workshops or Personal Social and Health Education (YJB 2004).

In an evaluation of a whole-school programme in three Scottish councils by Kane et al. (2006) there was strong evidence of cultural change in many of the schools and the atmosphere in most of the schools became noticeable calmer (p.9). They found evidence that pupils were generally more positive about their whole-school experience and they thought staff were fair and listened to 'both sides of the story' (p.9).

The whole-school approach demands that schools engage in organizational and cultural change with the application of a continuum of relational practices from proactive to reactive. Many problems are then eliminated or minimized before they develop into more serious issues. Hence, whole-school approaches have been found to be most effective in terms of providing improved relationships within a more communicative school culture. Morrison et al. (2006) argue that cues for assessing a change in school culture include:

1. How management speaks to and about staff
2. How staff speak about the management, particularly in their absence
3. How management and staff speak to and about students and parents
4. The patterns of communication within staff meetings
5. How criticism and disagreement are handled
6. How the school invites, promotes and supports initiatives
7. How the school responds to identified needs amongst students or staff

As Sherman and Strang (2007) state, culture change is a difficult concept to measure. The measures suggested by Morrison et al. (2006) would be difficult but not impossible to implement.

Shaw (2007) points out that for some school staff the adoption of restorative approaches represents 'a fundamental shift in thinking about school justice and discipline' (p.131). Blood & Thorsborne (2005) discuss the difficulty some of us may have in making the transition from a punitive to a restorative mind set given that most of us grew up in the punishing tradition. In restorative processes we are forced to learn from our experiences and examine our attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. They argue that 'this challenging of mindsets is where true culture change begins' (p. 3). In addition:

Taking up restorative practice, then, can challenge us in ways that may cause professional and personal discomfort, even pain (Blood and Thorsborne 2005)

It is important to note, however, that in some cases the adoption of restorative approaches does not represent a fundamental shift in thinking. In some studies it has become apparent that schools were already using strategies compatible with restorative approaches before embarking on a more structured or formalized use of restorative approaches. For example, in an evaluation by Stokes and Shaw (2005) of eighteen schools, pastoral care, citizenship education, peer mediation and circle time were cited as examples (p.129).

I now turn to a discussion of the success of restorative approaches in terms of some of the outputs that have been found to emerge from them.

Outputs

Evaluations demonstrate many positive and some not so positive outputs of restorative approaches in schools for both staff and pupils. It is frequently reported that one of the barriers school staff see, to the successful implementation of restorative approaches, is pressure from other priorities and their lack of time to invest in training, ongoing support and review. However, as Hopkins (2002) argues:

Challenging and distressing incidents have a tendency to send ripples far beyond those immediately involved (Hopkins 2002, p.148).

Dealing with inappropriate behaviour and conflict restoratively takes time initially, but in the long term, greatly reduces the total time that these situations tend to take.

Hopkins (2002) gives the example of peer mediation which she claims greatly reduces the time teachers need to spend on playground conflict. In the YJB (2004) study, staff reported that they lost less of their teaching time dealing with behaviour problems during lesson time (p.44). However, the study does not state whether this is because pupil behaviour had improved in the school as a whole, because teachers were using restorative approaches in the classrooms or a combination of these. Another related output is that teachers may begin to feel more in control and confident in their abilities as teachers due to the increased options there are for managing behaviour and relationships. Restorative approaches may be seen as a strategy to enable staff to work in more productive ways (YJB 2004, p.68). However, outputs have not all been positive. For instance, as noted on page 5, just under half (43 per cent) of all staff in the schools in the YJB evaluation reported at the end of the programme that they knew either nothing or not very much about restorative justice. This it was argued indicates evidence of a lack of a whole-school approach (YJB p.45). Another related output in the YJB assessment was that the majority of the staff continued in their belief that exclusion was the most effective was of dealing with inappropriate behaviour.

As for pupils, they may also find themselves with more options when faced with relationship or conflict problems. If taught conflict and problem solving skills, pupils are more likely to become self-regulating and better problem solvers (Blood and Thorsborne, p.9). Restorative approaches such as problem-solving circles or conferences can provide a safe place for pupils to express problems. An evaluation of the Responsible Citizenship Programme also in an Australian elementary school aiming to build school community and resolve conflict peacefully found that students' feelings of safety at school and participation in the school community had improved (Morrison 2001, 2006). In the assessment of a problem-solving circle programme in an Australian elementary school students reported that they felt teachers held bullies more accountable (p.54).

Outcomes

There has been growing evidence of various positive outcomes emerging from restorative programmes in schools such as reduced rates of exclusions, reduced incidents of bullying, improved learning outcomes etc. However, outcome measures are often inconclusive as numerous other factors are likely to impact on outcomes. Nevertheless, restorative educationalists and researchers continue to find evidence for positive outcomes.

Do restorative approaches reduce bullying?

In their survey assessment of changes in the school environment following the introduction of restorative approaches, the YJB (2005) found that in certain schools in their study e.g. Lambeth, Hammersmith and Fulham (the ones that had been implementing restorative

conferences for longer) there had been an 8-11 per cent reduction in racist name calling, a 4-7 per cent decrease in bullying, an increase of 13 per cent in pupils reporting that they had not been verbally threatened by another pupil in the past month, a 7-10 per cent increase in the percentage of pupils who thought their school was doing a good job of stopping bullying and a decrease in their perception that bullying was a serious problem in their school (28 per cent, 42 per cent and 19 per cent). Positive findings of this nature were also recorded in many of the other schools (See p.42-43). The staff survey also showed that the staff believed there had been a significant improvement in pupil behaviour (See p.66) and that they lost less time dealing with behaviour problems during lesson times (See p. 44). However, perceptions of changes in behaviour are not the same as actual improvements in behaviour. Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) report that conferencing has been found to be particularly effective in addressing bullying in schools.

When measuring levels of conflict in schools it is worth considering that restorative approaches may make it seem as if levels of conflict between pupils are increasing as more pupils feel able to come forward to report problems. In the words of a police officer in the YJB evaluation:

Restorative justice can sometimes make it look like there is an increase in bullying and violence, because the more you deal with it in a positive manner, the more likely pupils will come forward to report things (p.58).

Do restorative approaches reduce school exclusions?

The Annual Youth Crime Survey (MORI, 2004) shows that young people excluded from school are more than twice as likely to commit offences than young people in mainstream school (60 per cent versus 26 per cent). Therefore, it is important to try to determine the impact of restorative justice on school exclusions.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly the impact of restorative justice practices on schools using exclusion data, as exclusions are affected by a number of variables. Schools tend to have developed a number of different strategies to improve behaviour and reduce their exclusion figures. This makes it difficult to tease out the effect that restorative approaches has had on reducing exclusions. School exclusion rates are also subject to changes in school leadership and in behaviour policies.

Schools employing restorative approaches have used it in some way in relation to exclusions, either to try to avert an exclusion or as a reintegration tool following exclusion. In the YJB 2005 study, there was a slight trend for schools implementing restorative justice to reduce their permanent exclusions when compared to non-programme or low-programme implementing schools. However, the number of schools was too small to reach definitive conclusions (p. 47).

Evaluators of restorative approaches impact on exclusion rates have collected data on pupils 'risk' of exclusion prior to involvement in restorative conference interventions. Conference participants identified as at risk in the YJB study included young people who had been excluded before the conference, were at risk of temporary exclusion, had experienced temporary exclusion or permanent exclusion from a previous school or had a history of physical or verbal assault on staff (p.48). Eleven per cent of conference participants had been identified as having a statement of special needs, school action special needs or school action plus (p.30) and less than one per cent were on a special needs supportive curriculum (p.29).

According to the YJB evaluation, conferences had made no discernible effect on exclusions, as they were used by many schools to reintegrate pupils following exclusions (2005, p.70). However, changes in school leadership in one of the schools and placement of another school under special measures meant that the number of conferences was drastically reduced and exclusions increased. Furthermore, some of the qualitative data supported the idea that restorative justice generally and restorative conferencing in particular had helped to reduce school exclusions (p.48). However, at the time of the assessment of the programme it was found that the majority of staff in the schools still believed that exclusions are the best approach to dealing with behaviour problems (p.44).

According to the experience of the YJB study, one of the challenges in assessing the success of the restorative approach was the definition of what was counted as a conference (See YJB 2005, p.27). Some schools did not include short or informal conferences in their monitoring, believing they did not count as restorative conference cases. This meant that the data on conferences was incomplete and did not represent all the conferences and mediations that took place.

In an evaluation in some of the high schools in Sefton, Merseyside, a restorative conference is always used where there is a chance of exclusion. In three pilot schools this has resulted in 55 per cent reductions in permanent exclusions, 38 per cent reductions in fixed-term exclusions and 57 per cent in the number of excluded days in one year (Allen 2006, p.13).

Do restorative approaches improve attendance rates and academic achievement?
Improved attendance rates and improvements in academic achievement are less directly attributable to restorative approaches. Schools are likely to have other policies and practices that will impact on these possible outcomes. However, schools with restorative programmes have experienced improved school attainment and attendance rates when compared with non-programme schools (e.g. see Kane et al. 2006).

Chapter three: Incorporating RAIS into school policies and processes

The process of implementation

In August 2006, in partnership with the Safer Bristol Partnership and Bristol City Council Children & Young People's Services (CYPS) Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS) proposed to develop a demonstration RAiS Programme in Bristol, designed to reduce:

- Permanent exclusions
- Fixed-term exclusions
- Fixed-term exclusions (days)
- Anti-social Behaviour problems in school and local community
- Unauthorised absences
- Bullying
- Racial conflicts

And to improve attainment levels amongst pupils.

Bristol was chosen for the location of the project as in Bristol school exclusions are particularly high and on this criterion the Local Authority was the worst performing one in England & Wales. The secondary schools were selected from south Bristol as this is a particularly deprived area in Bristol. Bristol CYPS and Safer Bristol wanted the project to focus on 'problematic' schools and chose four schools from south Bristol that fitted this criterion. These schools had significant issues with behaviour, attendance and attainment and were making extensive use of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. They were all:

- Mixed comprehensives with between 700-1200 pupils
- Serving the deprived areas of south Bristol
- Described by Bristol CYPS and Safer Bristol as 'problematic'
- Having significant attendance and behavioural problems
- Using fixed term and permanent exclusions up to (in some of the schools) 150 per year.

A summary of why each of the schools implemented RAiS is provided in Appendix 5. All the school managers provided a different account of why they decided to implement RAs, how they fitted into the school, how they were used and the difficulties encountered. As we discuss shortly, the reason school managers adopted RAs had a direct bearing on whether the implementation was whole-school and on the extent to which RAs were integrated into school policies and procedures. Leadership was also of importance to the use of a whole-school approach, as has been noted by Blood and Thorsborne (2005) and YJB (2004). In the

RAiS schools, the initial vision of senior mangers, in terms of how they thought they could use RAs, was believed to impact on school outcomes and on the climate for learning.

Once the school had agreed to implement RAiS, they went through several stages of training. There are two levels of RAiS training. In level 1 training, staff spend one day learning about RAs and shown how to use basic (instant) restorative skills. In Level 2 training, staff spend two days learning how to convene restorative conferences. In each school, all staff received Level 1 training from the RAiS Project Manager and a group of five or more experienced Restorative Solutions trained trainers. The trainers came from a wide range of settings which include police officers, YOT officers, school staff and prison staff and were led by the Director of Training for Restorative Solutions Brian Dowling.[2] A select number of staff from each school also received Level 2 training which was conducted by the RAiS Project Manager. In all schools, Level 2 training was provided to those who expressed an interest in it. This tended to include at least one Senior Manager, an RA Champion, Heads of Year and Support Staff.

In the first phase of training, which included Hartcliffe, Brislington and Hengrove, a small cohort of staff from each school received a mixture of level 1 and 2 training. At Brislington, 90 staff, including some non-teaching staff, received level 1 training during an INSET day in June 2007. Of this, a small cohort of 8-10 staff, who showed an interest, were then trained to Level 2 over the following year. In total, 23 staff were trained to level 2 and 113 staff were trained to Level 1. At Hartcliffe, 79 staff were trained to level 1 in September 2007 and 14 staff were Level 2, making a total of 93 trained staff. At Hengrove, 63 staff were trained to level 1 during an INSET day in January 2008, and 7 staff were trained to Level 2. So in total 70 staff were trained at Hengrove.

In the second phase of the training, the RA Champion and 2 support staff at Bedminster were trained to level 2. In March 2008, a further 105 staff were trained to level 1 in Bedminster and in July 2008 7 more were trained to Level 2. In total, 105 staff were trained to level 1 and 10 to Level 2 making a total of 115. A small cohort of staff from Hengrove and Brislington also received training to qualify them as RAs trainers in October 2008.

The approach to implementation: whole-school vs. pockets of RAs

There appeared to be two different approaches to implementing RAs[3]. The first, which applied to Brislington only, was to implement RAs on a whole-school basis. RAs were in this case, integrated in school policies early on, during the roll-out period. Detentions were taken away and replaced with a continuum of actions including RAs. The plan was evidently to change the culture of the school from the top down and allow teachers and pupils to quickly adjust to the new way of doing things.

The second approach deployed in the other three schools, was to initially concentrate RAs in pockets of the school (e.g. one year group).[4] The intention was not to enshrine RAs in school policies until it has been practised, tried and tested by staff and pupils in parts of the school. This allowed staff and pupils to evaluate its progress before taking the plunge and implementing it across the board. The idea was that the culture of the school would begin to

[2] See http://www.restorativesolutions.org.uk.

[3] The models of implementation provided by the four schools have been simplified into two categories for the purpose of discussion and comparison.

[4] This is not to suggest that the three schools included in the Model 2 category implemented RAs in the exact same way or faced the same issues.

change in small pockets of the school and staff would see and experience RAs working and gradually become convinced of its value and that this would spread.

Unless contractually agreed at the outset, providers had no control over how and to what extent schools deployed and utilised the RAs, training and support. However, service providers preferred the whole-school approach as they believed that it encouraged staff to immediately embrace RAs and that it produced positive results in a shorter space of time. However, senior managers deploying the second model asserted that their way of implementing RAs was right for their school, as this Champion explained:

> We've kind of learned stuff here over the last four years I've worked here, is that you can't chuck things at everybody all at the same time, you have to take really small steps, and I think that was kind of hard for RAiS to understand that because we've moved on so much as a secondary school, but only by taking baby steps, and I think that was something they had to learn alongside us as well. *RJ Champion, 4.*

Staff indicated that there were a number of advantages and disadvantages to both implementation models. An advantage enjoyed by Brislington in deploying a whole-schools approach was that it maximized staffs' access to training and support provided within the two-year rollout period. Consequently, it is likely that the quality of the RAs practised in the school was higher than in the other schools and better reflected the original intentions of the programme. There were examples of how staff, who may have been well-intentioned, had compromised the integrity of the programme in the three other schools that did not use a whole-school approach. Firstly some pupils at Bedminster reported that they were given little choice about taking part in conferences. When asked whether he was asked to attend a conference, Pupil 15 said "we didn't really have a choice to go down and speak about it." Secondly, in Bedminster, conferences were also being conducted with harmers who had not admitted they had done anything wrong, as this interviewee explained:

> The perpetrators, there were three of them, they hadn't actually been asked if they wanted to have a conference, they hadn't actually admitted they'd done anything wrong, so they were coming into a room with a victim but they hadn't admitted to it. *Support Worker 1, Bedminster.*

Thirdly, there were also accounts of staff finding it difficult or thinking it unnecessary to keep to the set script. For example, staff would tell pupils to apologise or tell them what they had to do to make amends or generally chip in with their own prescriptive opinions. This Head of Year at Hartcliffe said of staff using RAs:

> They're not actually using the script properly, and they're putting their own opinions in*. Head of Year, Hartcliffe*.

One pupil described how he had been shouted at in what was supposed to be a conference.

> You've got the support kind of people, they do like proper conferences but the other ones, they say they're conferences but they're just going to sit you down and shout at you. Pupil 6, aged 15, Brislington.

There were also cases of management designing distorted forms of RAs which, despite good intentions, could not be described as restorative. For example, one school adopted a

strategy for dealing with pupil reintegration, which involved a 'quiet day' spent in the internal exclusion room to prepare them for going back into the school. During the day, they were asked to do a piece of restorative writing in which they reflected on what had happened, who they affected and what they could do to put things right. Pupils were asked to talk about what they had written with the facilitator and the other pupils in the exclusion room. The written sheet was then given to their teacher with the idea that a restorative conversation would take place between them and the pupil. However, the extent to which the use of 'quiet days' was restorative was questionable, as pupils were not given a choice. There was also little in place to ensure that the restorative conversation between the pupil and teacher took place.

Taken together this suggests that using a whole-school approach may contribute to greater adherence to the programme. It also suggests that all schools need continuing input from providers to monitor, advise and support their practices particularly during the rollout period; otherwise, the quality and integrity of the programme may be compromised.

A further advantage of the whole-school approach to implementation was that it was more likely that the programme would be integrated into school policy and retained in the longer-term, rather than being diluted and forgotten. Staff in the schools that did not use a whole-school approach were more likely to view the programme as having been diluted and/or forgotten:

> Every year we have a lot of new ideas coming in, which is great, but I think sometimes, as a staff body, I think we sometimes get such a lot of changes that RJ was another, and…a lot of what we do, there's been something that we've done maybe for a year, two years, and then it's like, out the window. *Head of Year, Bedminster.*

> Unfortunately it's like a lot of things though, isn't it. It starts off, everybody's really excited about it, and use it, and then it wanes, so now I don't think, this is my perspective, but I don't think it's used as much as it used to be, not the instant RJ…I think there's a danger that if we carry on the way we are, and we don't have a reminder session, I think the future of it will be that it will go downhill. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

A disadvantage of the whole-school approach, however, was that senior management had to deal with disgruntled teachers struggling to adapt to new rules. A Senior Manager at Brislington described how staff reacted to the loss of their punitive powers:

> It's caused some issues, you know, particularly in November, December, in the end of the Autumn term, you know, when staff are tired, you know, "Nothing's being done about these children", "There are no sanctions", "The children are in charge", you know, type thing. *Senior Manager, Brislington.*

Nevertheless, these difficulties were not insurmountable. Senior Managers reported that keeping the lines of communication open with teaching staff was key to supporting them through the policy and procedural changes as well as reasoning with them about the need to change behaviour. Moreover, interviewees in all the schools, not just Brislington, which used the whole-school approach, reported that there were a minority of staff who opposed to RAs, did not want to try them and preferred to continue to use traditional sanctions.

One advantage of using only pockets of RAs, rather than the whole-school approach, in Bedminster, Hartcliffe and Hengrove was that staff and pupils were gradually exposed to RAs before they were incorporated into school policy. This meant that staff had time to become accustomed to it, as this RJ Champion explained:

> It's too big a step … for some staff, from what they're used to doing, to how you want them to start thinking, the mindset has to change, and you can't do that, you'd never do that automatically, you'd just shoot yourself in the foot, you've got to prove that it works, and be able to showcase some successes. *RJ Champion, 4*.

This perspective was supported by the accounts of several staff who admitted to being initially skeptical about RAs until they saw others doing them and saw that they worked. Another advantage of using pockets of RAs was that staff were less likely to feel that new policies had been imposed on them. This approach also allowed staff and pupils the opportunity to become involved in the decision-making process regarding how RAs could be best implemented in the school.

A disadvantage of using pockets of RAs was that if a school did not take the opportunity to integrate RAs into school policy during the roll-out period, the opportunity may have been lost all together; for example, this could be due to unforeseen changes in leadership, as was the case in Hartcliffe. Another disadvantage was that if and when the schools did decide to integrate RAs in policy the opportunity for advice and support from the service provider's may have passed. A further shortcoming of this approach to implementation was that traditional sanctions, such as detentions and fixed-term exclusions, co-existed alongside the RAs. This can mean, as the YJB (2004) found, that these existing sanctions are the predominant, automatic or 'easier' response to pupil behaviour. This was substantiated in the accounts of several staff. For instance, this Head of Year says:

> Being completely truthful, sometimes I will just put them in the inclusion room, because it's easier to fill in a form, and phone the parents and say they're in the inclusion room, because I simply have not got the time to do the background RJ, and then do the RJ itself, and I wish I did have more time because I think it's a really worthwhile thing. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

Key implementation issues

"It's a time issue"

This interviewee quoted above hints at another important implementation issue raised by interviewees in all the schools, namely, the management of staff time in relation to RAs. Staff in all the schools, particularly teachers, saw time as a major obstacle that prevented them from using RAs as much as they would like to have done. One Support Worker put the initial cynicism she perceived amongst the teachers, during the Level 1 training, down to their anxiety about having to make time to hold the conferences, as she explained:

> There was a lot of cynicism, because teachers are a bit like…"Oh when are we supposed to find time to do this?" And I think a lot of them sort of panicked and thought, oh, we're going to be expected to be having these conferences, and things. *Support Worker 2, Bedminster.*

Support staff rather than teachers were most likely to have time in their day to facilitate conferences and pupils were in favour of support staff facilitating conferences than teachers or senior managers; they saw the former as more prepared to listen to and understand them. However, support staff in one school did not feel that they were used in this way, as this support worker explained:

> We should be the ones who are really pioneering it for the school, because we're in the best position to do it, that's our job, we've got more time. If I wanted to go "Right I'm going to spend two days having a conference, then I could. *Support Worker 1, Bedminster.*

Unlike in the other schools, the triad model that was adopted by Brislington (see Appendix 5) was seen as a way of ensuring that there were trained support staff who had time to conduct conferences, should the need arise.

One RA Manager stated that getting staff to see that RAs did not necessarily take more time, was key to getting them to change their practice, as she explained:

> Actually I think getting over to staff that you don't need more time to do a restorative intervention than a telling off, I think that that is quite key to all of this, and I think they are taking that on board that … you can stand and chat to someone in the corridor, and it doesn't take any longer to say, well, what happened, and who was affected by that then, what can you do to put it right, which will probably have a better outcome, will not raise people's blood pressure to the same extent, and actually doesn't take any longer, and I think staff are beginning to get that message. *RA Champion, 1.*

The need for pupil involvement

Some staff asserted that the implementation of RAs needed to involve pupils more, stating that the majority of pupils in the school probably would not know what a restorative approach was.

> If you said restorative justice, they might look at you daft, but then if you went through the script, they'd cotton onto it, and the year groups, any of the students who have been through it, or had issues and been dealt with by particular staff would be aware, but there would be quite a few who wouldn't. *Head of Year, Hengrove.*

Exposing pupils to RAs as part of an implementation strategy would mean that more pupils would become aware of it and would understand the point of it. Staff made various suggestions about how this could occur in their school or in lessons:

> It could be like a dialogue day session where the students have an hour with someone, and they'd maybe do a bit of a role play. It could also be integrated into some of their lessons. *Head of Year, Hengrove*.

> They could have it as part of their curriculum. It could be integrated into their Personal and Social Education lessons. *Teacher 2, Hartcliffe.*

> We could do that sort of scenario in drama lessons. These are the stages you need to go through when you try and resolve issues that are going on. *Teacher 3, Bedminster.*

One RA Champion thought that pupils need to be involved in the whole process as co-facilitators and that pupil training could be provided by RAiS.

A few pupils agreed that pupils should be made more aware of it, provided it could be delivered in a way that was interesting

> I don't think a lot of kids know about it, until they are in a conference. Why don't they tell everyone about it so we can do it then. *Pupil 13, aged 13, Bedminster.*

> I think it would help if we were explained about it in lessons, maybe watch something about it or maybe if, in an activity day. But it has to be done in a way that makes it interesting and fun for kids. *Pupil 17, aged 12, Hengrove*.

The need for continued input and encouragement

Staff in three out of four schools felt that people were forgetting to use RAs, people were 'getting rusty' and RAs had already got 'diluted'. This was seen as to do with the reality of the competing demands of school life.

> It's like something that you do as a standard thing everyday, and everyone's doing it, then it kind of gets forgotten, and it gets diluted, and then some people are doing it, some people aren't, and, oh what was that restorative thing we did once, you know what I mean, it needs to be kept at the forefront to be kept up. Because I know myself, I was like really enthusiastic about it, I thought, this is great, yes, let's try it, and then school life sort of takes over. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

Staff in all the schools pointed out that for RAs to avoid being forgotten altogether, to continue to be used and to grow, staff needed continued input and encouragement in the form of refresher sessions and training, continued consultation with the RAiS project worker and/or stronger or renewed leadership.

Restorative conferences

Table 3.1 shows the level of participation in conferences in each of the schools, as a measure of the extent of implementation. The data include conferences held from the beginning of implementation until the end of the school year 07/08. Table 1.1 shows that the schools can be categorised into three groups: (i) High (Brislington and Hartcliffe) (ii) Low (Hengrove and Bedminster) (iii) none (Ashton Park and Withywood).

Table 1.1 Level of participation in RAiS

Variable	Bedminster	Brislington	Hartcliffe	Hengrove
Number of conference participants	40	202	249	90
No. of conferences	20	97	168	40
Approx no. of pupils in school	1000	1160		810
No. of months implementing RAiS	8	16	17	15
First conference	December 2007	April 2007	March 2007	May 2007
Average no. of conferences per month since first conference	2.5	6.1	9.9	2.7

However, as the section on the type of implementation shows, the level of conference participation was not entirely related to the type of implementation approach, which we have divided into two types, whole-school and pockets of RAs. Brislington used a whole-school approach and was also in the 'high' category in terms of the number of conferences it held. However, this was not true of Hartcliffe, which was also in the 'high' category, but used a pocket RA approach to implementation. This suggests two possible groupings for the schools could be used in the quantitative analysis: (i) conference participation – high, low, none or (ii) type of implementation – whole-school, pocket, none.

Across all schools conference participants were nearly exactly made up of an equal number of boys and girls, but there was one notable exception to this. Hengrove tended to hold conferences with girls with 63 percent of conference participants being girls. Brislington also tended to use conference slightly more for boys with 56 per cent of conference participants being boys. As table 3.2 below shows the spread of conferences was far from even across the year groups. Across all the schools, conference participants were predominantly drawn from years seven, eight and nine. It is unclear why this is so.

Table 3.2 Conference participation by year group and by school

Year gp		Brislington	Hartcliffe	Hengrove	Bedminster	Total
7	Count	62	74	26	5	167
	% within School	33%	30%	29%	13%	29%
8	Count	25	64	29	10	128
	% within School	13%	26%	32%	25%	23%
9	Count	54	66	11	6	137
	% within School	28%	27%	12%	15%	24%
10	Count	20	30	19	9	78
	% within School	11%	12%	21%	23%	14%
11	Count	29	15	5	10	59
	% within School	15%	6%	6%	25%	10%
Total	Count	190	249	90	40	569
	% within School	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In terms of the type of incidents that caused a conference to be used, the main reason across all schools was a fight. However, Table 3.3. breaks down the figures by school. Hengrove was an exception to this, as staff there mainly used conferences to deal with disagreements and arguments. It is also interesting to note that few schools used conferences for re-integration after exclusion, as was originally intended by the programme, and Brislington and Bedminster did not use conferences at all like that. This limited use of conferences for re-integration after interview was also picked up in the qualitative research

(see appendix 5); although, there were discrepancies between the qualitative data and the monitoring data. Brislington reported using conferences after exclusions as a matter of procedure, whereas in the other three schools it was done on a more ad hoc basis. This discrepancy may be because of missing information in the monitoring data.

Even if conferences were not routinely used for re-integration, they were viewed as a viable option. This was because fixed-term exclusions were viewed by some staff as unsatisfactory because of their inability to resolve the relationship problems leading to exclusion; this Champion described how pupils could return to school after a period of exclusion and end up in the same situation:

> If you exclude a child for two days, they'll take more just to spite you. By the time they come back the world's moved on, you know. Their learning was fractured anyway, a bit disjointed, so exclusion doesn't help. And they will take out that exclusion on someone when they return. And we need to repair those relationships quickly, RJ provides us with that vehicle. *RJ Champion, 4*.

By contrast, RAs were seen by staff as an effective way to 'repair relationships' and more generally 'pick up the pieces' after pupils had undergone a period of exclusion. When conferences had been used for the purposes of re-integration, senior staff reported that the function of this kind of conference was to 'make the victim feel better' as much as it was to prepare the excluded pupil for going back into the school.

Table 3.3 Incidents for which a conference was used by school[5]

Incident		Brislington	Hartcliffe	Hengrove	Bedminster	Total
Bad behaviour	Count	2	11	4	2	19
	% within School	3%	7%			7%
Bullying	Count	14	15	3	0	32
	% within School	18%	9%			11%
Disagreement or argument	Count	5	26	8	2	41
	% within School	6%	16%			14%
Physical abuse or fights	Count	26	55	7	8	96
	% within School	34%	33%			33%
Threaten physical abuse	Count	2	20	3	2	27
	% within School	3%	12%			9%
Verbal abuse	Count	12	22	0	3	37
	% within School	16%	13%			13%
Other	Count	16	15	1	3	28
	% within School	21%	9%			10%
Total	Count	77	164	26	20	287
	% within School	100%	100%			100%

[5] Unlike the data on conference participants, this data is drawn from a table of all incidents. In theory, this should mean that there were fewer incidents than there were conference participants since most conferences involve two or more participants. In addition, some of the information about what conferences were used for was missing from the monitoring data recorded by staff. Percentages have not been calculated for Hengrove and Bedminster, given the small number of conferences there.

Chapter four: RAiS and the climate for learning

Detailed information about staff and pupil perceptions of changes in the climate for learning were gathered from the interview data; at the outset of the evaluation this had been identified as an important issue. The extent of the impact RAs can have on the culture of a school or climate for learning is dependent on whether RAs have been implemented on a whole-school basis (Blood 2005, Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2004). This was put succinctly by one of the pupils:

> If everyone stopped and thought it would make the school better, and if everyone did it, yes then it might. But you can't just suddenly start throwing these new ideas at people because it's got to be a culture built into the school, and it's got to be something the teachers are all behind, and something the kids will then. If the teachers believe then I think it will work better. *Pupil 9, aged 13, Brislington.*

Only one school had used a whole-school approach to implementation and, therefore, it was the only one where it was fully possible to assess the impact of RAs on the climate for learning. However, we can offer a more limited assessment of these issues in the three other schools using pockets of RAs.

How do RAs fit into the climate?

Staff emphasised that the climate for learning in schools was a changing and constantly evolving phenomena. The extent to which staff perceived restorative approaches to have changed the climate for learning was partially dependent on how they saw it fitting within the existing school climate.

"We do it already"

Some version of the opinion, 'we do it already', was relatively common amongst the interviewees. By this, interviewees did not mean that they were already familiar with, fully informed about and practised in restorative approaches. What they meant was that *some* of the practices, principles and ways of working were *similar to some* of the things that were already happening in the school, as noted by senior managers, or were part of their individual practices, as noted by support staff and teachers. For example, similar communication practices had been used in the past, as this interviewee noted:

> Years ago we did this sort of thing … we'd just sit down, and we'd just say, what have you got to say, what have you got to say, that sort of thing, so we've been doing it for years, but not properly. *RJ Champion, 2*.

For senior managers, restorative approaches were seen as an opportunity to build on and embed principles and practices that they had already been working on in the school. It provided them with a structure within which to work. For senior mangers, support staff and some teachers it also meant validation, authority and a 'minor tweak' to some of the ways they were already trying to work.

> One of the reasons it sits so well with a lot of people here is that actually … it's identifying good practice that is already here, and taking it to the next stage, and giving it authority. *Senior Manager Bedminster*.

> I felt that we'd done a lot of groundwork with staff before, we'd been working towards it and this gave us a structure in order to embed and sort of promote good practice further really. *RJ Champion, 2*.

The accounts the staff gave of how RAs fitted in with their school climate indicate they want acknowledgement and credit for the 'ground work' they have done. As one staff member said, restorative approaches would bring about 'an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary change'. At the same time, the claim that 'we do it already' was also used to resist RAs by those who were skeptical or felt that they did not have time to do RAs or who wished to continue uninterrupted with their existing and unique working practices.

A threat to power and authority

Staff in all schools reported that RAs were resisted by their colleagues because they threatened the existing climate for learning in which they had power to discipline and punish badly behaved pupils. RAs were seen as a form of disenfranchisement that undermined their authority and threatened long-established practices, as this Champion explained:

> They will see, this is what I've done for X amount of years, you know, duty worker comes along, they pick them up…whatever, it's not my problem, somebody else should be dealing with their behaviour, that kind of thing, and you're going to get staff like that. *RJ Champion, 3*.

RAs were also perceived as challenging the power and control of teachers within the existing school climate (Shaw 2007); teachers struggled with letting go of their need to be in charge and 'run the show'. However, there was evidence that teachers were in the process of making this transition and that this was having an impact on the climate for learning:

> I've got to say now it's basically become part of my language now. *Head of Year, Bedminster.*

> I want to be saying, and you should have done that, and you, but you find, it's amazing with those questions, they actually sort it out themselves, you know, with the, how did that make you feel, what can we do to make it better, etc. And yes, every single one has worked. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

Punishment still necessary

Given the reported resistance to RAs and changes to the climate for learning, unsurprisingly, staff in all the schools said that punishment was still a necessary aspect of school culture and that RAs should be used alongside sanctions, such as detentions and exclusions, rather than instead of them.

> I don't think it will replace punishment, it shouldn't anyway, and I don't think it will here in the school, because the most serious ones are out, straightaway, like I said, it's the RJs after. *RA Champion, 1*.

Staff provided numerous reasons why exclusion in particular should be valued and continued. Many asserted that one of the fundamental roles of punishments like detentions

and exclusions was to send a message to all pupils about acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour. There seemed to be a broad consensus that permanent or fixed-term exclusion were a necessary response to very serious incidents, particularly when the offender showed no remorse.

> If someone's going to deny it, then it doesn't work, so you've still got to have exclusions there for the kids that say, "No, I didn't do it. I didn't hurt anyone. I don't care". *Head of Year, Brislington.*

Pupils tended to be of the same opinion:

> If the people actually don't care about what the other person is thinking, and don't really care if they're being horrible to someone, and if they're sort of winning, in a way, then it doesn't work, maybe they should get in trouble. *Pupil 9, aged 13, Brislington*.

At the same time, staff suggested that pupils did not necessarily experience exclusion as a sanction.

> Exclusion, per se, isn't a punishment. You and I know that, you know, it's a duvet day, isn't it? *Senior Manager, Hartcliffe*.

The interviews with pupils showed that this was indeed the case and that in some cases it was not a deterrent either. Several pupils stated that they were not bothered about being excluded and having days off school.

> Them keeping me outside of school, it's just nothing. It's just like being home all weekend. She has to sit in school doing lessons, and I'm at home, nice, in my pyjamas. *Pupil 11, aged 15, Brislington*.

Several pupils who had been bullied thought that punishment may be more effective than RAs in dealing with the pupils who had harmed them and were disappointed when punishment was not used, as this pupil noted:

> If they were punished, they'd probably learn a bit more, and then it will all stop. *Pupil 1 Hartcliffe aged 14.*

One of the incidents involved racist bullying:

> *Interviewer: So were you happy with the outcome?*
>
> *Interviewee: Well, not really, because I was expecting him to get punished or something like that, like a detention or something*. *Pupil 8, aged 13, Bedminster.*

The pupil stated that he would have preferred it if a punishment had been used alongside a restorative conference. However, this pupil also said that the bully had been "made to apologise" to him. Some pupils thought that a conference could be used first and then if this did not sort out the problem then a punishment should be given. That is, they were advocating the use of punishment only as a last resort, as this pupil explained:

> Yes, if they don't like stop it, then you could take it higher like getting them punished. *Pupil 3, aged 14, Brislington*.

In summary, punishment was seen by staff and pupils as an important and necessary part of the climate for learning. This was the climate into which RAs was introduced and both staff and pupils were familiar with. A Head of Year in one school felt that pupils respond more to sanctions because of their familiar and consistent presence in the school culture.

> I think the students respond more, I'm not saying in a better way, but respond more towards the sanctions, because that's something that every member of staff is doing, and everybody is clear of in the whole-school, and I think there's a bit of grey area with RJ in some places. *Head of Year, Hengrove.*

Perceptions of changes to the school climate

Here we focus on changes to processes within the schools, as the impact of RAs on outcomes, such as attendance, exclusions and attainment, are dealt with later, in chapter five.

"It's better than punishment"?

The majority of staff and pupils thought that RAs had improved the climate for learning in ways that highlighted the limits of punishment. While pupils saw punishment as something that made them feel angry and potentially made a bad situation worse, they saw restorative practices as helping them resolve conflicts so they could get on with their learning. Several pupils described how they felt angry about being punished.

> Just keeping me out for 2 days just made me feel even angrier because then I didn't know what was going on in the school, like what people are saying and if she's saying anything about me. So that made me feel even angrier. *Pupil 11, aged 15, Brislington.*

> If they go to detention they won't be sorry, they'll just be angry. *Pupil 5, aged 12, Hengrove.*

One pupil explained how punishing pupils can exacerbate existing conflicts between pupils:

> Every time you punish anyone they get angry about it, so it just escalates like. I've seen a bunch of shit going on in the school…where girls have started shouting in class, one has got sent out, and then the other one's come along and its been like "You got me sent out" and then they've both been in trouble, both got detentions. So it will be like "You got me a detention" and then you look away for 10 seconds and they punch each other in the face. So like detentions just don't work for solving anything. *Pupil 9, aged 15, Brislington.*

Some pupils stated that being punished made them feel as if no-one cared about them.

> It's just like, "Here you go. Here's a detention. Here's your punishment, go". It's not like "What's your side of the story? How are you feeling about this?" Detention is just like laziness to be honest It seems like people don't care. *Pupil 14, aged 15, Hengrove.*

Pupils and staff thought that RAs were a more effective way of addressing behavioural issues, than detentions and exclusions, because they help put an end to disagreements, as well as making people feel as if their feelings matter.

> If this hadn't have happened me and Bob would still probably be arguing outside on the field for the next couple of weeks. *Pupil 22, aged 13, Bedminster.*

> If you look at what's happened with two particular young people over this academic year, there are very few re-instances. *RA Champion, 2.*

Staff discussed the limits of punishments for bringing-about constructive changes in behaviour, as these two quotations illustrate:

> If it was like some bullying that was happening, then the young person who was causing the problem may have got detention, but then they're still back the next day. What does a detention do? *RA Champion, 4*.

> I've said to colleagues, if the only sanction is that you are able to take time off a child, then actually is that changing behaviours? *Senior Manager, Brislington.*

In contrast, RAs were seen as a set of strategies that had the potential to make positive changes to pupil and staff behaviour.

Predictably, many pupils thought that RAs were preferable to punishments such as detentions or fixed-term exclusions as they did not feel they were 'in trouble'. Not being 'in trouble' was significant to pupils for different reasons. For many pupils, it meant that things were going to get sorted out.

> Yes, I thought it was a good idea because like, if we didn't have the meeting I would just get shouted at, and get a detention or whatever, and it wouldn't be sorted out, and so if I had the meeting then it would get sorted out. *Pupil 21, aged 13, Hengrove.*

For some pupils it signified that they were being treated in a more reasonable and adult way.

> They will get it sorted out, there won't be a punishment and they will just make an agreement and get everything sorted out in a mature and adult way. *Pupil 5, aged 12, Hengrove.*

Many pupils stated, however, that conferences would only work with people who were willing and open to being involved:

> *Interviewee 1: You've got to be willing and mature enough to actually do it, because if you're just going to be stubborn and sit there and say, no, you're lying, shut up, you're not going to get anywhere.*
>
> *Interviewee 2: You've got to be willing to make things happen and make that change.*
> *Pupils 23 and 24, aged 15, Hengrove.*

RAs provided pupils with the opportunity to face up to being 'wrong':

> The way the meeting came across it felt like you, well you were in the wrong obviously, but you weren't in trouble like. *Pupil 10, aged 13, Hengrove.*

Moreover, facing up to being wrong could reportedly have a positive impact on future behaviour. One pupil explained that after he was involved in a conference for his part in a group conflict involving 'girls against boys' and name calling he decided he was going to change.

> After that thing that happened and the meeting I realised that I would change. I just thought bad things are not really fun. In the school, I thought everyone would like me better. I'd be respected if I was kinder and everyone would appreciate me more. *Pupil 17, aged 12, Hengrove.*

For other pupils not being 'in trouble' was perceived as 'getting away with it' and/or an easier option.

> If I went to it then I'd get off it a little bit and there wouldn't be so many consequences. If I didn't go to it then I'd be kicked out of school. *Pupil 11, aged 15, Brislington.*

> Interviewee: It's a lot better than when they just used to give us C4s [detention], like if you did anything at all, anything that's reported, it would be like C4 after school, an hour, and then we'd just sit there in a hall for an hour and do nothing. And then I'd get really pissy and walk out and have another one the next day, and sit there for 10 minutes everyday after school.
>
> Interviewer: So you prefer it [a conference] to being punished?
>
> Interviewee: Yes, it's easier than being punished because all we have to do is kind of sit there, and just talk about stuff*. Pupil 6, aged 15.*

While all pupils perceived conferences as preferable to being 'in trouble', some pupils saw conferences as, in some cases, a waste of time and somewhere they would rather not be.

> Sometimes even if things have been sorted out, you leave there like even more pissed off because you're like, I've wasted a whole day talking to people I hate. *Pupil 6, aged 15, Brislington*.

Pupils also sometimes experienced a conference as a process that did not necessarily change their perspective on an incident.

> Me writing on a piece of paper isn't going to stop me from hitting her again, it's just making them shut up basically. *Pupil 11, aged 15, Brislington.*

In instances where conferences did not change pupil perspectives their perception of the situation that led to the conference/s in question was that they had not done anything seriously wrong. From their point of view they were just 'having a laugh' or they were justified in their response to another person's initial mistreatment of them e.g. verbal abuse.

At the same time, these pupils appreciated the input of particular staff who had listened to them and helped them.

> The more down to earth ones understand where you are coming from, and the snobby stuck up ones just think you're the person that's bad, and then goes off to help the person that you hit. It's like Janet [RA project manager], Janet's helped me through loads, and she knows where I'm coming from with everything, and like she understands me. *Pupil 11, aged 15, Brislington*.

Significantly, pupils that saw conferences as 'getting away with it' or an easier option tended to express disillusionment with what their schools had to offer them, school policies and procedures and how they were treated by staff.

> Well they give us an hour and a half lessons which just makes us get bored of our lessons, then we start misbehaving, then we get in trouble, and then we get sent home. *Pupil 11, aged 15, Brislington*.

> They just like shout at you, it's all they do, and then like as well, it's other than shout at you, when they separate you, they put you in rooms, and like they've got nothing better to do but walk past and say really horrible shit to you. *Pupil 6, aged 15, Brislington*.

These two pupils had histories of truancy, frequent detentions and fixed-term exclusions. They said that they also experienced difficulties with a parent or guardian at home. At the same time, these pupils came across as intelligent and articulate and had clear ideas about what they wanted to do in the future. Their accounts raise questions about the ability of RAs to deal with the most disaffected for whom nothing seems to work. These two pupils also point to the fact that RAs and indeed any measures taken by schools can only tackle the symptoms of deeper underlying difficulties connected, for example, to social exclusion and deprivation.

However, it may be that using RAs from a younger age they could be more effective, even with the disaffected. For example, one pupil suggested that young people need to be exposed to RAs from an early age for it to have an impact:

> I think with this thing here, the restorative justice, I think it needs to start from an early age, because like people when they're older they're "I've been like this, what harm has it done me". They're really like "I'm safe, people won't mess with me" and stuff like that so you need to start at an early age and say "Look you have to sort it out like this. It's a better way to sort it out". That's what I reckon. *Pupil 16, age 15, Hengrove.*

This pupil asserted that early exposure to RAs was especially important for addressing the needs of troubled pupils who would get the message that they are cared about and listened to.

> It's like people are probably, when they're going round hitting people they're actually probably like crying for help, like they need attention but they are getting it in a negative way. And this like gives the fact that maybe some people want to listen, and when you do have a problem, they want to take your side on board, and stuff like that. So from a young age they're going to

> think, "Yes, people actually want to listen to me, instead of growing up thinking, no-one's listening to me. I might as well just cause trouble and stuff". *Pupil 16, age 15, Hengrove.*

Fairness

Pupils felt that there were injustices in the distribution of punishments as conflicts were often seen simplistically by staff as involving only victims and bullies. For instance, one girl described what had led her to hit another pupil. In her eyes, she was not the only one at fault, as she explained:

> She was saying stuff about my family and that, and like obviously I'm going to go mad if they start saying stuff about my family. But because I was the one who hit her first, no matter what she was saying, whether she was verbally abusing me or whatever, I was still the one who got in trouble for it all, and she didn't get nothing done to her. *Pupil 11, aged 15, Brislington.*

Pupils thought that RAs were, therefore, a fairer and more just response to conflicts in that they enabled staff to get to the bottom of what had actually happened, as this pupil noted:

> I think it's better because like some cases people are just like seen as bullies and victims and that, but not actually like knowing the actual story, so it kind of clears that up. *Pupil 14, aged 15, Hengrove.*

Staff acknowledged that, in many cases, RAs moved them beyond a crude understanding of incidents and towards an understanding of the subtleties and complexities that were involved, as this support worker described:

> Like two boys the other day, year 7s, one's small, and one was quite a big lad, so you know, straightaway I think, well there's a little boy and he's crying and all the rest of it. So straightaway I felt sorry for him, because I thought Jake's, picking on him, and bullying him. But in the discussion before the meeting Jake actually said, "But he's been calling me fatty". So straightaway you think, I'm glad I've now got them together because my initial reaction was that the little boy was being bullied. Support Worker, Brislington.

Pupils also thought that taking part in a restorative conference helped shed light on the reasons for the ensuing conflict, as this pupil noted:

> They can bring people together so they can understand why this is happening to them. *Pupil 3, aged 14, Brislington.*

Many pupils discussed how taking part in a conference and making an agreement allowed them to put a conflict or incident behind them and to move on with their learning. This kind of closure was seen as a positive outcome of restorative conferences.

Improved communication and relationships

There was also evidence that RAs had a positive impact on pupil-pupil and staff-pupil communication and relationships. Existing studies on restorative approaches in schools support the idea that improvements in the way that staff and pupils communicate and conduct their relationships will gradually improve the climate for learning (e.g. YJB 2004).

One senior manger stated that improving communication and relationships was one of the main reasons why he decided to implement RAs in the school:

> I felt that RAs gave voice, or the opportunity for voice, to different parties … In the previous system, if a child had behaviour that caused concern, a consequence/sanction could be issued divorced from the member of staff … I didn't think you ever closed the loop back to the adult who had been affected by the behaviour of the child, so voice was very important. Equally there are times when adults don't behave appropriately towards young people … I could have conversations with young people who felt very aggrieved at the behaviours of an adult that, from their perception, caused the behaviour … And so I was attracted to closing loops, to have dialogue, and to strengthen the quality of relationships. *Senior Manager, Brislington.*

Staff and pupils thought that RAs improved communication and one way this was particularly evident was that it helped people to talk calmly rather than shout.

> It kind of takes it away from all the shouting and screaming, and trying to sort things out, where you can kind of get everyone to sit down calmly, and kind of talk things over, and they can maybe learn skills and that, and then take that home with them as well in their families, that kind of thing. *Support Worker 2, Bedminster*.

Pupils stated that conferences enabled them to sit down and communicate calmly with the person they were in conflict with, away from other people who may otherwise get involved, and in some cases make things worse.

> You can kind of just end up shouting, and then like when you all start shouting other people start gathering round because they think there's going to be a fight, or like other people get involved and say, well no, Jenny feels like this, and like it was better because it was just the people that were involved, rather than bringing people in who had nothing to do with it. *Pupil 16, aged 15, Hengrove.*

As for staff and pupil relationships, interviewees observed that there were better relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils as a result of restorative conversations and conferences.

> The ones that can do it really benefit from it and nine times out of ten they probably leave on speaking terms, which is nice. *RA Champion, 4*.

> It generally helps people get on better. *Pupil 3 aged 13*.

Pupil-pupil relationships

Most pupils who were interviewed stated that they got on better with the person/people they were in conflict with as a result of the conference. Many pupils said that friendships that had broken down had been renewed. One pupil described how two of her friends and another girl she did not know from another school, started ganging up on her. As a result, she started playing truant as she was so distraught. However, after she had a conference with the girls from her school everything was sorted out with them and they are now friends again.

> Sharon and Natalie, like I get on really well with now…Me and Sharon are like really close. *Pupil 7, aged 14, Hartcliffe.*

Some pupils said that as a result of a conference they had learnt to simply tolerate or ignore people that they were in conflict with or been bullied by.

> Some of them I get on better with, like some of them I don't, I just like ignore them. *Pupil 3, aged 14, Brislington.*

> Like now, we talk to her, but like we're kind of distant. *Pupil 25, aged 16, Hengrove.*

In many cases it was about pupils reaching an agreement so they could coexist with one another. A senior staff member explained why this is often the only way forward for some people.

> They've learned to live with one another, and they both feel happy and safe in school … part of this process is to learn that sometimes you can't resolve these things, but you just have to walk the other way … we don't all get on with everybody, we don't all wish to have people as our best friends, and go out to dinner with them, but we have to work with them, and we have to co-exist with them. Senior Manager, Hengrove.

A few pupils stated they had actually become friends with or got on better than ever with a person who they had been in conflict with. For instance, one interview was conducted with two pupils who stated that before they had a conference together they had never been friends but now they got along. One of these pupils described how he was always being picked on and made fun of by certain classmates. He then said that he had been in a conference with the other boy in the interview and now this boy stood up for him and tried to stop other classmates bullying him.

Staff-pupil relationships

RAs were perceived to improve staff communication skills, which in turn helped improve their relationships with pupils, as this Head of Year noted:

> I think the staff that do restorative justice definitely get that better rapport with students. The students, perhaps I'm not saying respect them more, but they respond in a more appropriate manner, and perhaps take on board your feelings as well because you are prepared to take on board theirs and listen to them. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

Pupils saw staff that carried out restorative conferences or used instant restorative conversations as more approachable and helpful. This was evident from the accounts provided by staff practised in RAs who stated that pupils tended to come to them for help, rather than staff who were not.

> So there's pockets of effect, good effects with it, and the children know where those pockets are, I think, it might be subconsciously … the children in those groups know that those members of staff are the supportive ones really. *Head of Year, Hengrove.*

> As soon as they left me and went into Year 8, the same issues would carry on but I wasn't there to solve them, even though they'd come back to me. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

It was also evident from the accounts of pupils who saw some teachers as 'nice' and some as 'horrible'. 'Nice' teachers were ones who listened to them and tried to understand their feelings, while 'horrible' teachers were ones that shouted at them, did not care and were 'lazy'.

> A lot of the teachers though are actually quite lazy. They can't be bothered to be dealing with people. Pupil 16, aged 12, Hengrove.

> If I'm in like a place where I can either go be like in a conference with a nice teacher, or be ranted at by someone I really dislike, I'm going to pick the conference. *Pupil 6, aged 15, Brislington.*

From teachers' perspectives, staff participation in conferences enabled pupils to see staff as human-beings, as this Head of Year explained:

> Kids get to see you as a human being, not just a teacher, because they've got to deal with the fact that you, especially if it's a teacher/pupil RJ, with somebody else, neutral person doing the lead person, then the kid has to listen to what, to how the teacher felt, and how, and sees, because a lot of kids don't see teachers are human, you know, and I think that's good for them to see that. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

According to some of the accounts of pupil-staff relationship breakdowns, the member of staff could be seen as the one predominantly at fault. The power imbalance of a pupil-teacher relationship would normally mean that the behaviour of a teacher would not be questioned, except perhaps by a parent. However, RAs demand that the views of all parties are given equal credence and that teachers let go of their assumed power over pupils. A senior manger described an instance in which a pupil was asked to do a piece of restorative writing in the external exclusion room. In this instance, the RA became a vehicle for a dialogue to be started regarding the teacher's role in the breakdown of their relationship.

> If you'd have seen the two pages that that child wrote to explain why he had sworn at that teacher, quite frankly he was right, but they know that they're going to get listened to, and they know that somebody is going to look at that objectively, and take that back to the teacher and say, "This is what the student says. Is this your recollection? Because actually it's inappropriate to sanction a child in this way because your behaviour was inflammatory and confrontational", and that's where we are now. *Senior Manager, Hengrove.*

One pupil described how she had been 'singled out' a lot by a teacher in class and this was having an impact on her class work. She felt the teacher was picking on her as she did not have any trouble with behaviour in any of her other classes, and thought her classmates would agree. The pupil stated that the teacher had embarrassed her in front of the class by mimicking her accent, making her sound 'really rough' and made a comment that she had not been brought up properly. The pupil said that whenever she challenged the teacher about any of her comments or for singling her out, the teacher said that she was selfish, acted in a defensive manner and/or sent her out of the class-room. The pupil went to the RA

Champion in the school who organised a conference. Since then, the teacher has stopped picking on her, as she explained:

> It's been fine now, like since everything's happened, she still says stuff, but it's not as bad, and like if I say, "Miss why are you saying that for?" she just like shuts up, and that's it, so it's been good. *Pupil 2, aged 14, Bedminster.*

Some pupils stated that they felt that they got on better with teachers after they had been in a conference. For pupils who felt they had done something wrong, the fact they had admitted it, they thought would influence teachers to think they were 'good' really.

> It might be a little bit better because they, I think like as well, that we know we've done wrong, so they're just like, "Oh yes, like they're good kids", sort of thing. *Pupil 21, aged 13, Hengrove.*

A better atmosphere

Half the pupils interviewed stated that they felt that the atmosphere in the school had improved as a result of RAs, while the other half thought it had stayed the same. This inconclusive finding could be a reflection of the fact that RAs have been present in the schools for a relatively short period of time. Some argue that cultural change can only be measured after 4-5 years of RJ implementation (Blood 2005, Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2004). The finding could also reflect the fact that three out of four of the schools had only implemented RAs in pockets of the school.

The atmosphere was improved partly because it was calmer in school and this emanated from the staff. A Head of Year described how RAs gave staff the tools to communicate calmly and this meant that pupils would be more likely to do the same.

> It [RAs] just creates a calmer atmosphere, so kids, kids copy us don't they, if you're calm, they're going to be calm, if you're ranting and raving, they're going to be. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe*.

Furthermore, it was believed that the atmosphere created between pupils or between pupils and staff could extend through whole friendship groups, whole classrooms, year groups and in some extreme cases the whole-school. A bad atmosphere between pupils or pupils and teachers in conflict can be resolved through conference participation. A pupil discussed the tense atmosphere created as a result of an unresolved issue as 'bad vibes' and how this improved after he had been in a conference:

> Before there was like bad vibes like when you walk around like, just even walk past each other, but there was no bad, it was just like you were a friend and just chatting about normal things, so it's definitely like, I think it's a really good idea. *Pupil 10, aged 13, Hengrove.*

Changes in the atmosphere of a school are difficult to measure, but there was some evidence that RAs had contributed to an improved atmosphere in the schools and some that it had made no difference.

Emotional literacy

A further change in the climate for learning was the improved emotional literacy of staff who were practising RAs and in pupils who had taken part in conferences or restorative conversations. After RAiS training, staff were expected to strive to become more emotionally literate and to deal with behavioural issues as they arose with instant restorative conversations. Staff stated that the majority of staff who had been trained to Level 1 and definitely those who had been trained to Level 2 were practising 'instant RAs'. However, most of them acknowledged that there was a minority of staff that refused to accept and use such practices. One RA Champion stated that these staff, 'the flog 'em brigade', would eventually have to make a shift in their practice in response to the changing school climate which involves a 'pressure not to exclude', as well as the expectation that they should be 'less inclined to demand that people higher up the command chain come in and give the kids a roasting on their behalf'. As a Senior Manager put it:

> What you would hope is that individual staff are having continuous restorative conversations, so actually the language that's being used, is a consistent one, and there is a continuous drip feed of dialogue. *Senior Manager, Brislington.*

However, pupil accounts indicated that the language used to talk to them was not in fact consistent and they were still shouted at by staff.

The emotional intelligence of pupils is obviously linked to that of staff in a school. One Head of Year stated that she had daily restorative conversations with pupils in her year group. She described how she noticed a change in pupil behaviour after RAs became the normal way of dealing with issues:

> I remember talking to someone just outside a classroom because they'd had this issue, and I didn't actually need to bring them with me, to sit them down, they knew, they were answering the questions before I was asking them, so it turned into sort of an expectation and the norm of how to go about and deal with things, and they don't come to me anymore about issues. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

She argued that the emotional literacy of these pupils had developed to the extent that they no longer needed input from staff.

One of the key developments in the emotional literacy of pupils was the capacity to reflect on their behaviour. There were many accounts of pupils becoming more reflective about their behaviour due to the impact of RAs by staff.

> Yes, it's helped them. It's made them more aware of other people's feelings, hopefully made them think before they open their mouths, or hit, or whatever else it is that they are doing. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

A Senior Manager explained the importance of school pupils being given the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour, given that adolescence is infamously a time when people seem to become more self-centred.

> It's given students an opportunity to be reflective on their behaviour. The nature of adolescence is that you're not always aware of the impact of your actions on other people. When young people are in adolescence, it's very much

> a 'me' driven conversation. They don't often have that space to reflect about how their actions impact on this person, or these people. I think that restorative approaches have given some of our young people that opportunity to reflect. *Senior Manager, Brislington.*

An RA Champion described how RAs provide pupils with a structure that enables them to reflect in a way that they may not otherwise do.

> And it was really very reflective in a way that I don't, I think they reflected on the whole issues in a way that I don't think they would have done without that kind of structure of who's been harmed by it, because it went beyond just you and me, they started to see that it affected the reputation of their teacher, all the people who had been there, impressionable people might think this was the way to manage issues, the staff who'd been involved in breaking the fight up, their parents. *RA Champion, 1*.

Pupils also provided evidence that they had become more reflective as a result of their exposure to RAs.

> I can like work things out better, and I know how to do things better, and I get on better because of it, yes. *Pupil 9, aged 13, Brislington*.

Another improvement in the emotional literacy of pupils was the development of empathy skills. Staff said that pupils seemed much more willing and able to see things from other people's points of view, as these quotations illustrate:

> I think the first one we had, the people were in tears, the kids were in tears, because they didn't realise, as they often don't, just how it's being perceived. And I think it's very, it's a way of developing empathy isn't it, because empathy is not as well developed as we think it is, and it is a way of developing empathy at a young age. Senior Manager, Hengrove.

> They sit down and the kids see they've upset the other kid, and see why. They see the parents are upset. They see their parents are upset, because then they find out that their parents were bullied when they were kids. It is a good eye opener. It really is a good eye opener. *Head of Year, Bedminster.*

Pupils themselves thought that conferences had helped them see things from other pupil's points of view.

> If you're a bully and you hear somebody's point of view, you start to think differently. *Pupils 4, aged 12, Hengrove*.

> We thought it wouldn't be harmful. Now looking back, it was, so like the things we said in the past to other people, I think it's like, they might have felt the same way, but not showed it, so like it's changed my view completely. *Pupil 10, aged 13, Hengrove.*

> In the meeting, really, I kind of realised that actually it was me who was wrong, not her, but before that I didn't think that. *Pupil 9, aged 13, Brislington*.

Pupils said that initially they thought they were having harmless fun with someone but after attending a conference they realised that this was not how it was experienced by the person they had harmed, as they explained:

> Interviewee 1; It was quite emotional wasn't it? I was just like shocked really. You couldn't believe what she went through just because…
>
> Interviewee 2; Yes, you didn't know, because how you'd done it, you thought it was a laugh. We didn't know she was that bad over it, like that, like the way she was. *Pupils 10, aged 13, Hengrove*

One pupil described how she had been suicidal as the result of bullying by peers but discovered that the 'perpetrators' thought it was just a joke.

> They said that they didn't really know the effect in had on me, because at the time I was saying that I wanted to kill myself and stuff, and like the police came out, and they had to get my counsellor. It was like really bad, and I said that to them in the meeting, but they didn't think it would have that amount of effect on me. They thought it was just like a joke or something. *Pupil 7, aged 14, Hartcliffe*.

An important aspect of the improved emotional literacy of pupils, observed by staff and pupils, was an increased pupil willingness to take responsibility for their actions. One RAs champion described restorative conferences as a safe and structured environment for pupils to take responsibility. Conferences could in this way benefit everyone involved and in theory improve the whole-school climate.

> If you're empowering young people to take responsibility for their actions in a way in which it's safe and it's structured, then that makes it easier for everybody. *RA Champion, 2.*

The accounts of many pupils also contained evidence that as a result of their experiences with RAs they would behave more responsibly in the future.

> I don't want to get in the situation again because I know the feelings I have aren't very good, so I just want to make sure they stay away. *Pupil 5, aged 12, Hengrove.*

Staff felt that RAs created a space for pupils to talk about how they were feeling in the situation that led up to a behaviour incident. They also helped pupils think about the impact of their actions on others. These were important processes in pupils learning a different and more responsible way of behaving, as this Manager explained:

> I think it's improved their behaviour, it's given them a sense of responsibility for their behaviour, and it's made them think about the impact of their actions both verbally and physically, and even their body language. And it's opened up sometimes, it's been, you know, they've been able to talk about perhaps where they were, and we've been able to talk about alternative responses to that. Senior Manager, Hengrove.

Pupils who had been involved in conferences were also seen as less likely to get involved in similar situations because of what they had learnt from the experience.

> Neither of them have been involved in anything like it since. I actually don't think they will, because I think they were at that stage in their development where it was almost like, you know, a burning bush moment to them, thinking about how they managed relationships with one another. *RA Champion, 1.*

One teacher described how pupils who were sent to the external exclusion room, where RAs were integrated, often did not return due to their exposure to RAs.

> It works really well, so we actually find a lot of the kids that come into the C3, don't then re-offend, or they actually volunteer to go and say sorry to the teacher, and to respond to it that way. So we find it's really, really useful, *Teachers, Hartcliffe*.

RAs can provide pupils with the tools to deal with conflict and relationship issues independently without input from staff. Staff provided many examples of pupils learning restorative skills, using the techniques they had learnt by themselves and not needing to go through the process with them.

> So they might have gone away and thought about it, and thought, well actually maybe I was a bit silly about that, and they use their own, they do it themselves. So they're being restorative themselves, and they might go back and say, look, I'm sorry about that. *RA Champion, 3*.

One RAs champion discussed how the restorative process was more likely to have a lasting outcome on pupils than punishment in the way it taught them to manage their own issues.

> I think that this gives them a voice, it gives them some power, and that in most cases that is much more likely to produce an outcome which has got a lasting effect, and from which the pupils themselves are learning, so that they're learning about how to become independent and manage their own issues, rather than dependant on external forces, offering punishments as a reason why they should be behaving in the way that we want them to. *RA Champion, 1.*

The increased emotional literacy of pupils in the schools meant that staff had to spend less time sorting out conflicts and relationship problems between pupils. Pupils were noticeably beginning to learn how to deal with problems themselves.

> I'm not having to run ragged after people and pick up the pieces for them and handhold them through everything, and they're learning to kind of deal with things on their own, maybe not necessarily realising it straightaway, but afterwards they think, oh, well I did get through that, so that's OK, so next time it will be OK. *RA Champion, 3.*

In this sense, RAs were actually experienced as a time-saver by staff who had used them to deal with behaviour issues. While some staff, particularly teachers, were anxious about RAs being too time consuming to be practical, restorative practices were seen as freeing up time for staff who used them. After an initial investment in RAs, they were viewed as practices that could help ease the stress of a heavy workload.

> It was quite a big drain on me, all the students coming to me wanting to sort out simple problems, when if they had the skills themselves, they'd be able to do it themselves. So that's why I went on that, seeing ways to go about it, just to ease the pressure of my workload as well. *Head of Year, Hengrove.*

Improved well-being

Improved well-being, as a result of the improved emotional literacy of staff and pupils, was also believed to improve the climate for learning. It was argued that staff and pupils who were empowered to understand other people's points of view and express their feelings, without getting stressed or involved in escalating conflict, were more likely to enjoy improved well-being. There was evidence that pupils felt better after they were given a chance to express their feelings, apologise to pupils or staff they had wronged and/or experience closure regarding incidents involving conflict, as these quotations illustrate:

> You get your point across. People actually know where they stand with you now. They know whether to smile or not to smile, and it just basically gets it all off your chest. *Pupil 14, aged 15, Hengrove.*

> It worked quite well because I just got to say "Well yes, I know I've done this and I'm sorry and like we sort of moved on. Pupil 9, aged 13, Brislington.

> I normally just feel better that like it's all been solved, and it's like all over, and you're just like "Yes man, hours of stupidness just over now. Everything's been solved. *Pupil 6, aged 15, Brislington*.

One Head of Year described how she thought RAs had helped a lot of pupils in terms of their well-being:

> I guess it's good for kids to realise, to actually get the opportunity to say sorry, or to say how they felt, because I think that can be quite a release, can't it, if you've been able to apologise to somebody, and you're given that opportunity. So I think in terms of well being, I think that's helped a lot of children, yes, rather than keeping it all in. *Head of Year, Hartcliffe.*

Improved well-being was also related to empowerment and confidence, as this Manager explained in relation to pupils:

> It does bestow confidence in a child, I mean, I think every child that's been involved in a conference has changed. Senior Manager, Hengrove.

Staff also had increased confidence; once they were trained in RAs, they had more tools available to deal with pupil behaviour, without needing to refer them to senior or support staff. It seemed that emotionally intelligent and articulate staff who had the confidence to use RAs were also less likely to feel anger, stress and raised blood pressure and could, therefore, experience improvements to their well-being.

Chapter five: The impact of RAiS on outcomes

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the impact of RAiS on attendance, school exclusions and educational attainment of pupils in the four schools implementing RAiS since April 2007. To do this, we compare the schools that implemented RAiS with those in the South Bristol area that did not. In particular, in the quantitative analysis, we have grouped the schools according to the number of conferences that they conducted; they are grouped into the three categories of high (Brislington and Hartcliffe), low (Bedminster and Hengrove) and none (Ashford Park and Withywood). Whilst it was also possible to group the schools according to the type of implementation approach that they used, namely, whole-school, pocket or none, this type of grouping did not improve the models in the analysis. Consequently, this approach was rejected in favour of using the number of conferences conducted to group the schools. This chapter is mainly focused on the quantitative analysis, but we have also integrated it with the qualitative analysis to provide an insight into staff and pupils perceptions of the impacts, if at all, of RAiS and how and why RAiS impacted on attendance, exclusions and attainment.

Attendance

As we noted earlier in the literature review, RAs can impact on attendance rates (e.g. Kane et al. 2006) and our findings are broadly in-line with the existing research. Staff in all the schools perceived that RAs had helped attendance, although they were one of a number of strategies used to improve attendance.

> Restorative approaches have been part of the way in which we've worked with truancy and absenteeism. It's going to have helped. It's got to have done, along with other strategies, a bit like the behaviour. *RA Champion, 1.*

Staff explained that pupils may play truant from school if they were having problems with other pupils or teachers. Staff thought that pupils who had managed to resolve problems in conferences would be less likely to have days off school. A Head of Year described his experience of a few specific cases where he had witnessed truancy due to bullying which was then resolved through RAs:

> [T]here's a couple of cases in my year group where kids have been out because other people have said stuff to them, and they've been scared of them, and getting them together and sorted out their problems, and then attendance goes up. *Head of Year. Bedminster.*

This was corroborated by the accounts of several pupils who said that they had stayed at home, or caused someone else to, in order to avoid conflict or victimization.

> I was missing time off school because they [the bullies] were in the school. *Pupil 7, aged 14, Hartcliffe.*

> Interviewee: We didn't know, because how we'd done it, we thought it was a laugh, we didn't know she was that bad over it, like that, like the way she was.

> Interviewer: Was that when she told you how she felt?

> Interviewee: Yes because she told us like she didn't want to come into school and stuff because of that. *Pupil 10, aged 13, Hengrove.*

Table 5.1 confirms this picture that RAiS impacted on attendance. It shows the mean scores for the authorised absence rate, unauthorised absence rate and attendance rate in 05/06 and 07/08 in each of the six schools. All six schools showed an improvement in attendance rates between 2005/6 and 2007/8, with the exception of Ashton Park. Independent t-tests, which establish whether two means collected from independent samples (e.g. from the different types of schools) differ significantly were used to examine this relationship further. These t-tests show that pupils in the RAiS schools had a significantly higher attendance rate in 2005/6 compared to the non-RAiS schools ($t=-7.321$, $p<.01$); the mean attendance rate for the RAiS schools was 81.75 per cent compared to 78.23 per cent in the non-RAiS schools. Similarly, in 2007/8, the RAiS schools had a significantly higher attendance rate than the non-RAiS schools and this difference was greater than in 2005/6; the mean attendance rate was 84.36 per cent in the RAiS schools and 79.66 per cent in the non-RAiS schools.

This suggests that there were improvements in the attendance rates, particularly in the RAiS schools, between 2005/6 and 2007/8. Therefore, dependent t-tests, which establish whether means collected from the same sample (e.g. within the same type of schools) differ significantly. These tests were used to compare mean attendance rates between 2005/6 and 2007/8 for each of the three types of schools. Table 5.2 shows the results of these t-tests; it indicates that between 2005/6 and 2007/8 there was a significant increase in attendance rates in the low and high RAiS groups, but a significant decrease in attendance rates in the non-RAiS schools. Together this suggests that there was a greater improvement within the RAiS schools in terms of attendance rates. It cannot be inferred that this improvement was caused entirely by the use of RAiS in these schools, although it may be a contributory factor.

Next, multiple regression was used to explore the variables that best predicted attendance rates in 2007/8. Initially, bi-variate analysis was used to explore which independent variables were significantly associated with the dependent variable, the attendance rate so that it was possible to decide which ones to include in the multiple regression.

The bi-variate analysis showed that the variables that were significantly associated with attendance rates in 2007/8 were type of school; free school meal eligibility 2007/8; special educational needs in 2007/8; attendance rate 2005/6; fixed-term exclusion rate 2007/08; section 98 GCSE score per entry 2007/8. With the exception of section 98 GCSE score per entry, these independent variables were added to the model in the following blocks:

(i) Conference participation
(ii) School Type in 2007/8 – No RAiS, low RAiS or high RAiS[6]
(iii) Educational variables - attendance rate 2005/6 and fixed-term exclusion rate 2007/8
(iv) Socio-demographic variables - sex 2007/8, free school meal eligibility 2007/8, and special needs 2007/8.

[6] In runs of the regression model, two types of school-type variables were tested, based on the qualitative research. The first used conference participation to divide the schools into the categories of high, low or no conferences. The second use the type of approach to implementation to divide the schools into whole-school, pocket RAs or no RAs. The former resulted in a marginally higher estimation of R Square and was therefore included in the final run of the model.

The section 98 GCSE score per entry were omitted from the model as previous runs of the model showed that whilst it appeared to be a significant predictor of the attendance rate in 2007/8, it seriously curtailed the number of cases that could be included in the model. Including this variable meant that only pupils who were in Year 11 in 2005/6 or 2007/8 were included in the analysis (N=1010). This was also the case for the model used to predict school exclusions discussed below. In addition, the difficulties with the educational attainment data are described in more detail in section 5 below.

Findings from the final run of the regression analysis are presented in Table 5.3. According to the criteria noted by Field (2005: 175), the tolerance and VIF statistics suggest a minimal amount of multicollinearity between the independent variables which, if it existed, might have biased the model. In the analysis N=3248 and the model is significantly better at predicting the outcomes than using the mean as an estimate (F=67.94, P<.01). Furthermore, 14 per cent of the variance in the data is explained by the predictor variables (R Square = .143) and each group of independent variables make a significant contribution to the model as they are added to it.

There were six variables that significantly predicted attendance rates. Of particular relevance, however, were those related to RAiS. The type of RAiS school was a significant predictor of attendance rates in 2007/08; in particular, being in a low RAiS school resulted in an increase in the attendance rate of .167 standard deviations and being in a high RAiS school resulted in an increase in the attendance rate of .214 standard deviations. This suggests that RAiS had a positive impact on attendance rates whilst controlling for other variables that may also impact on the attendance rate. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that this finding is an artefact of the schools included in the high and low RAiS groups; it may be that the schools most interested in participating in RAiS were those already interested in improving outcomes such as attendance rates and were already taking positive action.

By contrast, conference participation resulted in a slight but significant decrease in the attendance rate of -0.042 standard deviations, whilst controlling for other variables that may have impacted on the attendance rate. This is a puzzling finding, particularly, as the qualitative research found that pupils *did* find the conferences helpful to them in terms of improving their attendance. It may be there was an intervening variable, such as educational attainment which, if controlled, might have meant that conference participation would result in an increase not a decrease in the attendance rate. A second possible explanation is that those pupils involved in the conferences were already those with poor attendance rates, meaning that whilst conference participation decreased attendance rates, this decrease might have been even greater had they not participated in the conferences. Independent t-tests partly confirmed this explanation. They showed conference participants had a slightly, but not significantly, lower average attendance rate of 81.74 per cent compared to non-participants, whose attendance rate was 82.32.

Table 5.1 Mean scores and standard deviations for attendance variables

Variable	Measure	High		Low		None		All
		Hartcliffe	Brislington	Hengrove	Bedminster	Ashton Park	Withywood	
2005/06 T1-6 Authorised absence rate	Mean	15.48	13.81	14.05	12.16	13.74	19.52	14.69
	Std. Deviation	11.42	11.47	11.52	10.35	10.60	13.73	11.68
2005/06 T1-6 Unauthorised absence rate	Mean	1.96	4.65	9.67	3.96	4.06	9.11	5.13
	Std. Deviation	9.23	12.88	16.15	9.48	9.54	15.54	12.35
2005/06 T1-6 Attendance rate	Mean	82.56	81.54	76.28	83.88	82.19	71.36	80.18
	Std. Deviation	15.13	17.69	19.82	14.75	14.74	21.51	17.60
	N	1234.00	918.00	760.00	985.00	999.00	782.00	5678.00
2007/08 T1-6 Authorised absence rate	Mean	10.49	10.08	15.48	10.44	14.22	9.92	11.75
	Std. Deviation	10.49	9.90	12.40	10.14	15.85	7.67	11.86
2007/08 T1-6 Unauthorised absence rate	Mean	4.73	4.24	6.33	3.63	10.87	4.58	5.97
	Std. Deviation	12.25	12.68	12.99	9.58	22.66	9.95	14.99
2007/08 T1-6 Attendance rate	Mean	84.77	85.68	78.19	85.93	74.92	85.50	82.28
	Std. Deviation	16.95	16.31	17.38	14.51	28.23	13.58	19.78
	N	791.00	1059.00	653.00	1018.00	1211.00	717.00	5449.00

Table 3.2 Dependent t-tests comparing attendance rates in 2005/6 and 2007/8

School	Mean 2005/6	Mean 2007/8	t value
None	81.93	76.73	6.475**
Low	80.55	82.91	-4.652**
High	83.99	86.03	-4.240**

Table 3.3 Regression model examining predictors of attendance rates in 2007/8

	Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
Conference participation	-0.042	0.013	-5.972	-0.698	0.915	1.093
School Type 2007/8 - Low RAiS	0.167	0.000	5.970	9.332	0.750	1.333
School Type 2007/8 - High RAiS	0.214	0.000	7.644	10.888	0.720	1.388
2005/06 T1-6 Attendance rate	0.302	0.000	0.373	0.464	0.931	1.074
Fixed-term exclusion rate 2007/8	-0.049	0.003	-1.229	-0.255	0.961	1.040
2008 SEN type	0.003	0.841	-1.576	1.936	0.911	1.098
Sex 08	0.031	0.057	-0.037	2.644	0.969	1.032
2008 Free School Meal Eligibility	-0.029	0.083	-3.268	0.201	0.951	1.052

Fixed-term exclusions

Since there were only a total of 21 pupils moved to pupil referral units (known as PRS1 moves) and 22 pupils who were permanently excluded across all six schools in 05/06 and 07/08, the focus of this section is on fixed-term exclusions, rather than permanents ones.

RAs as a contributing factor

Staff in all the schools except for Hengrove perceived that RAs was one of a number of factors that contributed to a reduction in fixed-term exclusions; all four schools had introduced other measures to reduce school exclusions prior to RAiS being implemented (e.g. all had introduced an internal exclusion room a few years before the implementation of RAiS). For instance, a senior staff member in Brislington stated:

> The first impact you would notice [of RAs] would be the reduction in fixed-term exclusions, it's not the only reason but it is a big contributor to the way in which we deal with fixed-term exclusions, and how we've changed our practice using restorative approach. *Senior Manager, Brislington.*

One RA Champion stated that the current climate in schools was not to exclude. This meant there was pressure on staff to change their practices, as she explained:

> One of the ways that it's been easy to reduce exclusions here is that staff are no longer expecting it to happen….you get people who say, "This kid has just sworn at me, I want them excluded", actually they know that the climate in schools is that actually, we just can't keep excluding kids because it doesn't really solve the problem anyway, and we can't have all the most disaffected and difficult kids out on the streets all the time. So in a way, another of the things that's reducing exclusions, is that the pressure that those staff know we're under not to do it, and in a way that pressure will also bring them on board eventually, I think, into having to use the more restorative approach. Because, not only is it for many of us, the best way of doing it, but they will begin to see that it's the only option we have available to us. *RA Champion, 1.*

Mechanisms

Where RAs were perceived to have had an impact on fixed-term exclusions, reductions were seen as the result of either:

1) A *direct* strategy, that is, when a conference was used for a serious misdemeanour instead of an exclusion. This corresponds with the findings that conferences were used predominantly to deal with fights.

2) An *indirect* strategy, that is, when a restorative conference was used to address less serious misdemeanours. Low-level incidents were prevented from escalating into bigger ones that could result in exclusion.

However, the extent to which conferences were used directly or indirectly to reduce exclusions depended on the school and their approach to implementing RAiS. At Brislington, RAs had been implemented on a whole-school basis, which meant that throughout the school a restorative conference was considered as an alternative strategy at the stage of fixed-term and permanent exclusion. As a member of staff put it:

> "Is a situation restorable?" And that's a phrase I use a lot, because I often get sort of brought into discussions around what should happen if there are incidences, and I will often say: "Well is it restorable?" and if it isn't then we'll look at something else. You know, ultimately that might mean a permanent exclusion, but it [the restorative approach] is there. It's become embedded into our behaviour policy around what we will do when a situation arises. *RJ Champion, 2.*

Similarly, at Bedminster, conferences were reported as being frequently used instead of exclusions and as impacting directly on the fixed-term exclusion rate, as this Head of Year explained:

> Interviewee: It's lowering exclusions, I mean years ago other kids, we would have excluded for fights and stuff like that, whereas now it's a conference, so there's no exclusion. The exclusion figures are going down because we are dealing with incidents differently.
>
> Interviewer: And would you attribute that to restorative approaches?
>
> I: It's one of the things, yes, one of the few things definitely. It gives us something to do instead of exclusion*. Head of Year, Bedminster.*

However, because RAs were implemented in pockets rather than on a whole-school basis, at Bedminster, conferences may not have been routinely used to directly tackle exclusions throughout the school, particularly as conferences were first of all limited to those conducted by a RAiS project worker and later by only a few members of staff. At the same time, conferences were used to tackle exclusions indirectly by addressing low-level incidents that might have escalated into an exclusion. A similar picture was noted in Hartcliffe where conferences were used instead of exclusion, but only in pockets; RAs did not spread school wide and conferences were limited to those conducted by a RAiS project worker and a few members of staff particularly in the first-term of the project. This suggests that in the later stages of implementation conferences could only have been used to a limited extent as an alternative to exclusion.

By contrast, in Hengrove, conferences were rarely used as an alternative to exclusions. RAs were not implemented on a whole-school basis and the Champion did not have access to serious behaviour incidents. Consequently, there were very few conferences that saved exclusions. These findings are supported by the quantitative data, which indicates that a high level of participation in conferences yields better results in terms of exclusions. Nevertheless, staff at Hengrove (Oasis) said that RAs, in the form of small informal conferences or restorative conversations, contributed to a reduction in exclusions indirectly. This was achieved by preventing less serious behaviour incidents from escalating and becoming bigger incidents that pupils would be excluded for:

> We are, really we are preventing exclusions, but its from very, very small things, which we know as staff who have been here with the kids, that these things just go like from one really small thing to a massive, massive thing, really, really quickly. If we can prevent and stop it at those small incidents, then we know we're going to be preventing exclusions, but we couldn't necessarily put a number on it. *RJ Champion, 4.*

The figures

In absolute terms, there was a decrease in the number of fixed-term exclusions in RAiS schools. This decrease was something noted by staff who believed that RAs was a contributing factor. Staff in Brislington reported that they had halved their fixed-term exclusions (560 days to 234) and that RAs had contributed to the dramatic drop. Bedminster staff also reported a 50% drop in fixed-term exclusions and staff stated that restorative conferences had contributed to this. Similarly, staff at Hartcliffe reported a 45% reduction in their fixed-term exclusions partly due to RAs. By contrast, staff at Hengrove felt that RAs had had no measurable impact on exclusions.

However, there was also decrease in fixed-term exclusions in non-RAiS schools. In addition, the decrease in fixed-terms exclusions was across the board whether schools implemented a high/low/no conferences or whether they implemented RAiS in pockets or as whole-school initiative. This is a reason to be cautious in interpreting the drop in the number of fixed-term exclusions as being caused wholly by RAiS. As the interviewee at the beginning noted, all schools are under pressure to reduce exclusions and it may be that RAiS is one of only a number of tools that contribute to a reduction.

Table 5.4 show the mean scores for the fixed-term exclusion rate. Of particular note is the fixed-term exclusion rate (*100), which is highlighted. This has been calculated by dividing the total number of fixed-term exclusions per pupil by the total number of possible sessions that a pupil could have attended between term one and term six and multiplying by 100 to make the figures easier to follow. This calculation reflects the fact that some pupils may have been out of school for legitimate reasons, for example, if they were on work placement and therefore unable to attend as many sessions as others. These legitimate absences would have affected their 'availability' to be given fixed-term exclusions and so the fixed-term exclusion rate variable is simply an attempt to standardize the data.[7] This table shows that there were decreases in the fixed-term exclusion rate between 2005/6 and 2007/8. Independent and dependent t-tests were used respectively to examine firstly whether the differences between RAiS and non-RAiS schools were significant and secondly whether the differences between 2005/6 and 2007/8 in high- low- and non-RAiS schools were significant.

Firstly, the independent t-tests showed that in 2005/6 non-RAiS schools had a lower fixed-term exclusion rate than RAiS schools (as the mean was .863 compared to 1.111); although, this difference was only significant at the ten per cent level. In 2007/8, this difference between the RAiS and non-RAiS schools had increased with RAiS schools having a significantly higher fixed-term exclusion rate (as the mean was .201 compared to .321). Secondly, the dependent t-tests, the results of which are in Table 4.2, showed that all schools significantly reduced the fixed-term exclusion rate between 2005/6 and 2007/8, including the non-RAiS schools. This suggests that RAiS had not had a discernible impact on fixed-term exclusions.

Bi-variate analysis was next used to explore the associations between the dependent variable, the fixed-term exclusion rate, and other independent variables. The independent variables associated with the fixed-term exclusion rate were type of school 2007/8; free school meal eligibility 2007/8, special needs 2007/8, currently in care in the school census 2007/8, sex 2007/8, ethnicity 2007/8, attendance rate 2007/8, fixed-term exclusion rate in

[7] We could have used the total number of fixed-term exclusions as the dependent variable, but it would have been unstandardized and therefore misleading.

2005/6 and conference participation. These variables were added into the regression model in the following groups:

(i) Conference participation
(ii) Type of school – no, low- or high-RAiS[8]
(iii) Educational variables – attendance rate 2007/8 and fixed-term exclusion rate 2005/6.
(iv) Socio-demographic variables – currently in care in the school census 2007/8, special school needs 2007/8, sex 2007/8, ethnicity 2007/8 and free school meal eligibility 2007/8.

The findings from the final block of the regression analysis are provided in Table 5.4 In an initial run of the regression model, the second group of independent variables, the type of school variables, did not make a significant contribution to the model and so were excluded from subsequent runs of the model. In all, 3,535 cases were included in the final run of the analysis. There was little indication of multicollinerarity according to the appropriate criteria; for example, none of the VIF statistics were greater than ten (Field, 2005: 175). The model predicted the data better than a model based on estimates of the mean ($F=23.07$, $p<.01$). However, the R square estimate was only 0.05, meaning that only 5 per cent of the variance in the data was explained by the independent variables.

There were a number of variables that significantly predicted fixed-term exclusion rates. Of particular interest, however, is conference participation, which significantly increased the fixed-term exclusion rate by .119 standard deviations. There could be five different explanations for this puzzling finding which contradicts the hypothesis that RAiS reduces fixed-term exclusions, related either to the data or to implementation:

1. An intervening variable? It may be that there was an intervening variable, such as educational attainment which, if controlled, may have resulted in conference participation reducing not increasing the fixed-term exclusion rate. This is a strong possibility, given that a full set of attainment data were not available.
2. The data could not detect the subtleties of the changes in the school? The qualitative data pointed to the indirect uses of conferences; they were used to stop events escalating and resulting in fixed-term exclusions. The subtleties of this process would not have been discernible in the local authority data.
3. Pupils did not find the conferences helpful? It may have been that those participating in the conferences did not find them to be a helpful way of addressing the kinds of behaviour that lead to fixed-term exclusions. Unfortunately, there were no qualitative data on pupil's views on the relationship between conferences and fixed-term exclusions.
4. Staff did not use conferences enough as an alternative to fixed-term exclusion? This explanation is highly likely, given that the qualitative research shows that only one of the schools, Brislington, reported that they routinely used conferences throughout as an alternative to fixed-term exclusion, this explanation is highly likely. A key recommendation, therefore, is that staff should be given greater encouragement to use conferences as an alternative to exclusions.

[8] As with the analysis of attendance rates, previous runs of the model were used to test school-type in terms of either as a conference participation variable or as a type of implementation. However, neither were significantly related to the dependent variable and both were omitted from final runs of the model.

5. The pupils taking part in the conferences already had higher levels of fixed-term exclusions? As with the attendance rate data, it may be that the increase in the fixed-term exclusion rate would have been even greater had the pupils not participated in the conferences because the conferences tended to involve pupils with higher levels of fixed-term exclusions. An independent t-test confirms this picture. In 2007/8, conference participants had a significantly higher mean fixed-term exclusion rate of .941 compared to those that did not participate in conferences and who had a mean fixed-term exclusion rate of .213 ($t=-11.09$, $p<.01$). There was no significant difference between these two groups in 2005/6.

Therefore, in the light of the limits imposed on the analysis by the patchy availability of attainment data and given the small amount of the variance explained by the model, it is best to conclude that RAiS did not make a discernible impact on fixed-term exclusions. This is in-line with finding in other studies, such as by the YJB (2004), who similarly found no discernible impact of RAs on fixed-term exclusions. However, RAiS may have been a contributory factor to the reductions in fixed-term exclusions particularly in the schools where conferences were routinely and explicitly used as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions. Moreover, given that conferences were largely used for pupils who had significantly higher levels of fixed-term exclusions, this suggests that their fixed-term exclusion rate may have been even higher still without the input from RAiS. We can tentatively conclude from this that RAiS has promise to reduce fixed-term exclusions in the longer-term.

Table 5.4 Mean fixed-term exclusion data

		High		Low		None		
Variables	**Measures**	**Hartcliffe**	**Brislington**	**Hengrove**	**Bedminster**	**Ashton Park**	**Withywood**	**All**
Total no. of fixed term exclusions 2005/6	Mean	3.75	1.12	3.36	1.51	0.54	3.89	2.19
	S.D	9.35	7.07	10.23	5.81	3.35	9.81	7.86
2005/06 T1-6 Total possible sessions	Mean	212.22	216.11	220.77	202.32	212.07	201.98	211.06
	S.D	54.70	40.38	62.25	31.83	39.62	52.34	47.19
Fixed term exclusion rate 2005/6 *100	Mean	1.67	0.50	1.67	0.73	0.24	2.17	1.07
	S.D	4.38	3.01	6.26	2.74	1.42	8.80	4.81
	N	918.00	1234.00	760.00	985.00	999.00	782.00	5678.00
Total no. of fixed term exclusions 2007/8	Mean	0.57	0.40	0.69	0.40	0.10	1.54	0.55
	S.D	2.37	2.06	2.55	2.11	0.67	4.45	2.48
2007/08 T1-6 Total possible sessions	Mean	167.24	157.02	164.21	157.25	136.83	343.23	179.48
	S.D	45.99	35.98	49.64	30.52	62.36	59.74	80.88
Fixed term exclusion rate 2007/8 *100	Mean	0.38	0.26	0.47	0.24	0.07	0.46	0.28
	S.D	1.63	1.35	2.18	1.21	0.42	1.41	1.38
	N	791.00	1059.00	653.00	1018.00	1211.00	717.00	5449.00

Table 5.5 Dependent t-tests comparing fixed-term exclusion rates in 2005/6 and 2007/8

School	Mean 2005/6	Mean 2007/8	t value
None	.62	.23	5.521**
Low	1.07	.31	5.309**
High	.88	.26	4.723**

Table 5.6 Predictors of the fixed-term exclusion rate 2007/8

	Standardized Coefficients	Significance	95% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		0.054	-1.385	0.011		
Conference participation	0.119	0.000	0.463	0.808	0.994	1.006
Fixed-term exclusion rate 2005/6	0.097	0.000	0.018	0.037	0.991	1.009
2007/08 T1-6 Attendance rate	-0.070	0.000	-0.007	-0.003	0.990	1.010
2008 SEN type	0.066	0.000	0.114	0.342	0.958	1.044
2008 Ethnicity - 2 categories	-0.013	0.417	-0.252	0.105	0.994	1.006
2008 Free School Meal Eligibility	0.079	0.000	0.155	0.375	0.975	1.025
Sex 08	0.066	0.000	0.090	0.266	0.983	1.017
2008 Currently in care at census	-0.007	0.674	-0.725	0.469	0.994	1.007

Educational attainment

At best, even if all KS3 and KS4 data for 2005/6 and 2007/8 educational attainment were included, the analysis would only include pupils who were in Year 9 or Year 11 in either 05/06 and/or in 07/08. Since KS3 data are not available for 07/08, only KS4 data can included in the analysis. This means that the current data only permit analysis which includes pupils who were in Year 9 in 05/06 and/or 07/08. For this reason, I have only produced measures of central tendency for the KS4 educational attainment data.

Table 5.7 shows means scores for GCSE results. These were provided either as the number of A-C grades or the total points for awarded for GCSE grades (known as section 96 points).[9] Since pupils were entered for different numbers of GCSEs, the most meaningful variables are the number of section 96 points per entry and the number of A-C grades per entry, which are highlighted below. This was calculated by dividing the total section 96 GCSE scores or the number of A-C grades by the number of entries. This table shows that educational attainment improved between 2005/6 and 2007/8 for pupils in all schools not just those participating in RAiS. Independent t-tests showed that there were no significant differences between RAiS and non-RAiS schools for A-C grades per entry or section 96 points per entry in either 05/06 or 07/08. This suggests either that either RAiS was having little impact on educational attainment or that these changes were not discernible in the available data.

[9] GCSEs are scored as follows: A* = 58 points, A = 52, B = 46, C = 40, D = 34, E = 28, F = 22, G =16.

Table 5.7 Mean scores and standard deviations for educational attainment variables

Variable	Measure	High		Low		None		All
		Hartcliffe	Brislington	Hengrove	Bedminster	Ashton Park	Withywood	
KS4 Total Section 96 points 2005/06	Mean	310.79	292.36	272.78	286.51	318.19	284.17	294.33
	S.D	148.09	150.18	177.01	125.11	121.30	183.81	151.14
KS4 Total capped Section 96 points 2005/06	Mean	232.94	239.49	212.16	248.77	269.70	207.79	236.88
	S.D	117.63	120.64	127.54	107.30	85.71	122.07	115.40
KS4 Section 96 number of entries 2006/06	Mean	9.88	8.89	8.97	8.55	9.52	9.78	9.22
	S.D	2.87	2.44	3.50	1.82	2.00	3.55	2.74
KS4 Number of A*-C grades 2005/06	Mean	3.94	4.48	3.46	3.68	3.98	4.01	3.96
	S.D	3.71	3.96	3.72	3.70	3.64	4.45	3.88
KS4 Total Section 96 points per Entry 2005/06	Mean	29.74	30.88	26.94	32.16	32.23	25.74	29.88
	S.D	10.12	12.47	12.06	10.53	8.31	12.04	11.28
KS4 Number of A-C grades per Entry 2005/06	Mean	0.35	0.45	0.30	0.39	0.38	0.32	0.37
	S.D	0.31	0.37	0.30	0.38	0.33	0.34	0.35
	N	129.00	220.00	146.00	185.00	187.00	153.00	1020.00
KS4 Total Section 96 points 2007/08	Mean	351.49	307.74	320.99	322.41	392.15	393.14	345.46
	S.D	184.58	136.38	172.11	132.92	147.79	183.43	160.88
KS4 Total capped Section 96 points 2007/08	Mean	249.10	253.51	242.68	270.79	294.80	273.28	264.36
	S.D	120.79	114.59	117.11	93.08	90.73	106.47	108.60
KS4 Section 96 number of entries 2007/08	Mean	9.87	8.77	9.19	9.17	10.95	11.59	9.84
	S.D	3.68	2.47	3.66	2.27	2.38	3.77	3.17
KS4 Number of A*-C grades 2007/08	Mean	5.52	4.57	5.09	4.53	5.51	5.83	5.11
	S.D	4.71	3.72	4.31	3.82	4.28	4.63	4.22
KS4 Total Section 96 points per Entry 2007/08	Mean	33.51	33.52	32.32	33.86	34.70	32.87	33.55
	S.D	9.35	10.30	8.43	8.78	8.92	10.20	9.44
KS4 Number of A-C grades per Entry 2005/06	Mean	0.48	0.47	0.44	0.45	0.47	0.47	0.46
	S.D	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	0.35
	N	157.00	242.00	122.00	190.00	178.00	152.00	1041.00

This uncertainty about the impact of RAs on attainment was mirrored in the qualitative research, where the majority of staff felt unable to comment, saying that it was too early to tell. In terms of individual pupils, some staff said that if pupils had issues resolved through conferences then it was likely to have a positive impact on their capacity for learning. Staff also thought that pupils were likely to enjoy greater overall well-being if conflicts had been resolved and this would impact on their ability to concentrate on their school-work.

> Pupils often tell me that they sometimes get really affected by problems with other pupils in the school and they might sit in lessons but not really concentrate or participate. Things will be bothering them. These conferences give them a chance to sort things out and that is bound to affect their academic performance. *Support Worker, Brislington.*

Staff thought that pupils who had managed to resolve problems in conferences would also be less likely to have their learning fractured as a result of exclusion or truancy. This was thought to be the case in one Champion's view of the conflict between a pupil and teacher:

> I think sometimes it's a door back into education, because especially the one we did with the member of staff and the student, they were already out of school because of the incident, and I think they had their own barriers about coming back, and the member of staff had barriers about them coming back into their classroom as well, so that was a door opener for them. *RJ Champion, 4.*

A pupil interviewed for this study had been involved in a conference with a teacher who she felt had been picking on her in the classroom. The pupil described how her work had been negatively affected.

> I couldn't finish my work because I was always outside the class for no reason, so my work was going down as well, and because it's like for coursework, like stuff on the computers, that kind of suffered…and ages ago, she didn't tell me the titles, but she told everyone else in the class when I wasn't in, and because she hadn't told me, I've done all my coursework, but I've done all the titles wrong, and it was too late to change it, and little things like that. *Pupil 2, aged 15, Bedminster.*

The pupil said that after the conference things were much better as the teacher had stopped picking on her and she could get on with her work.

> If like I brought down my work now and showed you over the last couple of months, then it went straight down, and then since the meeting it's gone like straight back up, and I've moved onto another folder and everything. *Pupil 2 aged 15, Bedminster*

In terms of the overall attainment levels of the school, one Senior Manager thought that teachers at the school would be able to teach better as the general climate of the classroom would be calmer with the influence of RAs.

> I think most staff would say they can teach better because it's calmer, calmer because of the behaviour. There is a reasonable strand there, but you know, proving that link is difficult. *RJ Champion, 2.*

Notably, the staff that had most to say on this matter were managers at the school that had implemented RAs on a whole-school basis.

Other outcomes: bullying

There was evidence from the qualitative research that RAiS impacted on outcomes that were not quantified in the local authority data. Staff and pupil felt that restorative approaches were an effective way of dealing with bullying incidents. Half the pupils, (n=13) thought that there was less bullying in the school as a result of RAs. Several pupils made comments that the difference in their school was noticeable, as illustrated by the following quotations:

> About a year ago, you'd walk out of your class and then just see like loads of people outside their doors because they'd been sent out for bullying people, but now there's hardly anybody, because everyone has just calmed it down. *Pupil 22, aged 13, Bedminster.*

> Interviewee 1: There's not as many people bullying.

> Interviewee 2: In year 7 it was pure terrorising.

> Interviewee 1: Year 8 there was a little less, and now we're in year 9 it's not as much, in fact I haven't seen any much. *Pupils 20 and 21, aged 13, Hengrove.*

A pupil who was being bullied described how she was truanting from school and had felt suicidal as a result of the bullying. Taking part in a restorative conference stopped it.

> Like my experience, well it was like really bad for me, it was like the worst thing that's happened, and I didn't think it was ever going to get sorted out, but then like after we'd had the meeting it's been like fine. *Pupil 7, aged 14, Hartcliffe.*

Another pupil explained that after a conference she had been in with four girls who had been bullying her one actually came and apologised to her, as she explained:

> Like some of the stuff these people were doing to me was really nasty, and right, at the time I thought I hate them, I want all this bad stuff to happen to them, but then one of the girls actually came and said sorry and stuff like that, and she was acting all OK about it, so I think that's fine and I think it might have been the restorative justice a bit that made her think. *Pupil 9, aged 13, Brislington.*

RAs were seen by staff as enabling the empowerment of victims of bullying by providing them with a setting in which they could voice their feelings and be taken seriously.

> It gives those that sometimes would be described as victims, it gives them voice. Now this is a critical thing, in a very clear structured way, you know, when we talk about the actions, and who's been harmed, it allows that voice. You know, they may not be able to describe it in detail, but they do, they are able to articulate and say, "This is how it was. This is how your actions, this is how they impacted on me". *Senior Manger, Brislington.*

Pupils described how RAs had given them a chance to voice their feelings about being bullied.

> He said that it would be better if I go now, wrote down how I was feeling and then he would like read it out to the people in the meeting, and then it should change, and ever since that it's just been perfect. *Pupil 7, aged 14, Hartcliffe.*

Bullies also felt that they received fair treatment in restorative conferences.

> I felt it wasn't all one sided, it was like, it was fair like, a chance to say your point of view, and like our points of view matched up with hers. Pupil 21, aged 13, Hengrove.

However, a few pupils discussed how conferences did not resolve all bullying issues. One girl explained that after the conference she had been in with four girls who had been bullying her, only two of them actually stopped it, while two of them carried on. This left the victim to conclude:

> If you're the one being picked on and the other people just want to carry on and they don't want to sort it out, then it won't work, because what happens is,

> they don't listen to you, and they just go in your face, and talking and stuff, and then it doesn't work. *Pupil 9, aged 13, Brislington.*

Likewise, in the case of a boy who was being bullied, although some of the boys in the group had stopped as a result of a conference, some of them were still bullying him. The pupil was worried that that they may come after him after the conference and that they might lash out at him when there was no teacher there. This made the researcher feel worried for the pupil.

> Interviewer: Right, have you told anybody so that you can get it sorted out?
>
> Interviewee: Yes.
>
> Interviewer: And they're working on it now are they?
>
> Interviewee: Yes.

One of the schools had begun a programme of peer mentoring which involved year 10 pupils mentoring pupils in year 7 or 8 using a restorative approach. Peer mentors reported that this had been helpful to them in cases of bullying:

> those students are reflecting back to me, that they think it's beneficial…our peer mentors deal sometimes with low level bullying, you know, in year 7s and 8s, and the year 10s will be mentoring, and they're finding it an effective tool, you know, at that level. *Senior Manager, Brislington.*

Chapter six: Conclusion

Summary

In summary, in this evaluation, we have examined how RAiS was implemented in four schools in South Bristol, as well as how and whether RAiS impacted on the climate for learning, attendance, fixed-term exclusions and educational attainment. The research employed multiple strategies of research which enabled us to explore these issues from different dimensions. In total, thirty-four interviews were conducted with staff and twenty-six with pupils. These provided a snap-shot, at one point in time, of the implementation process and the impact on the climate for learning, as well as providing insights into *how* RAs impacted on attendance, exclusions and attainment. Local authority data from 2005/6, prior to the implementation of RAiS, was used as a base-line against which to compare pupils' attendance, exclusions and attainment in 2007/8, that is, after the implementation of RAiS. The performance of pupils at the RAiS schools was also compared with the performance of pupils at two other schools in the South Bristol area that had declined to participate in RAiS.

In Chapter three, we described the implementation of RAiS in the schools in Bristol. We have identified two approaches to implementing RAiS: (i) whole-school where RAs were incorporated into policies and procedures and used throughout the school (ii) pockets of RAs where RAs were used in different parts of the school, for example, in particular year-groups or classes. Only Brislington employed a whole-school approach, whereas the rest implemented RAs in pockets. The advantages of the whole-school approaches were that staff has maximal access to training and support and also that the programme was less likely to be diluted, distorted or forgotten. However, the pace of change created dissatisfaction and resistance amongst staff, although this was not insurmountable. By contrast, implementing RAs in pockets meant that there was greater scope for staff to adjust to the changes and that they were less likely to feel that policies had been imposed on them. But the cost was that staff lost the opportunity to fully integrate RAs into policies and procedures and that traditional sanctions continued alongside the new RAs.

Other implementation issues revolved around staff feeling short of time to implement the RAs in their day-to-day practices. However, one of the solutions could be to make greater use of support workers, for example, to convene conferences. In addition, the triad model used in Brislington (involving a regular meeting between the triad of a Support Assistant, Learning Mentor and a Head of Year, and the RA Champion) might help resolve implementation issues, as they arise. Staff also suggested that greater pupil involvement (e.g. as co-facilitators) would increase awareness of RAs. In addition, staff suggested that ongoing training would help prevent the dilution of the programme.

In terms of the conferences convened since the programmes began in each of the schools, Brislington and Hartcliffe held a high number of conferences (6.1 and 9.9 per month respectively), whereas Bedminster and Hengrove held a low number (2.5 and 2.7 per month respectively). Across all schools conferences were used equally for boys and girls except in Hengrove where they were used mainly for girls and in Brislington where they were used mainly for boys. Across all schools the main reason that conferences were convened was to deal fights, except in Hengrove where they were used mainly to deal with disagreements and arguments. There was little evidence of conferences being used to re-integrate pupils, after exclusion.

In Chapter four, we discussed the impact of RAiS on the climate for learning, that is, on the culture and ethos of the schools. It is likely that the benefits of RAiS for the climate are likely to be more apparent in schools that have implemented the programme using a whole-school approach. Nevertheless there were still improvements in schools which had only implemented RAiS in pockets. RAs built on and consolidated existing practices (e.g. in relation to communication), but the idea that staff "do it already" could be used to resist change. Staff were also concerned that by taking away options to use conventional punishment, such as detentions and fixed-term exclusions, RAs would take away their power and authority. Consequently, staff and pupils thought that punishments such as exclusions and detentions should continue to exist alongside RAs, as they could be used as a last resort.

RAiS impacted on the climate for learning in six ways. Firstly, it challenged pupil and staff perceptions of the usefulness of existing mechanisms for punishing pupils. Staff described RAs as better than punishment because they could be used to resolve behavioural issues for good by getting to the bottom of it. For pupils, RAs meant that did not feel as if they were 'in trouble', which could be beneficial given the negative implications of labelling. In addition, they felt as if they were treated in a more reasonable and adult way and that they had to face up to being in the 'wrong'. This could bring about real changes to their behaviour. At the same time, for a minority of pupils, not being 'in trouble' also amounted to 'getting away with it' or 'to getting off lightly'. Some also regarded conferences as a waste of time. Secondly, they encouraged a fairer approach to dealing with bad behaviour which got to the bottom of the problem and moved beyond simplistic bully/victim categories. Thirdly, RAs improved communication between staff and pupils, encouraging people to talk calmly, rather than shouting, as well as improving relationships. Pupils got on better with their peers and conferences gave pupils a voice and helped to redress the power imbalance in staff-pupil relationships, humanizing staff in the process. Fourthly, there was some evidence that RAs had partly contributed to a calmer atmosphere in school, emanating from staff to pupils. Fifth, RAs reportedly improved the emotional literacy of staff, but especially pupils, in their ability to reflect on their behaviour, empathise and to take responsibility for their actions. Some staff, the 'flog em' brigade' remained resistant to the new approach; yet, those in favour of them experienced the development of pupils' emotional literacy as a 'time-saver' because they could sort out problems for themselves. Finally, RAs also helped improve the well-being of staff and pupils. Staff had the confidence and skills to deal with pupils without relying on support staff or senior teachers. Pupils had an outlet for their feelings and expressing them was both empowering and gave them confidence.

In Chapter five, we assessed the impact of RAiS on attendance, fixed-term exclusions and educational attainment. In terms of attendance, RAiS appeared to have a positive impact in that being in a high/low RAiS school predicted a significantly higher attendance rate than being a non-RAiS school. Whilst conference participation did not predict a higher attendance rate, this may have been because those participating in the conferences had a slightly lower attendance rate to start with. It may have been that without input from RAiS, their attendance rate would have been even lower. Indeed, the qualitative research suggests that pupils did find conference beneficial in terms of resolving conflicts or victimization that may have otherwise kept them at home. We can conclude, therefore, that over time RAiS may be a promising way of increasing the attendance rate.

In terms of the fixed-term exclusion rate, there were reductions in the absolute numbers of fixed-term exclusions in the RAiS and non-RAiS schools. This reduction was noted by staff in all four RAiS schools. Staff believed that RAs impacted on fixed-term exclusions either (i) directly (when restorative conferences were used instead of fixed-term exclusions) or (ii)

indirectly (when conferences were used at an earlier stage and prevent incidents from escalating to the stage where fixed-term exclusions were necessary). Difficulties with the local authority data (e.g. the absence of educational data, an important additional independent variable) meant that RAiS did not make a discernible impact on the fixed-term exclusion rate. The YJB (2004) reached a similar conclusion in their research. However, it is likely that RAiS was a contributing factor to reductions in fixed-term exclusions, particularly in the schools where conferences were routinely and explicitly used as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions. Given that conferences were used for pupils with significantly higher levels of fixed-term exclusions, we can tentatively conclude that RAiS has promise to reduce fixed-term exclusions in the longer-term.

The analysis of the educational attainment data was limited because Key-Stage 3 data were not available for 2007/8. Based on Key-Stage 4 educational data alone, RAiS did not have a discernible impact on GCSE performance. However, this may have been because of the limitations of the data. Staff were also hesitant to conclude that RAs impacted on individual or on whole-school attainment, saying that it was too early to say. However, some felt that RAs were likely to improve attainment by increasing pupils capacity for learning and their ability to concentrate and because they contributed to a less fractured and calmer learning environment.

Discussion

The research suggests that in the schools that implemented RAs in pockets traditional disciplinary approaches continued to dominate the culture of the school. This is a difficulty that has been identified in previous research (Sherman and Strang, 2007). It was only in Brislington, which employed a whole-school approach to implementation, that staff attempted to incorporate RAs into existing school policies, had stopped using detentions in favour of a graduated system of RAs and routinely used restorative conferences as an alternative to exclusions. This suggests that in Brislington only disciplinary approaches, such as exclusions were not the dominant modus operandi; instead, they co-existed alongside the RAs. This would seem to be a reasonable position to take, given that both staff and pupils wished for traditional sanctions such as exclusions to remain available for serious incidents (e.g. one pupil talked about hate crime) and if RAs failed to be effective. However, it is only reasonable so long as traditional sanctions are used as a last rather than a first resort. Using traditional sanctions as a first resort is more likely in schools where RAs are not fully-embedded within the school. This under-lines the fact that, as shown in the existing research, a key factor for successful implementation is whether RAs are implemented on a whole-school basis (Blood 2005, Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2004).

Regardless of the school, and therefore the approach to implementing RAs, the programme made a sufficient impact to challenge at least some pupil's and staff's perceptions of the existing mechanisms for punishing pupils; for example, pupils began to realise that they wanted to feel fairly treated and that they were treated in a reasonable and adult manner and that they wanted to face up to their wrong-doing, but without feeling as if they were 'in trouble'. These are the founding principles of restorative justice and re-integrative shaming. That is, an offender can be made to acknowledge their wrong-doing and be shamed in front of their peers and significant others such as their family, but also be allowed to make amends and be punished in a way that they can be re-integrated and accepted back into their communities. It is an achievement that staff and pupils had begun to grasp these principles in only two years, particularly when the successful implementation of a whole-school approach is generally agreed to take up to five years (Blood 2005, Blood and Thorsborne 2005, Morrison 2005, Hopkins 2004).

However, there remained a minority of staff and pupils that remained resistant to RAs. This resistance was noticeable amongst pupils who felt that RAs enabled them to 'get away with things' or 'to get off lightly' compared to how they would have been treated in the past. As for staff, none of them actually stated that they disagreed with the use of RAs, although they did report, regardless of school, that they had colleagues that remained resistant; indeed, one described such colleagues as the 'flog em' brigade'. In addition, the two 'silent teachers' described in Chapter one had negative views about the use of RAs, although they did not share them with the researchers. The perspectives of this group of pupils and staff resistant to RAs might have been more readily apparent had the research deliberately sought out to explore them. Their views are clearly important, given that they could de-rail the possibility of RAs being implemented on a truly whole-school basis, as well as the possibility that staff adhere to the programme. Even if staff are committed to RAs, this does not mean they are knowledgeable about the principles of it. For example, the YJB found that at the end of the programme, of the seven per cent of those who reported that they knew quite a lot about RAs, none could correctly identify its key features. Hence ongoing training has been emphasized as an important feature of successful implementation (e.g. YJB, 2004).

The research has shown that local authority data may not be up to the task of discerning the impact of complex and subtle changes to the climate of the school on individual pupils. This is partly because the data are not collected for the purpose of assessing programmes such as RAiS and also because the reliability of the data are affected by changes in school policies and procedures. However, it is also worth noting that part of the difficulty with discerning the impact of RAiS on individuals is that the factors affecting young people's success at school are wide-ranging and extend well beyond the school environment to families, neighbourhoods and the structure of society. And these wide-ranging factors are simply not captured in local authority data.

This illustrates a separate issue which was also highlighted by two pupils, the 'bad kids' - who had a string of detentions and exclusions and who had not benefited from traditional sanctions and also saw RAs as a waste of time - which is that schools are not able to tackle the underlying issues that impact on pupil's behaviour at school. That is, measures such as RAs may only address the symptoms rather than the cause of pupils' behaviour. Nevertheless, the evidence from the evaluation points to the fact there are good reasons to try all the same, not least the fact that it has shown promise in reducing exclusions, but especially in improving attendance rates.

Finally, whilst we have used the qualitative research to explore some of the mechanisms by which RAs impact on attendance and exclusions one mechanism that has been under-explored is legitimacy. Procedural fairness, as a contributing factor to the legitimacy, for example, of legal authorities has long been regarded as central to the restorative justice movement; for example, this movement draws on the ideas that procedural fairness is about giving harmers and the harmed a voice and enabling mutual respect between parties (MacCoun, 2005). In the present research, pupils also noted the importance of fairness, as a key impact on the climate of the school. Therefore, it may be that the effectiveness of RAiS in part depends not only on how the programme is delivered (e.g. whole-school or not) and whether RAs are used as an alternative to traditional sanctions, but also on whether RAs are perceived as procedurally fair, thereby entitling the school to assume a position as a legitimate authority in the eyes of pupils. This is a matter in need of further investigation.

Recommendations

1. The whole-school approach to implementation employed by staff in Brislington contributed to higher quality RAs in that staff delivered the programme in the way that it was intended. For this reason, we recommend that schools implement RAs using a whole-school approach, rather than implementing it in pockets.
2. The difficulties identified in the report, in relation to the dilution and distortion of the programme, particularly in schools that did not take a whole-school approach to implementation, suggest that there needs to be a continuous dialogue between staff and the programme co-ordinators, as well as refresher training, time permitting, to ensure that the programme is delivered in the way it is intended.
3. The resistance to RAs reported by pupils and staff in all of the schools, even those implementing RAs on a whole-school basis, suggests that this could be a challenge for the programme in the longer-term. Little data was collected from this group of 'bad kids' or resistant staff, which would have enabled recommendations. However, we recommend that more is done to understand these perspectives so that RAs can be implemented on a truly whole-school basis.
4. The continuing support for traditional sanctions, such as exclusions, amongst staff and pupils suggests that they should co-exist alongside a graduated response using RAs and only be used as a measure of last resort for serious incidents and if RAs have not worked.
5. RAiS showed promise in terms of tackling school exclusions, particularly, when conferences were routinely and directly used as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions. This suggests that teachers require greater encouragement to routinely use conferences as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions.
6. The importance of the routine monitoring data to the evaluation, particularly the information about the conferences held in each of the schools suggests that this is a vital and ongoing part of the programme. We recommend that staff in schools remain in regular contact with those implementing the programme and continue to supply regular updates about conferences held in the schools.
7. This evaluation provides a 'snap-shot' of how and whether RAs impact on the school climate at only one point in time, and an assessment of the impact of RAs on attendance, exclusions and educational attainment after only two years of implementation. We recommend further research to examine whether any positive outcomes are maintained in the longer-term, as well as an assessment of the impacts of RAs in any other schools that have begun to implement the programme. It would also be of interest to explore in more detail, perhaps using survey, aspects of the climate for learning such as improvements to emotional literacy and well-being, and perceptions of legitimacy. This given an indication of other mechanisms by which RAs make an impact on key outcome variables.
8. Given that the programme that we evaluated was implemented entirely in schools in South Bristol, it is difficult to say whether if it were rolled-out to other areas in Bristol or to other schools in other areas of the country it would achieve the same impact. We recommend that caution is exercised in how this programme is rolled-out in the future, paying attention to the contextual similarities and differences between the schools in South Bristol and any new schools.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide: staff

Background and the restorative process

1. What is you role?
2. How long have you worked at the school?
3. How did you hear about restorative approaches in schools?
4. What attracted you to implementing it in this school?
5. What has it been used for? Prompt: contribute to goals of the school to tackle problematic behaviour, exclusions, absenteeism.
6. How is it used? (prompt: during the reintegration interview after school exclusion)
7. What type of approach is employed? Prompt: conferences, problem-solving circles.
8. Who is involved in the restorative approach? Prompt: pupils, staff, parents, governors.
9. Do you have peer mediators? Why/why not?
10. In total, how many people are involved in facilitating the conferences?
11. How many conferences have there been so far?
12. What is the outcome:
    a. At the end of the conference? Prompt: written agreement
    b. In the longer-term? Prompt: improved education attainment

Implementation

1. How has it been implemented in school? Can you describe the process?
2. Who has been trained to deliver RA?
    a. How have they/you been trained? By whom?
    b. What has the training involved? (prompt: at level 1 and level 2)
    c. How much do they/you know about the restorative process?
    d. How much continuing input is there from the RAiS co-ordinators?
3. To what extent has staff training been put into practice?
    a. Level 1 training on using a script to solve problems when they arise
    b. Level 2 training on using conferences
4. To what extent has the RA been accepted by staff and pupils?
5. How have school policies and processes changed, if at all, since the introduction of RAs?
6. Do old policies co-exist alongside the RA? For example, do you still use school exclusions?
7. How has the RA been incorporated into school policies and processes?
    a. Evidence? If so, collect relevant documents/policies
8. To what extent has implementation involved the whole of the school?
9. Since the introduction of the RA, are there any other kind of changes to the school that might have affected exclusions and school attainment? Prompt: being in special measures, new staff, change of school status?

Perceptions of success since the introduction of the RA

1. What impact has the RA had on the school?
    a. Will you continue to be involved with RA in the school? Why?
    b. Will you continue to work at the school? Why?
2. More specifically, what impact has the RA had on
    a. Pupil behaviour
    b. Staff-pupil relationships?
    c. Relationships between pupils?
    d. The overall climate for learning for (a) pupils? (b) staff?
    e. Absenteeism?
    f. School exclusions?

   g. The educational attainment of (i) individual pupils involved in conferences? (ii) the whole-school
3. What impact has the RA had on other outcomes? (well-being of pupils and staff, anything else they mentioned earlier in the interview)

Challenges and the future

1. What, if any, have been the challenges of implementing the RA in this school? (prompt: lack of staff involvement, difficulties making it a whole-school approach, lack of pupil engagement)
2. What, if anything, would you change about the way the RA has been used in this school?
3. What advice would you give to staff in other schools about implementing RAs?
4. How do you see the future of RAs in this school?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think I have missed?

Appendix 2: Interview guide: pupils

Background to the conference

1. What was the incident that led up to the group conference or meeting?
2. Who do you think was responsible for starting this incident?
3. How did you feel about coming to the group meeting? Prompts: was it your choice to come? Were you asked to come or told to come?

At the meeting

1. Who else was at the meeting?
2. What happened at the start of the meeting? How did the facilitators start the meeting off?
3. How did you feel at the start of the meeting when the facilitators introduced everyone and said what was going to happen?
4. Who spoke first, after the introduction? And then who spoke, in what order?
5. Do you remember what the other person said?
6. How did you feel when the other person was telling their version of what had happened?
7. Did you get to put your account of the story across?
8. How did you feel when you were telling your version of what happened?
9. Do you think that the other person was really listening to you?
10. What was it like to have other people in the room?
11. How did you feel when the other people spoke? (friends, family etc)
12. At the end of the meeting
13. Do you feel you were treated fairly at the meeting? Why is that? Prompts: were your ideas properly listened to by everybody? How did the other people treat you? Interviewer to mention them.
14. Was anything sorted out by the meeting? What? Why? Is it completely sorted, or do you think that things will continue in a bad way after this meeting?
15. What did you want or expect from the meeting? Did you think you would get it? And did you get what you wanted?
16. Did you make an agreement in the meeting? If so, what was it? And did the other person make an agreement, and if so, what was it?
17. On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely do you think it is that you will stick to what was agreed in the meeting? Has this agreement been carried out so far?
18. Do you think that these meetings are a good idea? Why is that?
19. Would you encourage other young people in a similar situation to yours to use a group meeting to sort things out?

In the longer-term

1. Thinking of NOW. Do you feel differently about what you did that caused this meeting to happen? Why is that?
2. Who do you feel was responsible for making the situation right/better?
3. How do you feel about coming into contact with the other person again?
4. As a result of the meeting, do you think that you are more or less likely to get into the same situation again with the same person? Or will it stay the same? Or might you get into a similar situation with someone else? Why is that?
5. As a result of the meeting do you think you get on better, worse or the same with other people at school?
6. As a result of the meeting do you think get on better, worse or the same with teachers?

7. As a result of all the meetings that take place in this school, is there more, less or the same amount of bullying in this school?
8. As a result of all the meetings that take place in this school, does the atmosphere feel better, worse or the same?

Background information

1. How old are you?
2. What year are you in?
3. Have you been involved in other meetings in the past? How many?
4. How would you describe your cultural background?
5. Have you been suspended from this school in the past? How many times?
6. Have you ever been permanently excluded from any school? How many times?
7. Do you ever bunk-off school? Roughly how many times per week?

Thanks for your help. We would like to speak to you again in a few weeks to see how things are going on in the longer term. Would that be OK?

Appendix 3: Information sheet: staff

INSTITUTE FOR CRIMINAL POLICY RESEARCH
An evaluation of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Bristol (RAiS)

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STAFF

The Institute for Criminal Policy Research at King's College London would like to invite you to take part in an evaluation of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Bristol.

Who is funding the study and what is it about?
The Esmee Fairburn Trust and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation have asked us to conduct this research:
To learn about staff and pupil's experiences of taking part in a restorative conference.
To examine if restorative approaches improve the climate for learning, reduce school exclusions and improve educational attainment.

What will taking part involve?
If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed by a researcher. The interview will take place at a mutually convenient time and place, probably in school. The interview will last about 1 hour and we will ask you questions about your experiences of implementing restorative conferences and their impact on the climate for learning, school exclusions and educational attainment. If you agree to be interviewed, we will ask for your permission to record the interview. Recordings of interviews will be wiped once they have been transcribed.

Will anyone know that I have taken part?
The interview is confidential. We will not tell anyone that you have taken part in an interview, and we will not collect any information that will identify you. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You should only take part if you want to. Choosing not to take part will not affect you in any way. If you decide to take part, you are free to leave the interview at any time and without giving a reason. If you change your mind about taking part after the interview, you can ask us not to use the information you have given us. In this case, you need to tell us by 30th November 2008. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep.

How can I find out more about this study
If you would like to know more about this study or would like to take part please do not hesitate to contact Dr Layla Skinns on 0207 7848 1759. Dr Skinns can also be contacted if this study has harmed you in any way.

Appendix 4: Information sheet: pupils

INSTITUTE FOR CRIMINAL POLICY RESEARCH
An evaluation of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Bristol (RAiS)

INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS/ LEGAL GUARDIANS

The Institute for Criminal Policy Research at King's College London would like to invite you to take part in an evaluation of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Bristol.

Who is funding the study and what is it about?
The Esmee Fairburn Trust and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation have asked us to conduct this research:
To learn about young people's experiences of taking part in a restorative conference.
To help them understand if restorative approaches improve the climate for learning, reduce school exclusions and improve educational attainment.

What will taking part involve?
If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed by a researcher. The interview will take place in school. The interview will last about 45 minutes and we will ask you questions about your experiences of restorative conferences. If you agree to be interviewed, we will ask for your permission to record the interview. Recordings of interviews will be wiped once they have been written down.

Will anyone know that I have taken part?
The interview is confidential. We will not tell anyone that you have taken part in an interview, and we will not collect any information that will identify you. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You should only take part if you want to. Choosing not to take part will not affect you in any way. If you decide to take part, you are free to leave the interview at any time and without giving a reason. If you change your mind about taking part after the interview, you can ask us not to use the information you have given us. In this case, you need to tell us by 30th November 2008. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and we will ask you to sign a consent form.

How can I find out more about this study
If you would like to know more about this study or would like to take part please do not hesitate to contact Dr Layla Skinns on 0207 7848 1759. Dr Skinns can also be contacted if this study has harmed you in any way.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM
INSTITUTE FOR CRIMINAL POLICY RESEARCH
An evaluation of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Bristol (RAiS)

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Thank you for considering to take part in this research. I am one of the researchers from ICPR conducting interviews for this project.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

I have read and understood the information sheet and agree to be interviewed.

I understand that I am free to stop the interview or observation at any time, without giving a reason.

I understand that if I later change my mind about taking part, I can ask that information about me is not used in the study. I can ask this at any time until 30th November 2008.

I give permission for my personal information to be used for this research study. I understand that this information will only be seen by researchers at ICPR. If the researchers decide to use any of the information I have given them then they can do so but without making any reference to me personally. I understand that the researchers will keep and look after my information in a way that meets the standards of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Participant's Statement:

I _____

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Researcher's Statement:

I_____
Confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the participant.

Signed_____ Date_____

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM (if young person is under 16 years of age)

INSTITUTE FOR CRIMINAL POLICY RESEARCH
An evaluation of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Bristol (RAiS)

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and prior to your child being interviewed.

Thank you for providing consent for you child to take part in this research. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please contact the researcher before your child is interviewed.

I have read and understood the information sheet and agree for my child to be interviewed.

Parent's Statement:

I _____

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to consent to my child taking part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Appendix 5: Why did the schools agree to use RAs?

Brislington

Senior staff at Brislington said that they decided to implement restorative approaches to help reduce fixed-term exclusions in line with national targets. It was also felt that RAs fitted in with the school ethos on improving the quality of relationships and would contribute to a dialogue between adults and pupils in the school. Implementation was whole-school as RAs were written into the school behaviour policy which applied to the whole of the school. The use of detention as a sanction was stopped and Heads of Year were empowered to contribute to decisions regarding a continuum of actions to deal with pupil behaviour e.g. picking up litter, making contact with the parent or using a restorative conversation or conference. Brislington set up a triad of support involving a Support Assistant, Learning Mentor and a Head of Year who were all trained to level 2. This 'triad' met once a week with the Champion to talk about specific year groups and to make decisions about how to deal with particular students. Brislington sometimes used restorative conferences for reintegration after exclusion and used RAs in the internal exclusion room. Brislington also trained pupils as peer mentors, two staff members as RA trainers and continued to use RAiS for continued support.

Bedminster

At Bedminster, senior staff emphasised that RAs were not adopted to reduce exclusions, but to bring about a deep change in the culture of the school around conflict and communication break-down. RAs were adopted to make students accountable for their actions as part of a two-pronged approach to developing positive behaviour management. Bedminster were a pilot school for SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning). This involved developing emotional literacy skills in pupils by building learning activities into lesson plans. At the time of the fieldwork, the school were beginning their one-year cycle of development, focusing on attitudes and values. In the longer-term, the school planned to review and fine-tune all their behaviour policies and put RAs at the centre of it. Bedminster did not use RAs in their inclusion room but were considering doing so in the future.

Hengrove

According to the RJ Champion, at Hengrove, RAs were adopted to improve behaviour and communication. Restorative conferences had been used mainly to deal with low-level incidents involving friendship breakdown and had been used for reintegration after exclusion. RAs were also used in the internal exclusion room. A few teachers who were trained to level 2 trained used a 'think sheet' in the classroom as an alternative to sending students out. Pupils were asked to think about their behaviour and how they were going to restore the harm.

A whole-school approach was not used at Hengrove, as RAs were not integrated into the structure of the school. The school also had a change of head early during implementation. RAiS worked with an a Champion who was a support worker rather than being in senior or middle management, as was the case in the other schools. This meant that the Champion did not have access to information about serious behaviour incidents and serious conferences. If there was a behaviour issue it was dealt with by a behaviour management worker using a fixed-term or internal exclusion. RAs were not used instead of exclusions. Due to the Champion's many roles and heavy workload she did not have the capacity to

convene conferences herself. Any conferences that were conducted were convened by RAiS staff.

Hartcliffe

When RAIS first started work at the school, many conferences were conducted by the RaiS project worker. The RAiS Project Manager and the Champion started to write a restorative behaviour policy together. In it there was an option to use a restorative process in place of fixed-term exclusions. A change in leadership meant that this behaviour policy was discontinued and it was eventually re-written by the new Head who did not incorporate RAs. This has meant RAs are used in pockets of the school by particular staff who are trained to level 2. These pockets include classrooms, detentions and the internal inclusion room. Conferences have also been used for disputes and bullying incidents. In addition, pupils have also been trained as peer mentors.