



Restorative Practice in our School Community

Welcome to Restorative Practice in Creagh College

Most of us are already using Restorative Practice in some way in our daily lives. When we seek to avoid conflict situations by “talking,” and finding ways to move forward productively, we are to a large extent using Restorative Practice (RP).

RP is fast becoming a popular approach to resolving conflict, and building relationships in all areas of life; from family, businesses, community organisations to international peace keeping. Creagh College is already reaping the benefits.

The approach is based around three key areas:

- 1. When an incident occurs, the focus is not on the offender, but on the harm that has been done to people and relationships.**
- 2. When harm has been done it creates a need for healing, it therefore creates obligations and responsibilities for all concerned.**
- 3. When moving forward, the offenders, victims and the school community all play their part in healing harm and putting things right so that all involved can move forward in a constructive way.**

What is involved in RP?

- Identifying situations where a negative behaviour might be likely to happen and having plans in place to reduce the risk of an incident.
- Identifying who is affected by an incident or behaviour, how they are affected and how their needs might be met afterwards.
- Ensuring open discussion/dialogue where the wrongdoer gains a real insight into the impact of their behaviour and is supported to repair the harm.
- Supporting those affected to meet with the wrongdoer, to voice their feelings safely and be part of the decision-making process to restoring a comfortable and safe learning environment.
- Allowing, where necessary, for family to be included in the process.
- Ensuring that support and care is provided for the wellbeing of the wrongdoer as well as the victim.

How is RP being used in Creagh College now?

Procedures for students who break our code of positive behaviour remain the same. Restorative Practice aims to facilitate less reliance on those procedures where possible. When a student and teacher engage in the RP process, learning will take place for everyone - student and teacher alike. Sometimes it may be necessary for external punishments to be administered and sometimes it won't. This is why for example, a one-day suspension might be given to a student who has worked with the RP process and learned from the incident, whereas the other student who hasn't engaged with RP and hasn't learned from the incident may need a longer suspension.

All staff are presently undergoing professional training in the use of RP in their classrooms. We now have a Restorative Practice team of teachers who meet on a voluntary basis, one lunchtime per week, to discuss and develop their skills. Together they explore ways to use some of the tools outlined below, and to support each other.

The members of this team are known as RP Buddies. Teachers and students can call on these RP buddies to try to solve a particular issue between any two members of our school community. Usually, through using the process of RP, a resolution is found which avoids the use of any external procedures. The most important thing is that learning occurs and the relationship is restored in a way which allows quality teaching and learning to continue in the classroom. Restorative Practice is practiced through the use of the following 5 questions:

Restorative Practice 6 Questions

- 1. What happened?**
- 2. What were you thinking of at the time?**
- 3. What have you thought about it since?**
- 4. Who has been affected and in what way?**
- 5. How could things have been done differently?**
- 6. What do you think needs to happen next?**

How will my child benefit?

Restorative practice is important because it shows us that not everything is one sided and it gives everyone a say in the outcome of a situation. Having RP in our school means your child belongs to a culture where he/she is more fully protected from negative situations/harm. In this culture, your child is supported to play a more positive and active role in managing their own behaviour. All students will be wrongdoers in an incident at some point in their school life (that incident will probably be minor), and all students will be victims of incidents also.

Should your child be the cause of any harm or wrongdoing;

- the focus will not be on them but on the “harm” that was done.
- they will learn more about the consequences of their decisions and actions, and therefore build skills to make better decisions in life.
- they will learn to see things from other points of view, how their decisions can cause hurt to others while other/alternative decisions could lead to more productive and positive outcomes for themselves and for all involved. They will learn to become more in tune with feelings of empathy. In this culture they will learn to build and maintain more positive and happy relationships in their lives.
- where necessary, you may be included in the RP process.

Should your child be the victim of any harm or wrongdoing;

- they may benefit from telling how the offence impacted on them, putting questions directly to the offender and having a say in what should happen next, perhaps receiving an apology and reparation. The process is entirely voluntary and interaction with the offender can be direct or indirect.
- the relationship has been restored to some degree and the root of the problem has been dealt with so that it should not reoccur. Your child is enabled to feel safe again.

We look forward to further developing our relationships in Creagh College and to creating a safe and nurturing learning environment for everyone.