EMBEDDING RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

Jo Warin and Rebecca Hibbin

MARCH 9, 2020

Contents

Acknowledgements

Embedding Restorative Practice in Schools

Executive Summary

This evaluative study has been concerned with understanding how schools with different educational contexts implement, sustain and embed Restorative Practice (RP). In addition, as a subsidiary research focus it has examined to what extent a whole-school approach is needed to embed RP; and how parents can be most effectively engaged and involved.

The findings have shown that schools implement RP in a variety of ways that are linked to the relational initiatives and 'fertile ground' already in existence within school, to support pupils and parents, and create a coherent strategy for implementing RP overall.

Schools sustain RP through an ongoing process of promoting expertise and understanding of RP in their staff base. Training, modelling and supervision as well as accessing Model of Good Practice institutions and Hubs of Support, helped schools to keep the momentum going within their individual contexts, and refine understandings of RP over time.

Evidence of embedded RP was seen in both behavioural measures of success such as reduced rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusion or increases in attendance, and also through sociocultural measures of success such as transferability into the community context or organisational change across the whole institution.

Taking a whole school approach that was led from Senior Leadership down through all staffing levels was central to embedding RP. While different settings had distinctly different ways of approaching and supporting RP in school linked to their unique socio-cultural outlook, contexts and established initiatives, a whole-school approach overall was key.

Schools saw creating a common language that supported this whole school ethos as being a fundamental part of embedded practice, and there were commonalities across settings in relation to this shared language. However, different schools also had distinctive ways of talking about and describing their practice that was linked to their whole-school ethos and outlook. It was this common language that helped them to signpost the relational constructs that were of specific value within their individual setting.

Barriers to effective RP varied between stakeholders. Principle barriers included:

- **For pupils:** Differences in the home school environment;
- **For teachers:** Time constraints and punitive-authoritarian attitudes;
- **For parents:** Parental engagement, understanding of RP and punitive attitudes;
- **For the organisation:** Clashes of value across the institution.

Parents were effectively engaged and involved in both RP and school in a variety of ways: explicitly through parental training; implicitly through pupil training; through a variety of communication strategies designed to support RP and manage behaviour; and by physically getting parents into school via the fertile ground provided by other initiatives, such as Celebration Assemblies and 'Meet Your Coach' days.

Ultimately, in the most embedded settings, relationships were at the heart of everything connected to RP in school. Behaviour management was achieved through relationship, harnessing the familiarity of close association and knowing the child on a meaningful basis over time.

A primary outcome of this research has been to demonstrate that RP cannot be effectively embedded as a superficial, bolt-on exercise in conflict resolution. Rather it is most powerfully applied in a preventative and pro-social manner that harnesses the fertile ground of other relational initiatives in school. In addition, it has shown how embedded RP avoids broad-brush and administrative systems of behaviour management through supporting an ethos of relational accountability and individualised action in school. Finally, it has mapped a pathway to relational initiatives that have high degree of longevity, supplanting the landscape of 'project-itis' that has typified schools in recent decades, with whole-school organisational change over time.

Aims of project

This research conducted over two years, examined the use of Restorative Practice (RP) in a variety of educational contexts: Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND); Primary; and Secondary Mainstream settings. RP sprang from its close cousin Restorative Justice (RJ) that was first used within Criminal Justice system to repair the harm caused between victims and offenders of crime. Howard Zehr (1990) was one of the founding proponents of RJ as an alternative to the traditional model of 'Retributive Justice', and the first to articulate a complete theory of RJ where he conceptualised crime as a violation of people and relationships rather than an offense against the state. Since this time, RJ has transitioned into other civil institutions including schools (Hopkins, 2011), where it has become reframed into a Restorative 'Practice'. This change of moniker reflects its application within educational rather than crime and justice focused contexts, and is perhaps also suggestive of the time, persistence and repetition required to meaningfully apply RP in school. The overall aim of the study has been to understand how RP supports schools in managing challenging behaviour and how schools can most effectively embed RP as a whole school ethic. In particular, the research has aimed to understand the different ways that schools in a variety of educational contexts effectively implement, embed and sustain RP in the systems, staff base, pupils and parents. It is this focus on the whole school community that we have tried to capture overall, to create a sense of how the school as an institution puts RP to use in a way that avoids the dangers of 'project-itis' where 'bolt-on' interventions are initiated and then fall away before, moving onto the next latest educational fad.

It is important to note that all of the schools in this study were undertaking excellent practice in RP in different ways. While some of them had not (as yet) managed to embed RP into their whole school systems and culture, they were clearly on a journey where they were working towards this outcome as a long-term aim: as suggested by one Head of a school in the very early stages, they were still at the stage of 'reminding each other what to do' because it was not as yet 'natural enough' to come automatically.

As a result, not all of the settings feature extensively within this report and we want to stress that this is not because they did not have the will or ability to embed RP over the long-term. Rather they were in the early stages of their individual journeys, and as a result less embedded levels of practice were observed. Consequently, this report will mainly focus on the lessons from a core group of settings that had very clearly achieved an embedded level of working with RP, as a direct result of their experience implementing and sustaining RP within their individual contexts over time.

Methodology

'Embedding RP in Schools' started life as a study that was local to the North West of England. However, due to barriers in recruiting sufficient schools in the local area, a more National approach to sample selection was required. Within the process of school recruitment, we came to recognise a National network of RP with good practice taking place in pockets around the country. It was this good practice that we were particularly interested

in examining, to capture the ways that particularly effective schools are able to sustain RP over the long term.

Ultimately, we were able to recruit a range of educational settings including 5 Primary Mainstreams, 2 Secondary Mainstreams, 1 Specialist SEN College, 1 SEND Academy and 1 Pupil Referral Unit with varying levels of experience of RP (see **Figure 1**). Three of these settings formed a 'Hub' of schools (**Settings 1-3**) in that they were located very close together and had embarked on their restorative journeys at the same time and in a co-ordinated fashion.

We established a democratic partnership approach between the research team and the key stakeholders, using a bespoke system of evaluation, RUFDATA, devised by Saunders (2000). The acronym is derived from seven evaluation components: Reasons and Purpose; Uses; Foci; Data; Audience; Timing; and Agency. The procedure requires the research team to collaborate with key stakeholders, the School Project Co-ordinators (SPCs), to identify and interpret the seven elements, providing a shared stake in the findings and a clear vision of purposes. Each participating school decided how we should examine RP in relation to their unique educational and socio-cultural contexts, resulting in the exploration of a range of themes chosen by themselves. These included: the impact of RP/THRIVE on attendance; staff and students understanding of RP; peer mediation strategies between pupils; parental involvement; support for students' emotional wellbeing and development; transfer of RP between older and younger pupils; the effectiveness of relational pedagogical classroom tools; the impact of RP on levels of physical aggression between pupils; the impact of RP on staff wellbeing; and the impact of Coaching Groups on whole school RP. This has resulted in a multi-dimensional research strategy including the use of questionnaires in some settings (this strategy has been of most use in baselining staff and parental understandings of RP), and focus groups and interviews in all settings, to explore the bespoke RUFDATA aims identified by each school.

We aimed to visit each setting on three occasions[1] conducting individual interviews and focus groups with senior leaders, mainstream class teachers and pupils. In a few instances, we were also able to interview parents. All interviews were semi-structured and based around themes emerging from the data in an iterative process between data collection and analysis in line with our Grounded Theory research methodology (Charmaz, 2006). Interview and focus group questions centred on: staff training; staff perceptions of RP; behaviour management strategies used in the school; the school exclusion policy; the impact of RP on the child and the staff members; the role of leadership; communication strategies; and parental engagement.

---

[1] For settings that were further afield on a National basis, a lighter touch approach was utilised, with a mixture of telephone interviews and physical visits taking place.

Figure 1: Duration of RP in each setting

School 1 Primary (Mainstream) 1 yr RP

School 2 PRU (SEN) 1 yr RP

School 3 Primary (Mainstream) 1 yr RP

School 4 Secondary (Mainstream) 2 yrs RP

School 5 SEN College 3/4 yrs RP, 6 mnths THRIVE

School 6 Primary (Mainstream) 5 yrs RP

School 7 Secondary (Mainstream) 6 yrs RP, 14 yrs Coaching Model

School 8 Primary (Mainstream) 9 yrs RP

School 9 SEN Academy 18 yrs RP
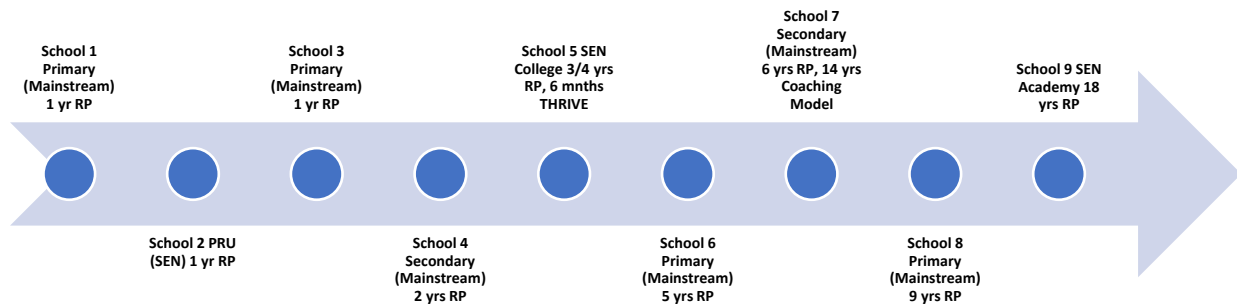
Analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data has been undertaken through the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory presented by Charmaz (2006) which advocates a principle of openness to the data and a method of constant comparison between findings and further stages of data collection. NVivo qualitative data software has been used to physically categorise and analyse the data set. An explicit part of the data collection strategy and also the analysis, has been to understand the implementation of RP in schools on the basis of a theoretical frame based upon preventative conceptions of RP in school, forwarded by McClusky et al (2008). This frame sees RP moving away from its roots within Restorative Justice as a form of conflict resolution (Braithwaite, 1989; Zehr, 1990) to an intervention that is supportive of more pro-social forms of engagement in school.

Settings were analysed on both an individual basis in relation to their specific RUFDATA aims, and also on a collective basis across the whole data set. This was achieved through the use of a highly structured coding frame that was common across all settings, whilst simultaneously analysing each setting on an individual basis. This approach utilising a coding frame that was both highly structured and yet mindful of bespoke RUFDATA aims, allowed within and between group differences and commonalities to emerge out of the larger qualitative data set. This allowed a coherent set of findings to emerge from a highly complex and differentiated research design based upon an individualised evaluative framework.

Research Questions

As suggested by McCluskey et al (2008) "when conceptualised within a theoretical framework which draws on a humanistic and person-centred perspective, combined with a strong sociological understanding of the complexities of schooling, restorative practices may be compatible both with current priorities and practices in schools and, importantly, also offer a stronger, more cohesive structure for these current priorities and practices" (p.212). It is this theoretical frame that we have transposed into the methodological considerations of this evaluation, to ask research questions that capture the tensions surrounding the

implementation of RP as a humanistic and person-centred approach within the highly variable and idiosyncratic context of schooling:

Primary RQ

- *How do schools implement, embed and sustain RP?*

Subsidiary RQs

- *How far is taking a whole-school approach necessary to the success of RP?*
- *How can parents be most effectively involved in RP?*

Findings: How schools implement, embed & sustain RP
Implementing RP: Fertile Ground

Schools implemented RP in a variety of ways. This was frequently connected with other initiatives they had previously implemented, so that RP was in effect 'retrofitted' onto other approaches. This 'fertile ground' was helpful in providing a congruent platform on which RP could be based, to both inform and support RP, enabling it to become even more firmly rooted within the relational ethos of the wider school.

The Coaching Model: Setting 7

The fertile ground in Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) was the Coaching model. This setting (that was also a 'through-school') had considerable experience of RP (6 years) and even more embedded practice in Coaching (14 years). The Coaching model is a relational approach to behaviour management, relational support and pro-social skill development. Coaching Groups are vertically structured small groups of 8-10, that pupils joined in Year 6 upon entering the Secondary phase of education and stayed in for the duration of their time at school. As well as being part of the same small group of peers, pupils also kept the same Coach during this time, who could be a member of the teaching, pastoral, management, administrative or caretaking staff base.

As such the Coaching Model can be understood as both an environment that promotes and supports the development of relationships over time as well as a mechanism through which RP can be employed on a non-hierarchical basis across the school by pupils, teachers and non-teaching staff alike, through a mechanism we are terming a 'Distributed Network of Relational Accountability'. In addition, the deliberate promotion of exposure to diversity within these vertically structured Coaching Groups, provided pupils with pro-social learning opportunities that were likely to be largely unavailable in traditional school and social groupings.

THRIVE: Settings 2 & 5

In Setting 2 (**PRU - Hub School**) and Setting 5 (**Specialist SEN College**), an attachment focused neuro-developmental approach called THRIVE was used to help children calm down when they were in a state of heightened emotion. THRIVE utilised (often play-based) individualised practical strategies focused upon the needs of the child, and in this respect the approach shared much in common with RP, that when used to best effect focuses on individualised behaviour as communication and knowing the child. In Setting 2, THRIVE had come before the introduction of RP.

In contrast, in Setting 5 RP had been in existence for some time before the use of THRIVE which was a new approach that was described by staff members as working 'alongside' RP, where THRIVE was used to help pupils calm down, after which RP could then be used to repair and restore relationships and encourage pupils to be accountable for their behaviour. This was due to a perception of RP being "a bit wasted on the ones who can't emotionally regulate" due to a difficulty understanding the impact of their behaviour on others and "how to move forward from it, or why [they're] doing it, or why it's wrong" (**SLT/Setting 5**).

Joined-up and informal RP: Setting 4

In Setting 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**), the sociocultural context necessitated a holistic approach where organisations outside of school also utilised RP so that pupils experienced a restorative approach in a variety of contexts. In this setting, the school, the local youth club and also the police, all utilised RP and worked together to create a joined-up approach and a consistent level of exposure to RP overall. This was particularly necessary in the context of high knife crime and gang culture in the surrounding locality. In addition, this setting talked about people in school "doing it naturally for years" and that the formal introduction of RP in school had just given it "a name" and a "label" allowing it to become "centrally done" (**Safeguarding Team/Setting 4**).

Rounded and Grounded Framework: Setting 8

In Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) the fertile ground included home grown initiatives that were used to link RP to a wider school ethos. One such initiative was the Rounded and Grounded Framework (RGF: Tomlinson 2010; In Hibbin & Warin, 2019) – a framework of prosocial behaviours and attitudes for learning based on the work of Claxton (2002). The RGF was presented on a large wall display in each classroom enabling the class teacher to refer to it throughout the school day. The rationale for its use was to highlight both positive and negative behaviours that children displayed at different times, or the kinds of learning that they wanted to see. In addition, it gave teachers a pedagogical mnemonic to support teaching, and the children a language and understanding of the emotional attributes that the school was trying to develop and instil. This seemed to be explicitly tied to RP, in that the use of inquiring language through restorative questioning was supported by the scaffolded language found in the RGF.

Parental Buy-in: Setting 3

In Setting 3 (**Primary Mainstream – Hub school**) the fertile ground could be understood as the very careful approach to securing parental buy-in that was taken when RP was first introduced. This setting was one of the most striking in terms of the fact that they had been using RP for a matter of months, making remarkable progress in that time. This is particularly notable due to the challenging context that the new Head Teacher had inherited, where the culture of the school was geared to the appeasement of parents and pupils in the context of highly challenging behaviour, and the staff could be understood as not been fully in control of the school. As a result, parental readiness and buy-in was identified as a key factor in ensuring that RP in school did in fact fall on fertile ground. This was achieved through strategies that were aimed at 'managing the parents' and building relationships with them, the most notable of which was a strong and accessible presence with "upwards of ten staff with high vis jackets on [the gate] before and after school" (**Head/Setting 3**), to field issues as they came up, and invite parents into school where more meaningful one-to-one work could then take place. This was coupled with a recognition and perception of parents as sometimes vulnerable, struggling and needing to offload.

Sustaining RP: Staff expertise

As a very general rule of thumb, schools sustained RP through expertise within their staff base. This was achieved in different ways depending upon the shape of RP in each setting: in some settings expertise was distributed across the whole staff base; in others there was a more centralised approach taken to the training of staff, and an associated expectation that knowledge would 'trickle down' to the wider staff base.

Modelling and supervision: Settings 8 & 9

In Setting 9 (**SEND Academy**) an approach to expertise took the form of a highly trained 'Gallery Team' of 3 staff who delivered the bulk of RP in school in the absence of teaching responsibilities, particularly in relation to more formal RP mediations. The Gallery Team received monthly supervision with a staff member who had significant previous experience of therapeutic approaches resulting from employment in a specialist residential partner school. This partner school ran a Foundation Degree in Therapeutic Work with Children and Young People, that the Gallery Team staff members at Setting 9 were enrolled onto as additional CPD.

This high level of expertise was seen at other settings with embedded practice; in particular Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) had a distributed model of expertise that enabled teaching and support staff to manage pupil needs in-class, through compulsory supervision for Class Teachers and for Teaching Assistants (TAs) through the school's Nurture and Care Team. This was in recognition of the difficulties and uncertainty that teaching staff can face when working with particularly complex pupils, resulting in them "feeling helpless" (**Nurture & Care Team/Setting 8**). Supervision was viewed as being a fundamental element of Setting 8s success in sustaining RP and relational approaches more generally in school, as a direct result of the circumscribed opportunities for reflection that it presented, that were separate from the day-to-day pressures of teaching, learning and mediating in school:

Nurture & Care Team/Setting 8: *"I think supervision whether it's group or individual…is key to all of what we do….it's only when I sit in the chair with my supervisor that I think, oh that's why I did that, that's what's happening.. And all of that stuff's really valuable for you to go back with a new set of eyes almost or kind of refreshed to start again….Because it's boundaried…."*

An apprenticeship model was also supported and encouraged in Setting 8 through opportunities for modelling and observation. This enabled staff members to gain a tacit and embodied understanding of RP by building up a "bank of confidence and understanding" (**Nurture & Care Team/Setting 8**) through exposure to different children and behaviours. Once again, this was in recognition of the difficulty that newer staff members had in fully 'getting' RP on a tacit level, and also the uncertainty that could be produced when moving away from more traditional forms of behaviour management.

Models of good practice: Settings 4, 5 & 7

In all of the schools with the most embedded practice in RP there was evidence of them working with external organisations and other schools to model their approach and provide

support within the community. In this way, they behaved as 'models of good practice' to other organisations aiming to mirror their approach. Settings 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 were all notable in this respect in a variety of ways, from working with community provision for refugee families in relation to trauma (**Setting 8/Primary Mainstream**), to undertaking CPD with, and supervision for, other schools (**Setting 9/SEND Academy**). However, three settings stood out in terms of the links they had made with other schools over time:

- Setting 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**) attempted to address the need for early intervention and transitions from other contexts that did not have a grounding in RP through the training of both teachers and Year 6 pupils in local schools, in the methods of iPEACE mediation (Cremin & Bevington, 2017). Importantly, the training of Year 6 pupils was undertaken by Peer Mediators (pupils trained to deliver RP to other pupils), giving the Peer Mediators the opportunity to embed and reflect on their own practice.
- Setting 5 (**Specialist SEN College**) aimed to transform the model of out-reach where specialist provision would go into local schools and support "one child, taking that child out of the classroom and doing an intervention, and then putting him back in again" (**Head/Setting 5**), through a long-term programme of 'in-reach'. This was seen as being required to break the cycle of exclusion from mainstream through specialist support, encouraging schools to keep pupils in mainstream, rather than relying on specialist provision to parachute in and take over. In the long term this would encourage specialist provision to be reserved for the most complex cases, and also that expertise is transferred from SEND to the mainstream context.
- Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) was a model of good practice in RP on a national basis where other schools would be directed to them as a school that put the theory provided by the trainers into practice as a working model of highly embedded RP in school. As a result of their "working at a pitch and depth" (**Head/Setting 7**) that was over and above anything they could find in terms of consultancy, Setting 7 was creating a sustainable model of CPD in RP that extended across the whole organisation.

Hubs of support: Settings 1, 2 & 3

Three of the schools in the study were located within close proximity to each other and as a result they created a 'hub of support' in implementing RP. Setting 1 (**Primary Mainstream**), Setting 2 (**PRU**) and Setting 3 (**Primary Mainstream**) had all embarked on their respective restorative journeys together, undertaking training with each other and visiting a Model of Good Practice school some distance away. This collaborative approach had taken place in concert with the Local Education Authority that had identified leaders in local schools expressing an interest in following an attachment-based approach. As a result, an Inclusion Steering Group was formed, with the explicit aim of supporting children and young people that had "negative experiences…around abuse, around relationships and…how that was impacting on their behaviours in school" (**Head/Setting 2**). This hub of support provided participating schools with a valuable resource for practice sharing, reflection and moral

support more generally, as well as spreading the cost of training when it took place within a consortium of schools at the start of their implementation journey.

Embedding RP: Behavioural measures of success

Measures of success varied from setting to setting depending on the individualised sociocultural context that encompassed schools, and the issues they hoped that RP would help to resolve. In many of the schools, success was viewed in broadly relational terms and could be understood in terms of the pastoral issues that were particularly salient within each school.

Physical aggression: Setting 4

In Setting 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**), one of their RUFDATA aims was to get an indication of the degree to which RP had impacted upon levels of pupil violence and conflict. As a school in an urban setting with high levels of knife crime and gang violence in the surrounding locality, this was an understandably salient and pressing aim. The data from interviews and focus groups with pupils, peer mediators and staff members painted a similar picture overall, where there was broad agreement that over the two years that RP had been implemented, pupil aggression had been significantly reduced to the level of verbal rather than physical conflict. In addition, pupils and teachers reported that such conflict could be more easily de-escalated by RP before an actual fight took place.

Bullying: Setting 3

In Setting 3, success was more quantitively measured by metrics tracking the incidence of bullying in school over a period of time, as part of a wider system of tracking and monitoring the impact of RP since it had been introduced in the previous year:

Figure 2: Incidents of bullying over one term

Sept-Nov 19	Total	Resolved	Current cases
All	16	10	6
Bullying	13	8	5
Racial	1	1	0
Homophobic	0	0	0
Online	2	1	1
Gender	0	0	0
Disability	0	0	0

The average time to resolve a concern in Setting 3 was indicted to be approximately 6 weeks from start to finish, with much of the time resolution of the original concern taking place within a week with an extended period of monitoring to avoid reoccurrence. This tracking of specific relational issues allowed a detailed examination of the extent to which RP was

impacting upon particular areas of concern, as well as ensuring that children remained safe and happy in school and incidents of bullying did not slip under the radar.

Attendance: Setting 5

In Setting 5 (**Specialist SEN College**) success was measured by their RUFDATA aim of reducing non-attendance which was a persistent issue in a SEN school located within an area of considerable urban disadvantage and deprivation. The complexity of the social issues surrounding this setting meant that they had an uphill struggle getting the pupils through the door, to deliver the interventions that enabled them to get to the root of why they weren't attending in the first place. Nonetheless it was felt that the use of THRIVE and RP had impacted positively on pupils' attendance overall.

Safeguarding: Settings 3 & 7

Another key measure of success that was noted by a number of settings related to the ability of RP to help schools identify specific instances where pupil's wellbeing and safety was in question. In particular, in Setting 3 (**Primary Mainstream**) the use of check-ins and the Emotion Triangles (see p.19) provided children with opportunities to make disclosures that had resulted in teachers reporting "some significant safeguarding" that they "may not have picked up" (**Class Teacher/Setting 3**) without the use of these relational in-class tools and practices.

Similarly, in Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) the Coaching Model was linked to safeguarding through the emotionally safe space that the Coaching Groups created, resulting in much higher levels of disclosure. This Coaching-safeguarding bridge was viewed as a fundamental element of the Coaching Model in Setting 7, and the resulting high numbers of cases that the school had to field necessitated the use of a dedicated Safeguarding Team of 6 people in school, whose sole role was to pick things up "early into the life of the problem to stop it becoming a serious issue" (**Head/Setting 7**). As a result, high safeguarding levels were viewed in Setting 7 as representing a behavioural measure of success.

Exclusions: All Settings

In many of the settings, perhaps unsurprisingly, the rate of fixed-term and permanent exclusions was the central metric by which the overall success of RP was couched. In many of the settings – particularly the ones in which RP was deeply embedded – rates of both levels of exclusion were widely reported to have significantly reduced, or in the case of permanent exclusions, to not take place at all. This was generally seen as a policy decision where a will to not exclude was linked to organisational change and innovative ways of working that were supportive of RP.

In schools that still felt the need to exclude in some capacity, the "massive reduction in fixed-term exclusions" (**Head/Setting 7**) from 250 per year to 14 that was reported in Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**), was pinned directly to the use of RP and a broader relational ethos in school, that qualitatively changed the way that exclusion was used in school. As a result, fixed-term exclusion in embedded settings changed from a broad brush and frequently applied approach to behaviour management, to a more targeted and rarely

used attempt to try and "engage parents or as a message to the child", or for the purposes of "health and safety" (**Head/Setting 7**) of the pupil, rather than a punishment.

Embedding RP: Sociocultural measures of success

Sociocultural measures of success were observed in settings with the most embedded practice in RP in terms of transferability, contiguity and change across the whole organisation.

Transferability: Settings 4, 5, 7 & 8

Transferability of RP beyond the boundaries of school was generally observed in all settings with embedded practice, where RP would 'ripple out' to others in the community in a natural manner, with teachers modelling RP in the social context of friends and family.

In some settings this transferability was more explicitly encouraged so that everyone could be 'on the same page', and strategies used in school could be reinforced at home to achieve consistency across contexts. This kind of parental buy-in was seen as an outcome that required both time and support, and was achieved in Setting 5 (**Specialist SEN College**) through a programme of parental training in THRIVE, and in Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) through a Family Links Parenting Programme where parents could access training and practical strategies, as well as providing a forum for them meet other parents for mutual support.

Settings 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**) and 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) took a different approach to transferability through the training of Peer Mediators and RP Reps. Here it was hoped that the transfer of restorative principles to the home context could be achieved through a process that was explicit in terms of pupil training, while being simultaneously implicit in terms of RP rippling out to the wider community, in a more natural and tacit manner:

Coaching Lead/Setting 7: *"I think what we have found is that the training the pupils are given is then taken home and discussed... and we have pupils telling us stories that they sit their siblings down or they sit their parents down to hold restorative conversations if there's been fall-out at home. So, there is the overlap which, you know pupils are getting the training in school and it's being taken home."*

Organisational change: Setting 7

In Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) one of the most salient measures of success was seen in a number of previously disaffected pupils who had managed to 'break the cycle' and return to the school as members of the teaching staff. Relatedly, the organisational change that had developed at Setting 7 over 14 years of Coaching was suggestive of an environment that was supportive of staff and pupil wellbeing on a fundamental basis. The connection created through the ritual of sitting in a circle with the same Coaching Group over time is difficult to underestimate; as described by one pupil, Coaching circles "can lift your emotions in a positive way because you have personal connections to certain people, and maybe even to everybody" (**Year 7 Pupil/Setting 7**).

Due to the fact that Coaching Groups took place at every level of school from senior leadership and staff circles first thing on a Monday morning, to pupil circles three times a week, it is likely that this impact on wellbeing was similarly experienced by staff members. Teachers in Setting 7 reported high morale and staff "never [going] away not wanting to come back the next day" (**Class Teacher/Setting 7**); as observed by a parent of a child attending Setting 7 "the figures around staff absence are very telling" (**Parent/Setting 7**). Such outcomes "opens up a conversation…around wellbeing of staff, and anxiety and stress and work-load" in terms of the impact of Coaching in particular, and relational approaches more generally, on the organisational culture of the whole school (**Coaching Lead/Setting 7**).

Taking a whole-school approach: Senior Leadership driving embedded RP

The whole school nature of embedded RP was one of the most salient aspects of creating a preventative and prosocial culture in school. To a large extent, the degree to which this was or was not the case was dependent on senior leadership and RP being driven and embedded from the top, down. In settings where this hadn't been the case, RP could not be sustained over time, regardless of the passion, courage and conviction of the key individuals delivering it on the ground.

As a result, in the most embedded settings RP was an explicit part of recruitment and retention where everybody knew that "if you're not working restoratively, there's going to be a problem" (**Head/Setting 9**). In addition, staff buy-in was intrinsically linked to the time taken to train people up (particularly more resistant members of staff) and then become accustomed to the new systems.

In each of the settings with an embedded approach to RP, a whole school ethos was discernible in terms of systems or attitudes that were strongly supportive of a relational approach overall. Many of these systems and attitudes were present to some extent in every setting. However, the socio-cultural configuration of individual settings was often markedly strong in certain areas, resulting in settings having distinctive approaches that ultimately defined the shape of their practice overall. It is this whole school ethos in embedded settings that we will now describe in more detail.

Promoting a non-punitive ethos: Settings 8 & 9

A central pillar of whole school buy-in related to the wider culture of the school, and the values that were placed by senior leadership on outcomes and ways of implementing RP. As already described, a policy of no permanent exclusions was pursued in settings that chose to promote a non-punitive approach to behaviour management as a fundamental identifier of values. In Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**), the value placed on a non-punitive approach extended to the school describing itself as being entirely 'punishment-free'. This was due to the perceived negative psycho-social impact of punitive sanctions that it saw as being non-supportive, shaming, labelling, silencing, and undermining of pupil trust, confidence and self-esteem. These negative impacts were viewed as affecting the whole school community, with parents being subjected to a kind of 'secondary trauma' resulting from their son or daughter being framed as a 'naughty child'.

Setting 8 had a nuanced understanding of the difference between punitive sanctions (punishments), versus nurturing and relational sanctions (consequences). This hard-won understanding was to a large extent a result of the resistance they had experienced through defining themselves as 'punishment-free' as well as widely held popular notions of 'consequences' being "a little bit woolly" (**Restorative Trainer/Supplementary Data**). As a result, Setting 8 had managed to embed a highly refined understanding of consequences as being positive, supported, individualised, variable and non-arbitrary opportunities for learning and intrinsically motivated behaviour. In terms of variability, there was a clear

strategy of stopping "and trying something else" (**Class Teacher/Setting 8**) if one consequence wasn't working.

This use of supported consequences was similarly evident in Setting 9 (**SEND Academy**), through offering pupils alternatives and avoiding the 'language of loss' through only a partial loss of rewards. It is also worth noting that in both these settings there was much less emphasis upon a complex system of rewards which tended to be more celebratory and relational in character rather than trying to 'bribe' children with what were perceived to be inauthentic prizes for compliance. For example, the use of a 'Head Teachers Lunch' which was "a bit like a mad hatter's tea party – it's fun" (**Head/Setting 9**), was used as a motivating and relational reward in Setting 9.

A 'Distributed Network of Relational Accountability': Setting 7

In Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**), the whole school ethos rested upon the use of Coaching Groups to create a system of behaviour management that simultaneously prioritised a 'whole school ethic of care' (Warin, 2017) alongside a 'Distributed Network of Relational Accountability' where everyone - pupils, teachers and non-teaching staff alike - were expected to take responsibility for behaviour. At the heart of this system was a deep commitment to positive and respectful relationships across school and over time, as well as a mechanism through which RP could be employed on a non-hierarchical basis. A metaphor that was used to describe this process was 'passengers into crew' where pupils were celebrated and nominated for a range of awards and badges for their collaborative and prosocial achievements. In addition, older pupils could help out within their individual Coaching Group by becoming Assistant Coaches; and some pupils were restoratively trained as RP Reps to help teachers with disruptive peers who were presenting an in-class behavioural challenge. This use of RP Reps enabled teachers to continue teaching, and also created a culture where high expectations were enacted at every level within school.

Another aspect of the whole school approach in Setting 7 was the exposure to diversity that was afforded through Coaching. This was achieved through the vertical structure of Coaching Groups where pupils would join in Year 6 and stay in the same group for their whole time in the Secondary phase of school. This meant that younger pupils were mixed in with older pupils, enabling barriers between age groups to be broken down in positive ways. A considerable amount of time and thought was given to social composition so that pupils from different backgrounds were given the opportunity to mix resulting in a "genuine, diverse community" (**Coaching Co-ordinator/Setting 7**) and pro-social opportunities for learning that were likely to be largely unavailable in traditional school and social groupings. This ethos in relation to diversity was further reinforced and supported through the RP Reps where non-traditional students that were "not any kind of specific type or cohort of kid" (**Coaching Co-ordinator/Setting 7**), would frequently be chosen to become Reps if they had managed to become a positive role-model over time.

Teaching and non-teaching staff were trained to deliver their own Coaching Groups. The rationale of this approach was two-fold. On the one hand it was a necessary and pragmatic way to support the delivery of small Coaching Groups of 8-10 pupils across the Secondary phase of a school. On the other hand, it was a strategic way to ensure consistency across the

whole school so that every individual that pupils had contact with was well-versed in Coaching and the relational/RP ethos of the whole school. This consistent approach - one that we have seen used in therapeutic residential settings for children with very complex needs (Warin & Hibbin, 2016b) – had the effect of instilling high levels of trust in staff members, with associated impacts in relation to confidence, wellbeing and individual empowerment, as well as reconfiguring the power dynamics of more traditionally hierarchical organisational structures in school:

LSW/Setting 7: *"Because I'm a learning support worker… it gives me more confidence having my own group, you feel more equal in the school…cos it's not really obvious but there is sort of hierarchy in terms of different roles…it has felt like that at previous schools whereas when I came here - you get your own Coaching Group, it makes you feel like you have more impact …"*

Working across the community: Setting 4

A significant part of the approach taken in Setting 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**) related to working across the community with external partners through RP. Due to the unique sociocultural context of this school's locality where there were high levels of knife crime and gang culture in an urban context, a joined-up approach working alongside the Police was an important part of their whole school ethos. This approach was taken in situations where there were "real, major concerns" (**Deputy Head/Setting 4**) requiring the school to involve the Restorative Justice trained Police Partnership Team, or alternatively the Police team would request to see pupils in school. Teachers at Setting 4 described the quick turnaround where it was "literally inside a week and they're in" (**Class Teacher/Setting 4**). This prompt response allowed problems of a very serious nature, often concerning whole families, to be dealt with effectively, positively impacting "on families who could have been at war" (**Class Teacher/Setting 4**).

Youth and Community settings were also important partners in this setting, with a less formal approach to RP being used outside of school hours. When mediations between young people were required, an approach was taken involving a high level of preparation so that the rules of engagement during the formal mediation - speaking to each other respectfully, taking turns and not swearing - could be fully understood. This also enabled the young people to feel as if someone had "sat and listened….so they've had that time to rant" (**Police Team/Setting 4**):

Youth Worker/Setting 4: *"And I learnt that myself - take them both separately…. and go through the whole process with them. This is what happens, these are the questions, think about your answers….really give it a good thought because when it happens for real, you'll want to speak what's on your mind…"*

This approach was particularly important in a Youth and Community setting where all the age ranges were mixing and there was greater opportunity for conflict between older and younger individuals. In such instances the approach taken was one of careful preparation that extended to going through a practice run to avoid younger pupils 'freezing' and not knowing what to say when confronted with sometimes intimidating older pupils.

Children as gatekeepers: Setting 3

The whole school ethos in Setting 3 (**Primary Mainstream - Hub School**) related to the ownership and control that was given to pupils in helping them to signpost their feelings, through the use of check-ins, Emotion Triangles and the Alternative Traffic Lights that had been developed in school. In particular, the Emotion Triangles were developed by the Head Teacher at Setting 3, as a way "of kids physically recording throughout the day where their behaviour is" (**Head/Setting 3**). Pupils at Setting 3 were given a laminated triangle with:

- A green corner for feeling **happy**, **positive**, **supported**, **confident** and **ready to learn**;
- A yellow corner for feeling **OK**, **worried**, **unsure**, **upset** and **embarrassed**;
- And a red corner for feeling **cross**, **tearful**, **overwhelmed**, **furious**, **angry** and **sad**.

Pupils were also given their own personal peg with their name on, which they could place anywhere on the triangle to signpost the way they were feeling, to their teachers and also to their peers. They were encouraged to use the pegs to indicate the way they were feeling on the following parameters, depending on the issues they were dealing with at that time:

1) **Learning:** At the start and the end of each lesson;
2) **Check-in:** To support the formal class check-in at the start of the day/after lunch;
3) **Playtime/Friendships:** To reduce bullying and conflict between pupils;
4) **Home-life:** To encourage greater levels of safeguarding through disclosure.

The Emotion Triangles could therefore be best understood as a physical check-in over which the children had a much higher level of buy-in and control, in contrast to the traditional group check-in where pupils were asked to rate themselves emotionally on a scale, most often from 1-10. While group check-ins using numbers were generally considered useful for both pupil and teachers, there were also barriers in terms of the degree to which pupils had the 'affective literacy' to be able to accurately match their emotional state to a number. In addition, the extent to which pupils were always honest about the way they were feeling resulting from either avoidant or attention-seeking behaviour, was sometimes in question. In contrast the Emotional Triangles were seen as encouraging greater levels of honesty by providing pupils with a means of voicing their emotional state away from the larger group. Importantly, staff at Setting 3 indicated that they "had some significant safeguarding that [had] come about" (**Class Teacher/Setting 3**) as a direct result of the use of the triangles.

A second whole school feature of Setting 3 related to the use of an Alternative Traffic Lights system that similarly gave pupils a greater sense of control. Traffic Lights are a well-known and established behaviour management system used in the UK where teachers put pupils on different levels according to behaviour, frequently based on the colour coding of green for good behaviour, orange for warning behaviour and red for the poorest behaviour that may result in a sanction. The Alternative Traffic Lights was based on this tried and tested system but it differed in that pupils were never left on orange or red for more than a few minutes, and even if they did end up having to go to the 'Link Room' due to poor behaviour, once they came back in they were 'reset' back up to green again. As a result, they were continually being given opportunities to improve. In addition, control for pupils was further

enhanced through pupils acting as gatekeepers to the effective implementation of the overall approach, something that was clearly recognised by the pupils themselves:

Year 4 Pupil/Setting 3: *"The difference between the triangles and the traffic lights is you move your peg to orange or red to let the teacher know. But with the traffic lights, the teacher moves it…if you're being bad...but then if they don't move it back up to green in a few minutes, you can tell them, 'Miss, you've got to do something with me', and then they move it back again…"*

Creating a common language: Signposting organisational value

In every setting, emotional literacy and the development of empathy through helping pupils to attain an understanding of self and others, formed a strong part of each setting's whole school ethos. To a large extent these qualities – emotional literacy and promoting a sense of empathy through RP – were part and parcel of creating a common language across school so that everybody was 'speaking the same language' in relation to systems and attitudes in school. Certain elements of this common language were consistent across all settings:

- The use of the Restorative Questions used in both formal restorative mediations and also less formal, spontaneous 'corridor conversations';
- Talking about 'behaviour as communication' and 'knowing the child' to get to the root of poor behaviour;
- Framing sanctions in the language of positive and proactive 'consequences' rather than punitive and arbitrary sanction systems (although it is important to note that not every setting could comprehensively and accurately articulate the difference).

In addition, the check-ins were helpful in creating a consistent language for both teachers and pupils in terms of signposting where children were emotionally falling from day-to-day, and enabling pupils to become gatekeepers for their peer's mental health and wellbeing:

Safeguarding Manager/Setting 1 - Hub School: *"…we do get the children that will come up and say 'aw, he looks a three today'… 'can you speak to so and so, he's a two today'…and I think maybe that's helped us pick up on children who are struggling with things that we wouldn't have picked up on…"*

In other settings there was a more nuanced and idiosyncratic language that had developed across school over time, that was linked to the individual context and whole-school ethos. It was this shared language was useful for signposting organisational value in terms of the specific aspects of RP that were of particular salience within each setting. Evidence of a strong common language was most notably seen in the three settings that were most experienced in RP: Settings 7, 8 and 9, and it is these schools that we will focus on now.

Equity over equality: Setting 7

In Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) their common language was centred upon the concept of 'equity' where there was a strong belief in the importance of individualistic understanding and action, where "there's no, 'a child's done this and therefore the consequence has to be this'" (**Head/Setting 7**). The rationale for this approach centred upon the idea that in order to "keep relationships with children and build trust…have a sense of repair…a permission to make mistakes and learn from them" (**Head/Setting 7**), children need to be treated as individuals rather than running a consequence system where one-size-fits-all. This concept of equity of consequence over equality of sanction, was something that was well understood by teachers and pupils alike:

Coaching Co-ordinator/Setting 7: *"They get that….Kieran who's a kid he joined us in year eight…his exact words were 'Our Head bangs on about this equity versus equality thing. And do you know what, it actually works, it is true…I needed an extra boost at certain times…but I noticed that I got it when I needed it at key times" - the kids recognize that and you don't get a lot of 'if I'd have done that, that would have happened to me'….."*

The common language in Setting 7 that had developed through the use of Coaching and then RP could therefore be understood as individualised understanding and action through relationship and knowing the child and supporting pupils to be both accountable for their behaviour, while remaining safeguarded in the process.

Embodied Language: Setting 8

In Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**), the consistent language that had developed over time related to tacit understandings of RP in more experienced staff members, so that the language of the whole school was changed as a result:

Head/Setting 8: *"I think that's something that we don't realise as a school but that is striking for visitors, that our language structures are very different. And my mentor…he'll just say, hang on a minute, I just need that little bit of time just to immerse myself back in the language - because it is quite a different language set, really."*

This 'embodied language' was clearly something that was felt in the context of staff who had not as yet managed to internalise the less punitive approach taken in Setting 8, so that the language used by new staff members would "sometimes really jar" (**Head/Setting 8**) with more experienced staff members. In addition, this ethos was described as being felt by the pupils who acted – and were encouraged to act - as gatekeepers for the wider approach. In practice, this meant that when they were confronted with someone who did speak to them in a manner that supported more structurally violent ways of interacting in school, pupils were equipped with an ability to uphold the common language and ethos that was embedded within school:

Class Teacher/Setting 8: *"So I had a lady with me…and then I heard her speaking to one of our children, Amber and I turned round to say what I was thinking but Amber said it before I did. And I thought, yes she's got every right to say that and that's what we teach our children. It's not ok to speak to people like that."*

Developmental understandings and complex need: Setting 9

In Setting 9 (**SEND Academy**) the consistent use of language was tied to the complex level of need that was evident in their pupils, requiring a modified approach overall. This extended to the use of 'Mend It Meetings' - or MIMs for short - that the school used to describe restorative mediations, and also the use of more simplistic and sensory language to help autistic pupils engage with the restorative process:

Gallery Team/Setting 9: *"…we've slightly adapted the way that we would approach the students that are more autistic…and it's just a different format of speaking to them. So, you do your check-in - you know, what happened, give me your story...and then I'll revisit it with them, really honing-in on 'What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel?' - as in*

physically feel - and then 'What were you thinking?' And I don't know if it's…clearer, and it's a more basic format, but that has seemed to make it easier for them to access."²

In addition, there were a whole range of language-based strategies used to support pupils to express their emotions and become more self-reflective in their learning and behaviour. 'Passports for Learning' were used at the end of each lesson to help pupils to reflect through rating different learning behaviours on a scale of 0-2. Once again, this process was simplified, scaffolded and collaborative with a high level of ownership on the part of the pupils who were asked to rate themselves rather than being assigned scores, so that they were gradually able to access the learning expectations:

Class Teacher/Setting 9: *"…our school passport….I think that's really effective. I think quite often when you get your [Year] sevens and they don't have much understanding of 'Were you prepared and ready to learn?' So I say 'were you doing good sitting, were you looking at me?'…So you teach them gradually - this is the expectation. And it's that two-way conversation. And normally by January, they're really clued up on what 'prepared and ready to learn' looks."*

Another strategy used in Setting 9 to foster emotional literacy and to develop a common language across school, was the careful and consistent use of Emotion Thermometers in "every class" that fed into "quite a lot of the classroom structure" (**Head/Setting 9**). This strategy is not unusual in itself, but its use in this school was both nuanced and deeply embedded. Classes with higher functioning pupils were given a wide range of laminated words to put next to their name on the thermometer to describe the way they were feeling, from 'elated' through to 'depressed' and 'anxious'. Sometimes the thermometer was in the shape of a wheel to get away from the idea of different emotions being better or worse than each other.³ Importantly, there was one very particular word that was used when pupils did not want to engage with anyone at all:

Pupil/Setting 9: *"So if we weren't having the greatest of mornings, you could just put yourself on 'inconsolable'. If you wanted some five minutes away from the class to try, calm down and try work to move up from inconsolable...so you could talk to an adult about why you're feeling inconsolable."*

---

² In Setting 2, (**PRU - Hub School**) they had adapted the restorative process to include 'shuttle mediations' where teachers would act as a go-between for pupils in conflict with each other who could not be in the same physical space. While this was a useful initial strategy (particularly within the constraints of short-term specialist provision where embedding RP encounters obvious barriers related to pupil turnover) it is important that such practice gradually scaffolds pupil ability to engage with RP over time and empowers them to take ownership of the restorative process, rather than supporting a deficit model overall where adults become the 'fixers' for pupil conflict in school.

³ Similarly, in Setting 3 (**Primary Mainstream**) staff had decided to pursue a policy of avoiding displaying a positive or negative reaction to children's high or low check-in numbers, to get away from this idea that it was 'bad' if children were feeling low or conversely positioning positive affect as the 'best' outcome, and also to try and reduce attention seeking behaviour when children might give a low number to get a particular reaction from staff.

It was this strategy of instilling emotional literacy through the use of an armoury of emotional language that was so striking in a SEND Academy with pupils experiencing a whole range of complex need. Certain pupils were less able to access this level of language, and in some classes pupils used pictures of happy or sad faces rather than words. However, in every class there was an equivalent for 'inconsolable', enabling peers and teachers to know that they needed to be left alone. This nuanced approach had the effect of avoiding a deficit model in relation to pupils with complex levels of need, something that was also seen in Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) through the use of the Rounded and Grounded Framework (Tomlinson, 2010) that used a similarly sophisticated level of language to instil emotional literacy in primary age children.

Barriers to effective RP

Barriers to RP in school varied from setting to setting and could be understood as anything that made RP more difficult and seemingly ineffective over the long-term. As a general rule, schools with a highly embedded approach tended to have somewhat different barriers to schools that had not as yet managed to embed RP. In addition, different settings experienced qualitatively different barriers depending on whether they were Mainstream or SEND, Primary or Secondary, and also the specific sociocultural context that surrounded each school. However, there were certain commonalities across all settings that we will outline in more detail.

Pupils: Home-school differences and emotional literacy

The main barriers in relation to pupils were connected to differences in home-school environment, something that the majority of settings experienced to some extent, where children "expect to be shouted at when they've done something wrong, because that's what happens at home" (**Class Teacher/Setting 6**). The need to counter this with a strategy that created consistency between home and school, was something that was well understood in Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) where teachers asked parents to provide a similar level of "structure, routine, and predictability at home" so pupils know "exactly what's happening" (**Class Teacher/Setting 8**) across contexts.

Another barrier that was specific to the Primary and SEN context related to the emotional literacy and developmental understandings of children coming into school with low language levels, where they lacked an "initial understanding of what they're feeling because a lot of times they don't have a word for it...and what that means" (**Class Teacher/Setting 1 – Hub School**). To a large extent this lack of language was often very specifically related to high levels of deprivation and need in the surrounding area, and as a result these settings had to put extra effort into instilling emotional literacy and language to help pupils access RP:

Assistant Head/Setting 1 – Hub School: *"A lot of our children haven't got the language so we do a lot of speech and language therapy, a lot of talk circles, a lot of time to talk, socially speaking...to try and give them the vocabulary to talk about their emotions.."*

Teachers: Time constraints and punitive-authoritarian attitudes

On the level of teaching a barrier that was common across all settings related to the time it took to effectively engage with RP. Participants talked about the pressures of teaching that meant that they were not able to easily devote the time that RP both deserved and required. This was particularly the case for settings with high levels of social need where teachers stated that "you can't be that one nurture person for 25/30 children" (**EYFS Teacher/Setting 1 – Hub School**). As a result, restorative conversations often spilled into lunch and break times due to there being no time built into the school day to prioritise relational repair.

A further barrier to RP concerned punitive staff attitudes in terms of sanctions, and also rewards. This often manifested itself in subtle and opaque ways, for example by punishment

through the loss of rewards. In Setting 6 (**Primary Mainstream**), there was inconsistency of practice by teachers who viewed the function of ClassDojos (a point-based classroom communications app that rewards pupils on their conduct and performance) differently. Some teachers felt it was useful to take dojos off pupils as a sanction and "a good incentive to stop…being silly in class" (**Class Teacher/Setting 6**), while others felt that "if you've earnt it, it's not fair to take it away" (**Class Teacher/Setting 6**).

Authoritarian attitudes to teaching was another barrier to RP, that manifested itself on two main fronts: perceived loss of control and status on the one hand; and seeing RP as a soft option on the other. In terms of the former issue, this resulted in the need for a strong response from RP mediators when undertaking a restorative conversation between a pupil and a teacher. This was particularly the case when mediating with high status teachers in a secondary context, who would sometimes "see themselves a little bit higher" (**Deputy Head/Setting 4**) or feel that they could 'deal with it' themselves without the need for intervention. This highlights issues related to power dynamics that a restorative process prioritising respect and neutrality for all participants can create:

SENCO/Setting 4: *"I think it's two different things. I think the male ones, they don't want to lower themselves to be equal with the pupils. With the SLT, the ones that have said, 'No', they just think they can deal with it. And I think that's different…"*

Alternatively, teachers seeing RP as a soft option was related to punitive attitudes to challenging behaviour where it was "the adult that feels like there needs to be a punishment because what has happened…can feel so very wrong" (**Class Teacher/Setting 8**). This emotional reaction to perceived hurt caused by a child, often had a practical basis where teachers wanted "to be able to say to the parent this happened… because when a child's been bitten, it can be hard to say…what happens?" (**Class Teacher/Setting 8**). This was principally seen as being a function of inexperience in staff members such as TAs who tended to have less practice in communicating restorative resolutions to parents. In addition, staff perceptions of RP as being a "wishy washy approach" where pupils "were going to have a restorative, and they weren't going to have to do anything other than talk about it" (**Attendance Officer/Setting 3 – Hub school**), was also cited as being a central barrier and a common issue across all settings.

The extent to which staff members saw RP as a soft option was generally part and parcel of the restorative journey that schools were on. Such perceptions necessitated a training-based approach that reframed punitive attitudes to challenging behaviour, mis-conceptions of RP as a soft option entirely devoid of consequences and firm boundaries, and "confusion about…how to put boundaries in place" (**Head/Setting 8**) in the absence or sanctions or rewards.

Parents: Engagement, understanding of RP and punitive attitudes

For parents, the principle barriers related to engagement, understanding and once again reframing punitive attitudes to challenging behaviour where RP was seen as a soft option that did not provide adequate levels of justice for children who had been harmed. In terms of engagement, there were a number of settings that experienced particular difficulty

engaging parents. Sometimes this was specifically related to the local sociocultural context, for example, in Setting 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**) language barriers posed a very specific difficulty due to the high numbers of pupils from ethnically diverse backgrounds including "roughly 50% Bengali, 20% Pakistani, 15% Somali" (**SENCO/Setting 4**).

Alternatively, in Setting 1 (**Primary Mainstream – Hub school**) high levels of inter-generational deprivation in the local community was cited as a barrier to parental engagement with both RP and school more generally:

EYFS Teacher/Setting 1:   *"And having parents who are young, parents who don't have that extended family anymore, parents who are struggling to know what to do and actually their parents struggled as well…. you don't have that sense of community, you don't have that sense of extended family."*

This lack of engagement was linked to the parents themselves having historically negative experiences of schooling where "teachers are quite often [viewed as] the devil because the parents have experienced that as a child" (**Class Teacher/Setting 3 – Hub School**). Similarly, parents went "back to their own experiences" (**Nurture & Care Team/Setting 8**) of being parented, and this impacted on their understanding of both RP and the best ways to metre out behaviour management in both the home and at school. In the same way that some teachers had a difficult time getting to grips with the idea that effective RP combining high expectations with firm boundaries was not a soft option, parents experienced similar difficulties. This included instances when their own child had transgressed and they wanted to continue the punishment at home, but particularly when their child had been bullied or physically hurt, and some form of retributive justice was seen as being required:

Class Teacher/Setting 9:   *"…some of our Year sevens, the parents ring up and ask 'what's the punishment?... what you're going to take away from this child?'"*

Organisation: Clashes of value across the school

On the level of the organisation the most notable barrier related to value clashes that were inconsistent with a restorative ethos overall. This was most obviously demonstrated in one Primary Mainstream setting where the overuse of cameras to get to the bottom of conflicts between pupils had resulted in an undermining of trust across the whole school. The rationale for the use of cameras was a pragmatic one, in the case of instances where an obvious transgressor was not forthcoming. However, pupils talked about the use of cameras to an extent that was suggestive of cameras being used on a routine basis, rather than as a last resort for incidents of a very serious nature. As a result, the overall impact seemed to be an undermining of trust between teachers and pupils, and also between the children themselves, where pupils had a tendency to think that other children were "always lying…because they do actually lie" (**Pupil 1/Setting 6**):

Pupil 2/Setting 6:   *"…if I was in an argument, and I was telling the truth…sometimes the teachers don't really….because they think you've lied before. They think that you're lying, but you're not…"*

Exclusion was perhaps the biggest value clash in relation to RP that all of the settings struggled with to some extent. It is important to note that all the schools had brought down their permanent exclusions through RP, and there was a strong will to move away from exclusion altogether. However, for the most serious behaviour, fixed-term external exclusion was sometimes seen as being unavoidable, as part of the school's "responsibility to the wider school community" to let "the students know there are boundaries" and to make pupils "accountable for [their] actions" (**Deputy Head/Setting 4**). However, in other settings there was a mindfulness about the social deprivation that characterised some of their pupil's home backgrounds, which necessitated a safeguarding-focused approach where they would actively "try not to exclude because often being at home is worse" (**Assistant Head/Setting 1 – Hub School**).

In settings with the most embedded level of practice, there was sometimes an explicit policy of not excluding pupils on the basis of their behaviour while providing managed moves for pupils that required additional "resources, skills or expertise…to thrive" (**Class Teacher/Setting 8**) However, even in such settings with the strongest will to avoid exclusion, there was acknowledgement of the thorniness of the issue that meant that there were times when the explicitly articulated policy was challenged:

Interviewer: "*What about your own school's exclusion policy?*"

Head/Setting 8: "*We don't have one, so bluntly we don't have one. So it's just never discussed. I mean it is sometimes at an SLT level, and the SLT challenge me…SLT will challenge me about that.*"

Effectively involving parents in RP

Involving and engaging parents with RP was key to embedded practice in the most effective settings, and these schools had key strategies for maintaining contact with parents, allowing resolutions to conflict in school to be communicated and an understanding of RP to the home context be transferred.

Parental training: Settings 5 & 8

As previously described, there were a few settings where an explicit training programme for parents was undertaken to transfer the principles of RP and developmental understandings of children and young peoples' behaviour into the home environment. In Setting 5 (**Specialist SEN College**) a parental training programme in the neurodevelopmental approach of THRIVE was undertaken over a period of 6 weeks to help parents understand their child's triggers and put in place strategies to help manage behaviour, such as implementing a non-adversarial morning routine. Parents reported the benefit of this in helping them to reframe the ways they approached their child's behaviour at home, with associated impacts in relation to the way pupils then engaged with school:

Parent/Setting 5: *"And I know one mum said she totally changed their approach in the morning to getting her children up [where] you go in ready for the battle. And she was really seeing a difference as to the child's willingness to engage with school."*

Similarly, in Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) the Family Links course, which was a rolling programme that took place a couple of times per year over 12 weeks, trained parents who were struggling to manage their child's behaviour using practical parenting strategies. While transferring the principles of RP and relational approaches to behaviour management was seen as a key aim of these courses, a major impact of parental training and a rationale for its use, was to provide a forum for moral support and relationship building for parents within the community of school. This safe space created by the courses allowed parents to feel supported and develop lasting friendships with both teachers and other parents over time:

Class Teacher/Setting 8: *"And they can go somewhere. They're not judged…Those parents being able to get their voice heard. And being able to talk. You know, be able to say, yes, parentings really hard work. Even with restorative practice, even with the best strategies in the world…Past parents really raved about it and kept friendships from it."*

As suggested by the Head in Setting 5, the physical and emotional impact of running a course after "one of the busiest days I'd ever had in the school" where she'd "been really violently attacked by one of the kids" (**Head/Setting 5**), the investment of time and personal commitment in undertaking parental training should not be underestimated. However, the safety created for the parents extended to staff members where the individuals they were training had "become more than just parents of the children that are in the school, you really do develop connections with them" (**Head/Setting 5**).

Pupil training: Settings 4 & 7

While parental training was used by some settings as a way to engage parents with RP and relational approaches in school, there was wide spread recognition of the time and

investment required in running these courses, and also the difficulty engaging parents, which in some settings was a considerable barrier. As already suggested in relation to the transferability of RP beyond the context of school, one way around this barrier was to train pupils in RP, and this was something that was explicitly undertaken in two settings in particular: Setting 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**) through the training of Peer Mediators to undertake formal mediations between pupils; and Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) through the training of RP Reps to undertake informal corridor conversations and more formal mediations, and also through the training of Assistant Coaches to help with Coaching Groups.

This approach essentially reverse-engineered the principles of RP into the home and community context through a process of practice 'rippling out' naturally beyond the boundaries of school, something that was well understood in Setting 7:

Coaching Lead/Setting 7: "*We have done, in the past…sort of bespoke training sessions for parents as well, which parents were invited along to come to these sessions if they wanted to find out a little bit more. I think what we have found or what we have seen is that the training that the pupils are given is then taken home and discussed at home…So there is the overlap…I think that's a real important thing that we recognise and value.*"

Communication strategies: All settings

All of the settings emphasised the importance of "really good communication and relationships with parents" (**Head/Setting 2**) as being key to effectively involving them in RP and school. This was achieved in a number of different ways across settings:

- The use of positive phone calls and texts to parents "so that when [pupils] go home they will get praised…[and] they may not have that battle" (**Class Teacher/ Setting 5**), and explicit attempts to send out more positive communications home overall;
- Down-playing instances of poor behaviour, especially for parents of pupils who had been previously excluded, who were viewed as experiencing a form of 'secondary trauma';
- An emphasis on the tone of communication when negative incidents did need to be relayed, so that teachers would let parents know that "'this happened and now it's finished' - no biggie" (**Class Teacher/Setting 8**);
- Through a THRIVE app in Setting 5 (**Specialist SEN College**) to support home-school communication, parental training and to monitor parental engagement through online metrics.

In spite of the usefulness of these varied strategies, it was acknowledged that communicating resolutions – specially in relation to RP and mediations – often required improvement. In Setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) there was a general perception that effectively communicating resolutions was a complex business balancing issues of consent, confidentiality and feedback while upholding their overall ethos of down-playing negative instances of behaviour in school:

Head/ Setting 8: *"...we tend to just go, 'Oh we've sorted it'...and it's not because we're trying not to be transparent, because we're trying to be really reassuring. But actually, their impression – 'How have they sorted it?'... But then because of the confidentiality and because of the process...So we've got better at contracting that with the children and saying, 'right who needs to know that this is the resolution?'"*

In contrast in settings in the early stages of their journeys who were struggling with parental resistance to RP, communication strategies revolved around taking a very firm line in relation to the school behaviour policy. Here staff members reported having to "put our foot down that this is our practice - if this isn't the school for you, this isn't the school for you" (**Assistant Head/Setting 1 – Hub School**), when parents did not want their children to participate in a circle or a restorative meeting. Similarly, communicating RP to parents was part and parcel of school admissions policy which they viewed as being "key for setting expectations and understanding [of] how we'll respond to certain behaviours" (**Head/Setting 2 – Hub School**), for both children and parents.

Getting the parents in: Settings 4, 7, 8 & 9

Creating a bridge to the home context through physically getting the parents into school, was tackled by different settings in different ways. In Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**) Meet You Coach Days (MYCDs) reinforced the wider Coaching Model in school where pupils remained in small Coaching Groups with one adult Coach for the duration of their school career. MYCDs took place 3 times per year where parents would "come in for a 20-30 minute talk about how [their children are] getting on" in a "friendly supportive meeting" (**Coaching Lead/Setting 7**). Unlike parents evening that focused on more detailed subject feedback on an academic basis, MYCDs involved "a proper conversation about the child as a whole" (**Head/Setting 7**) and how their academic progress related to their holistic development.

As well as helping pupils to progress, the emphasis during these meetings was on helping parents in a non-judgemental manner that fulfilled the role of advocate for both parties, and mirrored the restorative principle of neutrality where Coaches would have "a conversation with the parent about how things are and what does it feel like and what can we do together to help" (**Head/Setting 7**). An implicit aim of this advocacy was to transfer the principles of working restoratively that were used in school to encourage that practice to continue at home. Overall, this relational approach to engaging parents through Coaching was particularly visible in the traditional reconfiguration of hierarchies in school, where the first point of contact for parents tended to be their child's Coach:

Head of Year/Setting 7: *"It's just a way of having a regular check-in and making that contact with the parents...they've got my number and they'll ring me if there's problems. And I think I think for most Coaches...you become the point of contact in school. So even though I'm ahead of year, most parents would contact their child's Coach before they contacted me, which is, I think it's a positive thing."*

In Settings 8 (**Primary Mainstream**), and Setting 9 (**SEND Academy**), Celebration Assemblies were used to celebrate the achievements of their children, inviting parents to come into a

celebratory school assembly, harnessing the power of specific praise in recognition of good performance. Importantly, these assemblies differed from the usual round of certificates and awards in that they were for specific instances of good learning or behaviour, rather than inauthentic awards such as 'Star of the Week', that were recognised by the children as being little more than whose turn it was rather than who had genuinely performed well in school.

In Setting 4 (**Secondary Mainstream**) a bridge between home and school was created by the external partners working within the community in order to address the lack of engagement by parents due to language and cultural barriers. In particular, the local Youth Worker who was also a staff member within school, reported higher levels of parental engagement where "some parents are more comfortable talking to me in the youth setting than they are in school" (**Youth Worker/Setting 4**).

Relationships, relationships, relationships: Settings 7, 8 & 9

Ultimately, the most embedded settings were those where relationships were prioritised across the whole school. This was best achieved in those settings where there was a high degree of familiarity through the proximity of remaining within small groups over time. In Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**), this was through their Coaching Group, and in Setting 9 (**SEND Academy**) through the use of 'Family Groups' at meal-times where pupils would eat together in preconfigured units to create a sense of community and social mixing. In addition, pupils remained in their Class Teams for the majority of the working week" to enable "a consistent response from all the adults and the formation of positive working relationships between child and the adult team" (**Promotional Materials/Setting 9**).

In the Coaching Model employed at Setting 7 (**Secondary Mainstream**), relationships were central to the whole system where there was a strong will to "build community, maintain community and repair community" through participation within "small units [that met] three times a week… to build relationships, and trust and expectation and commitment and loyalty to each other" (**Head/Setting 7**). Part of this relational ethos involved a recognition that for firm boundaries to work, a viable relationship based on trust needed to be previously established. As a direct consequence, sanctions in the context of a relational ethos in Setting 7 became a qualitatively different experience for both pupils and teachers:

Head of Year/Setting 7: *"…if one of my Coachees is doing something wrong, I will sanction them for it...But if you've got a real trusting relationship with someone, even when they give you a sanction, it's different…."*

This resulted in a non-hierarchical and 'individualised seniority' across the school where "instead of going to Head of Department or Head of Year" teachers would "go to their Coach, because the likelihood is that Coach will know" (**Class Teacher/Setting 7**). This approach to dealing with issues on the basis of who had a relationship with a given student rather than who occupied the appropriate role and level of seniority, resulted in a transformation of power structures across school:

Head of Year/Setting 7: *"I'm a year manager…and I will use Coaches a lot…rather than everything coming from me, actually saying to the Coach, could you have a word with them about this?...It helps because often the relationship with me as their Head of Year is…they see me as an authority or in trouble, whereas the Coach has a much more laid-back relationship."*

Similarly, in setting 8 (**Primary Mainstream**) there was an emphasis on the importance of knowing the child and key individuals who could act as an advocate and spokesperson for the child in instances where they aren't "ready or...lacks the confidence to then put across what they need" (**Class Teacher/Setting 8**). In such instances, it was an "adult that [the child has] a particularly strong relationship with" (**Head/Setting 8**) that was asked to facilitate, reinforcing the importance of practice rooted in relationships.

Conclusion

Within this evaluative study our primary question has been to understand how schools implement, embed and sustain RP. As suggested in our methodology, we experienced certain barriers in terms of locating enough schools on a local basis, who were willing to open their doors to the scrutiny of research examining behaviour and relationships policy in school. However, the schools that *have* welcomed us into unpacking their practices, have allowed us to achieve practical outcomes that have been manifold in nature, from mapping the range of RP initiatives currently being implemented and sustained in some of our most relationally oriented schools; to signposting the barriers to embedding RP on a more systemic basis. In addition, an emerging National network of schools, educators, practitioners and trainers has been provisionally formed, to create a genuine community of learning, advocacy and mutual support for the promotion of RP and relational approaches more generally in school.

What has become clear from this research, is that RP is connected to a range of initiatives aiming to support the development of pro-social skills and relationships in the whole school community. This was something that we have previously observed in the Comparative Nurture Group Study (Warin & Hibbin, 2016a) where teachers and practitioners with the most embedded practice in Nurture, had difficulty differentiating between the principles and commonalities of related approaches such as RP. What we do not want to suggest by this work is that RP is everything in school in terms of relational practice; it is important to differentiate between what RP *is,* and the fertile ground that supports RP, as these are clearly two very different things. As a result, more research is needed to clearly map the landscape of RP and differentiate it from other relational approaches, to avoid the danger of its lessons becoming diluted and confused.

The biggest take-home message from this 2-year study of Embedding RP in Schools, is that RP consists of much more than a set of five questions designed to repair conflict through mediation between teachers and pupils in school. Over time in the most effective settings, RP had moved from being a discrete intervention to an ethos that captured a relational way of organising school, prioritising the psycho-social wellbeing and development of pupils, teachers and parents within a holistic community. As such, RP was supportive of - and supported by - a whole set of relational practices designed to prevent conflict through organising school around the restorative principles of voluntarism, neutrality, safety, accessibility and respect. Within the nexus of these principles is a will to prioritise relationships and an understanding of children and young people's behaviour as communication, that can in turn only be uncovered through connection and a commitment to knowing the individual child. This individualised understanding leads to an individualised response and the application of consequences based upon a deep level of equity as the only logical basis upon which future action can proceed, in recognition of the understanding that children and young people inhere from vastly different and unequal backgrounds and circumstances. In this way RP has the potential to be supportive of organisational change in schools, to reorient schooling from an administrative endeavour that seeks to merely

manage behaviour through traditional systems of sanction and reward, to one that seeks to address individual pupils' unique needs through relationship.

However, such an outcome can only be achieved if a strongly preventative approach (McCluskey et al, 2008) is taken to implementing, sustaining and embedding RP in school, where prosocial skills are prioritised over mere conflict resolution. With time and persistence, such an approach has the potential to move RP away from being a mere bolt-on intervention that only superficially impacts upon systems and relationships across the whole school. The danger of not taking such an approach is to encourage organisational 'project-itis', where a constantly revolving door of new initiatives in school results in interventions like RP being introduced and only superficially sustained, before withering on the vine of implementation. Not only is project-itis tiring and resource intensive for a time and energy-poor staff base, but likely results in a cynicism about the introduction of any new intervention that is viewed as being merely the next 'fad' in school. The hope for this research is that it will give schools and school leaders an insight into the best ways to avoid superficial, reactive and bolt-on applications of RP, to avoid falling into the trap of project-itis that results in schools failing to get a sense of how a truly embedded approach to RP looks and feels in school:

Head/Setting 7: *"…we don't just do Restorative Practice at the point of conflict. You know, this isn't a conflict resolution strategy in the school, this is the way that we are..."*

References

Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage.

Claxton, G. (2002). *Building Learning Power: Helping Young People Become Better Learners* (Vol. 9). Bristol: TLO.

Hibbin, R., & Warin, J. (2019). A language focused approach to supporting children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). *Education 3-13*, 1-16.

Hopkins, B. (2011) *Restorative Classroom Practice.* Transforming Conflict, Optimus Publishing.

McCluskey, G., Lloyd, G., Stead, J., Kane, J., Riddell, S., & Weedon, E. (2008). 'I was dead restorative today': From restorative justice to restorative approaches in school. *Cambridge journal of education*, *38*(2), 199-216.

Saunders, M. (2000). Beginning an evaluation with RUFDATA: theorizing a practical approach to evaluation planning. *Evaluation*, *6*(1), 7-21.

Tomlinson, R. (2010). "Rounded and Grounded Framework" http://barrowford.lancs.sch.uk/page-40.

Warin, J. (2017). Creating a Whole School Ethos of Care. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. 22 (3): 188–199.

Warin, J., and R. A. Hibbin. (2016a). A Study of Nurture Groups as a Window Into School Relationships. *The International Journal of Nurture in Education* 2: 7–14.

Warin, J., & Hibbin, R. (2016b). Comparative Nurture Group Study. Final Report. NGN.

Zehr, H. (1990). *Changing lenses* (Vol. 114). Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.

Zehr, H. (2002). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.