

The Restorative School

Looks like, feels like, sounds like

If you walked into a restorative school and stayed long enough to see how things are done, what would you expect to see, hear and feel? What would be striking about the environment and the way people interacted?

The following list has been generated from conversations with schools and educational institutions in varying countries and settings; all schools that are on the restorative journey, in various states of implementation. Some schools have been on the path for many years, others are relative newcomers. We hope in time that this list may become more comprehensive as we learn more about successful implementation and the management of whole of school change around school improvement. Use the following as a checklist to assess how far along the journey your school might be.

	Not Often	At Times	Usually	Always	Comments:
Values, Attitude and Climate					
The attitude to learning and behaviour from both teachers and learners is unfailingly positive.					
Difficult moments are regarded as educational opportunities, indeed, as teachable moments.					
The school values are clearly defined for adults, students and parents in terms of expected behaviours. These behaviours are explicit, taught, known and modeled by all adults.					
Offending behaviour is viewed as a breach of relationships, against school community values.					
There is an inclusive approach to teaching and behaviour with the system striving to keep students at school. • There is an attitude of persistence among staff, parents and students that means that the school is unwilling to give up on difficult students or want to get rid of them at the earliest opportunity. Young people are not demonized. • The school sees its role as a partner in child rearing with families- not always an equal partnership, but the school is prepared to step up nonetheless.					

Comments:					Always	Usually	At Times	Not Often
Values, Attitude and Climate <i>(continued)</i>								
The school is the hub of its local community both physically and metaphorically. - Strong, positive, collaborative relationships are evident between the school, local police, local authorities/councils, local agencies, local businesses and community groups. - There is a whole of community approach to tackling the issues for young people and their families. This is seen as a shared responsibility and a challenge that the school embraces, rather than shies away from.								
There is a recognition that, and commitment to, the notion that positive, robust relationships lie at the heart of learning and pedagogical practice, of wellbeing and a sense of belonging and connectedness; and all decisions, structures, policies and procedures reflect this understanding.								
There is an understanding of the need to restore relationships in the aftermath of a conflict and wrongdoing or major incidents within the school. This is reflected in practice with the focus of problem-solving around the damage that needs to be fixed rather than the rule breach that needs to be punished and is solution focused.								
There is a comfortable marriage between the values of the school and the values of a restorative approach to problem-solving.								
Leadership is values-based and transformational, and leaders walk the talk, and model the required change.								
The school regards itself as a learning organisation, committed to continual improvement. - Data is used effectively to inform discussion, debate and problem solving. - Data is used to address gaps and reality is regularly interrogated.								
Visitors to the school are treated with respect, approached with a friendly greeting from students and adults, and are made to feel welcome.								

	Not Often	At Times	Usually	Always	Comments:
Values, Attitude and Climate <i>(continued)</i>					
There is a high level of trust evident across and between members of the school and wider community.					
The school feels friendly, peaceful and polite.					
The school has a reputation for a focus on the positives, for its use of fair process, for academic excellence, for making a difference in the community. Enrolments might be increasing, rather than diminishing, and car park and supermarket conversation amongst parents, about the school, is positive.					
Everyone understands that the school community is never static, that the school membership is constantly altering and that what has worked for one cohort of students, may not work for the next. The school is pre-emptive, future focused, and welcomes change.					
There is clear and effective dialogue from the top down, bottom up and between staff, students, parents and anyone engaged with the school and community.					

Comments:					Always	Usually	At Times	Not Often
Links with Curriculum and Teaching and Learning								
The restorative philosophy is embedded in and integrated into quality teaching and learning with clear linkages between key initiatives, system imperatives, pedagogy and key competencies so it is not seen as an add on or stand alone initiative. The approach is seen as the 'glue' that enhances the core business of teaching and learning within the school community- a framework for best practice.								
As part of relationship skill development, teachers are skilled in basic, effective, innovative classroom management and pedagogy.								
Attention is paid to the quality of the relationships between learners as well as between teacher and learner, in recognition of the need for an optimal environment for learning- a sense of safety and belonging.								
The school has a stimulating emotional environment where interest and enjoyment are maximized for learners and teachers alike. • Impediments to this are appropriately addressed.								
Behaviour of learners is not seen as a separate issue to be managed outside the curriculum. • Regular class meetings are held to develop social and emotional competencies, self-regulation and whole-of-class responsibility for the climate in the classroom. • Students are explicitly taught the skills required to participate in such process and other restorative processes.								
There is effective communication and collaboration between pastoral care and curriculum roles (e.g. classroom teachers, deans, heads of house, syndicate leaders and heads of faculty/department) when behaviour issues arise in classrooms.								
Induction for new staff and learners is taken seriously and adequately resourced. There is a prominent focus on the restorative approach to problem-solving.								
Transitions for learners are well managed; between schools, within school from one year level to the next or between sub-schools and subject changes so that a strong sense of connectedness and/or closure is an outcome.								

Comments:					Always	Usually	At Times	Not Often
Links with Curriculum and Teaching and Learning <i>(continued)</i>								
A case management approach is taken to address issues around particular learners, with a preparedness to work on underlying issues as well as the symptomatic behaviours. The school is well connected to providers that can assist with student and family issues.								
Restorative practice/relationship competence is built into the school's appraisal, selection and recruitment processes.								

Comments:					Always	Usually	At Times	Not Often
Restorative Practice								
There is a well-developed continuum of practice that can be adapted readily to situations from serious to minor.								
The continuum is understood by learners, teachers, school administrators and parents and is outlined in staff and student handbooks.								
There is a whole school approach to the restorative philosophy and a consistency of practice and philosophy across the whole school (teachers, support staff and school administration) so that everyone understands why the restorative approach is used and can trust the systems in places.								
Addresses the harm from inappropriate behaviour and incidents in a way that:								
- Repairs harm in the aftermath of wrongdoing. - Addresses issues with all involved. - Focuses on what needs to happen to repair harm. - Embraces a diversity of solutions by understanding there may be many ways to solve a problem. - Works with those involved to find the best solution for what has happened.								
Deals with conflict and disruption in a timely manner.								
Looks at what needs to happen to prevent further harm.								
The overall focus is on developing positive relationships between students, teachers, parents and the wider community.								
This also means that energy is spent on developing social and emotional competence and positive behaviours so that young people have the capacity to engage effectively in restorative problem-solving.								
Both practice and practitioners are reflective and the school is intent on developing best practice.								
With combination of positive pressure and support, the adults are held accountable for their practice as professionals.								
Leaders have had intensive training in the range of restorative practices- they understand the philosophy and processes from the inside out.								
Restorative process becomes the default approach to problem-solving and leaders and middle managers lead by example with this approach.								

					Comments:
Not Often	At Times	Usually	Always		
Restorative Practice <i>(continued)</i>					
Learners are taught about the approaches to problem-solving so that they can actively and effectively participate. - Eventually there is evidence that they are using this approach to solve their own problems at school and at home. - Parents request restorative processes when there is a problem.					
Practice is adapted for particular settings within the school community (early years, primary, middle years, secondary & beyond, special needs, alternate settings).					
Staff conflict is acknowledged and acted on with a restorative approach, with all adults having a clear understanding of the need to model what we want from young people. (We must be prepared to use the same approach for the issues that arise for us). If the school does not have enough skill to manage such issues, then it must be prepared to access external help.					
There is an alignment of philosophy, policy and practice. Any behaviour management policy is framed in more positive terms such as ‘Relationship’ policy, ‘Care and Responsibility’ policy, or ‘Respect’ policy.					
Dialogue about learners, their families or staff issues shifts from blame to flexible problem solving evidenced in practice, language and actions. Problems are seen as opportunities to refine existing practice.					
Everyone’s voice is important, not just the voice of adults within the school community. There is more listening, and less telling.					
The school is very clear about what is negotiable and what isn’t in terms of rules, limits and boundaries in classrooms and playgrounds. - The learner experiences the school and the adults as firm, fair and flexible and the rules make sense to children and adults alike. - Boundaries are generated and abandoned as needed (Richmond, 2009).					

Comments:					Always	Usually	At Times	Not Often
Restorative Practice <i>(continued)</i>								
Roles have been re-negotiated around <i>who is responsible</i> for managing behaviour and learning issues to increase the involvement and responsibility of classroom teachers. - The person who owns the relationship with the troublesome student is central to the problem-solving and healing the relationship is a strong focus. - Middle managers are expected to take a restorative approach to problem-solving and this is built into their role statements.								
The issue of zero tolerance is viewed as ‘we don’t accept that behaviour in our school’, rather than one of excluding students based on their behaviour. Schools show this by taking the issue seriously and defaulting to a restorative approach where possible (e.g. using RP for drug issues rather than immediate no-negotiation exclusion).								
Professional development for adults takes a high priority and is resourced to reflect this. Not only around responding to new curriculum and system imperatives, but keeping ‘relationships’ front and centre, and that there is a balance between these two often-competing pressures.								
Collegial, professional relationships among staff have been developed and the dialogue reflects ‘the problem is the problem’ rather than regarding the difficult behaviours with deficit thinking and pathologising of young people and their families. Language used is solution-focused and avoids blame.								
Older students are skilled up to help sort lower-level/minor issues with younger students, supported by the adults in the school ready to step in if a matter requires their attention. Students do not do the work of the adults.								
There is adequate resourcing attached to implementation and maintenance. Key staff are allocated time to do more complex or serious cases; there might be a co-ordinator appointed to oversee implementation.								

Comments:					Always	Usually	At Times	Not Often
Restorative Practice <i>(continued)</i>								
There is a strategic plan within the school's annual plan that addresses RP implementation and maintenance and has its own defined budget.								
Attention is paid to follow-up, data collection and analysis. There is a data driven approach to problem-solving that is aimed at school improvement and addressing gaps in learning, behaviour and practice.								
In the case of performance issues, a restorative approach is the first option, before more serious sanctions become necessary. Problems are not left to fester and/or escalate.								