



Restorative Justice Officer's Observational Report

Observations were undertaken in Freemantle CofE Community Academy on 12th and 16th July 2018 as part of the continuing Restorative Practice in Schools Project across Southampton with the school joining around twenty Southampton schools already actively involved in the project.

Time was spent becoming accustomed to the culture and general day to day functioning of the academy, familiarising with processes, visiting in classes and observing any conflict that arose and how it was dealt with.

There was the opportunity to speak with the teaching and support staff team, and a number of pupils to gain from them their thoughts and perspectives of their learning community, with particular focus on existing restorative approaches and responses to behaviour.

This report highlights my findings and provides suggestions for further development of restorative approaches that would complement those already observed and the embedding of the "Restorative Practice Framework" already used within those schools already involved with the project.

Please note – The findings below are based upon the observations made and discussions had with staff and pupils, it may not represent all practice throughout the school.

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Overview:

Freemantle CofE Community Academy is a mainstream primary school that aims to provide a safe, secure and positive learning environment for around four hundred pupils aged 4-11 years.

The school is located in the Freemantle area of Southampton, and benefits from a committed team of teaching and support staff, who provide opportunities through classroom, group and 1:1 learning provision, for all pupils to receive an inclusive educational experience.

Pupils can also benefit from a number of in academy clubs further supporting the community ethos the academy continues to positively and actively promote.

The restorative ethos and culture is clearly reflected within the academy's values where children are encouraged to :-

- "Have respect and tolerance for others"
- "Take their places as caring members of society"
- "Move towards independence and self-esteem"
- "Helps children to feel safe and able to talk freely... and that they will be listened to and valued"

The "Freemantle Family" philosophy further highlights the academy's restorative way of being that runs throughout the learning environment and is further seen within its values of Creativity, Fellowship and Courage.

The fostering of positive learning relationships with pupils and close relationships with parents, further reflects the academy's ambition, and wish, to be wholly restorative across their learning community.

It also offers the agreed opportunity of rewards for positive behaviours across the curriculum and that every pupil has a feeling of self-worth and parents feel wholly valued and included in their child's learning journey.



Restorative Approaches seen within the academy community include:-

- The Freemantle whole academy agreed rules further reinforcing the wish for a restorative learning environment through expected behaviours by everyone including:-
 - “Accepting **responsibility** for my own choices and actions” (one of the three core elements in restorative approaches) and the “act not the actor” focus of RP
 - “Respecting people and their property”
 - “Being polite”
 - “Listening carefully” – inviting opportunity for the sharing of thoughts and feelings without interruption
- The academy’s ethos of “Everyone unique and everyone valued”
- Visual displays around the academy promoting and reflecting the restorative thought process, principles and values including:-
 - “How To be Kind” display with comments of “include everybody” and “listen to each other’s problems” – **“inclusivity”, “fairness” and “empathy development”**
 - Friendship displays - “If you think someone could use a friend, be one”
 - Emotional literacy boards :-
 - Year R All About Me board of feelings and emotions words and comments to encourage development of positive restoratively grown friendships
 - Year 1
 - Friendship Tree Display created with handprints of class pupils – **“inclusivity”, “working with/together” ethos**
 - Dinosaur Display with ways of being words – “kind”, “helpful”, “caring”, “trusting”
 - Year 2 Respectful Display –
 - “Include everybody”. “forgive each other”, “Listen to each other’s problems”
 - Nurture Room
 - How are you feeling flower – opportunity for pupils to safely share their thoughts and feelings to support **“empathy development”** and **“empowerment”**
 - Nurture family tree – fostering the **“inclusivity”** principle of Restorative Practice and the academy’s “family” culture and ethos
 - “What can make playtime better” – inviting conversation to elicit thoughts, ideas and suggestions – **“having a voice, being listened and heard”**



- Pause for thought symbol encouraging the benefits of time for reflection
 - Affirmational phrases around the academy :-
 - “When you get encouraged it can help give you more confidence....”
 - “Try new things and believe in yourself.”
 - Heartstone Project and Everyone Welcome display board further promoting and fostering the **inclusivity** and **fairness** principles of Restorative Practice
 - Clear focus of reflecting the restorative way of being very visually across the academy community
 - “If you think someone could use a friend, be one” outside wall display
 - Classroom Reflection boards with word of the week e.g. compassion, to encourage all pupils to consider their behaviour and the impact on others, and comments i.e. “It’s good to talk”
- Conversation with pupils reflected use and development of restorative approaches across the academy community :-
 - “We know everyone”
 - “We accept everyone for how they are”
 - Learning partners – “we learn to **work together** and share ideas” – “it’s going good”, “better friendships”
 - Work with Winchester University social work students around EAL with academy pupils has led to a real awareness and clear understanding of difficulties experienced – fostering the **inclusivity** principle of Restorative Practice and introducing the restorative ethos
 - Observed focus on and acknowledgement of emotions with Year R pupil; recognition of their feeling sad with whole class
 - Encouraging of pupil learning through quiet, calm approach, going down to eye level, and offering alternative achievable learning goals
 - The sensory room providing an emotional refuge, where pupils can experience a quiet space and receive support, and able to successfully re-engage in their learning
 - Dedicated ELSA provision, and Nurture Room offering a safe emotional space for more vulnerable pupils to grow restoratively through small group activities focusing on feelings development and social skills – encouraging **empathy development**
 - In class positive behaviour for learning systems including:-
 - Thinking Cloud – encouraging self-reflection and acknowledgement of behaviour and opportunity to start again
 - Ready to Learn, Good Day, Great Day and Outstanding progression of learning board



- Observable use of positive praise across the academy community with situations addressed using restorative approaches and clearly identified positive staff and pupil relationships which has created positive learning atmosphere across the school community
- Empathy levels observed to be high during individual discussions with pupils across the school community and academy has
- Year 6 leavers poems reflecting the restorative culture within the academy:-
 - “Teachers there no matter what”
 - “Friends that help me”
 - “New friends that build me up”
- The academy has recently been awarded the recognition as a School of Sanctuary for its inclusive community ethos - further recognising the academy's belief in a wholly restorative culture

Breaktimes, Lunchtimes, Before and After School Opportunities

- Variety of playground “zones” to allow for both active and quieter activities reflecting both individual pupil needs and whole school inclusive ethos
- Observed positive friendship groups and engagement in play and social activity outdoors
- Opportunity for all to be included in play and social activities through the playgrounds Friendship Stop and the Freemantle Friends peer led project to support pupils to find friends to play with
- Lunchtime staff “picking up” on children without a play partner and supporting their engagement in play activities
- Alternative provision within the academy's Nurture Room for pupils identified as benefiting from more individual ELSA support at break times
- Number of extra-curricular clubs and activities offering pupils further social development opportunities and fostering of positive peer relationships

Parents/Carers and Community

- Opportunity for all parents and carers to be feel included in the life of the school through:-
 - The “working with” philosophy
 - Parent workshops
 - Contact with Parent Liaison Officer
- Partnerships with families strong within Freemantle CofE Community Academy, with an open door policy for parents



Policies, Strategies and Teaching Development

- Behaviour policy reflecting use of praise, respect and positive conversational and restorative thinking approaches to support pupils in the continuation of their learning through:-
 - Staff and pupils working and learning together to experience responsible learning
 - Teachers visible in playground to greet pupils very morning
 - Use of positive language as goal to success, with creation of respectful relationships and genuine regard for all
 - Calm response by staff to incidents of behaviour to encourage discussion, expectation that staff utilise restorative questions :-
 - “How can we do things differently in the future?”
 - Staff using positive de-escalation strategies which include:-
 - Restorative conversation to encourage solutions and re-engagement in learning
 - Allowing pupils thinking time
 - Celebration of pupil success in behaviour and learning :-
 - Positive Phone Calls
 - Praise notes/postcards home
 - Star of the Week jumpers
- The academy's curriculum offering all pupils the opportunity to grow restoratively through experiencing a variety of inclusive learning experiences :-
 - Cornerstones curriculum with Imaginative Learning Projects (ILP's) for pupils to become creative thinkers – allows freedom to express thoughts and feelings and consider alternatives - reflecting
 - Pupils spending time at Forest School, an alternative holistic learner-centred opportunity, which encourages and fosters resilient, confident, independent and creative learners – complementing the main curriculum and further supporting the acquisition of restorative thinking skills through practical activity
 - Cross academy learning focus on pupils becoming :-
 - Confident individuals – **being comfortable in sharing own thoughts and feelings**
 - Responsible citizens – **actively acknowledging errors in choice of behaviour**
 - Reflective individuals – **able to see the impact of their choice of behaviour/response on others in their learning community**
 - Effective and active participants within the learning environment and the wider community – **being heard and having a voice**
 - BLAST (Boosting Language, Auditory Skills and Talking) sessions encouraging development of restorative communication through activities focusing on :-
 - Turn taking
 - Attention

- Social communication



- Staff team working on assessment and creating of value in partnership working – reflecting the “working with” philosophy in Restorative Practice
- Anti-bullying policy with objectives clearly also reflecting restorative elements:-
 - Prevention through:
 - Promotion of a culture of **respect**, consideration and care for others
 - Discussion opportunities for pupils to reflect on differences – encouraging conversation around cultures, different family situations to create culture of acceptance and prepare pupils for life through with an **awareness of the needs of others**
 - Ensuring that the academy environment reflects a clear anti-bullying culture e.g. displays and assemblies
 - Offering opportunity for both bullied and bullies to talk through their experiences using **non-judgemental approach, find solutions for a way forward and rebuild relationships**
- The academy’s safeguarding policy reflecting the restorative ethos through the promotion of a “culture of openness” where both children and adults are able to talk and believe that they are being listened to
- Cross school Celebration of Learning system, rewarding positive behaviour of both individual pupils, and within classes and groups, allowing development of self-regulation in behaviour for learning, reflection on positive actions, the emergence of empathy for others and recognition of impact of behaviour on others learning within a restorative style format e.g.
 - School Council
 - Fellowship Award – given to pupils seen demonstrating friendship
 - Star of the Week
- British Values Policy clearly reflecting restorative values and principles:-
 - Promotion of “pupil voice” through :-
 - Whole class contribution to their Class Charters
 - Voting by pupils of celebration certificates for others for making great “choices”
 - Designated SEAL themes throughout the year which promotes the development of empathy and respect for others, aligning with Restorative Practice principles and mutual respect and the academy’s learning values



- Further evidence of the academy's aim to be wholly restorative is seen through their being a Rights Respecting school :-
 - Promotes respect, dignity and non-discrimination - echoing restorative principles
 - Supports and boosts wellbeing, encourages participation, positive relationships and development of self-esteem
 - A child who understands their rights understands how they and others should be treated and their sense of self-worth is strengthened

Ofsted's Inspection 2016 and monitoring visit in December 2017 commenting on a number of observed restorative elements within the school environment :-

- "The school provides a happy and safe haven, especially for its most vulnerable pupils"
- "The vast majority of pupils are gentle, kind and respectful"
- "Equality of opportunity is promoted well at the school"
- "Pupils and staff warmly congratulating each other on the weeks achievements, highlighting the friendly nature and community atmosphere at the school"
- "The school is particularly adept at helping pupils to develop into confident and self-aware young people"
- "Teachers never give up trying to help us"

Parents who completed parent questionnaires for the OFSTED report also commented that :-

- "My child is happy at school" – reflecting that pupils feel emotionally comfortable within the learning environment
- "My child feels safe at school"

Pupils who have engaged in conversations as part of these observations have also commented:

- "The dinner ladies look after us well"
- "Teachers help us and use the RP questions"

Whilst it is accepted that there may have been some incidents of unacceptable behaviours within the academy community during these observations none was witnessed and the suggestions below are intended as guidance to further enhance and complement existing Restorative Practice already in place



Recommendations for further Restorative Approaches Development within Freemantle CofE Community Academy :-

Moving Forwards

- Freemantle CofE Community Academy has already considered the benefits of restorative approaches in their learning environment, but are keen to refresh their practice with identified staff attending Restorative Practice Facilitator training during 2018 and 2019, and joining the growing Restorative Practice in Schools Project Network across the city
- The academy is keen to further their peer led approaches with the development of in academy RP mentors
- There are plans to develop a Quiet Zone in an area of the playground offering the opportunity of a dedicated space for restorative conversations, and a quieter activity space to meet the needs of all pupils during breaktimes

Best practice in restorative approaches can be further enhanced by:-

- Whole academy community understanding of Restorative Practice and Approaches through :-
 - Lead RP Practitioners to remain single point of contact for situations that require a higher RP response
 - Creation of clear referral process to lead RP Practitioners to underpin the fairness and equality principles of RP
 - Creation of feedback process from RP meetings and conferences to Lead RP Practitioners to share outcomes, clarify and confirm any action plans
- Shared understanding of the principles of Restorative Practice seen across all academy documentation e.g. Parent Handbook, policies
- All staff modelling of RP principles and values, to complement and enhance the academy's wish to be truly restorative
- Development of consistent use, and adoption of agreed restorative language and RP culture throughout the curriculum and academy community, not just isolated to behavioural incidents but throughout learning, to encourage pupils to find their own solution without suggestion or being led by staff :-
 - Words such as choice, opportunity, responsibility, changes, reflection time, impact, etc
 - Clear understanding that RP focuses on the "act not the actor" and is a solution focused journey for pupils and **NOT** an alternative to consequences
 - Ensuring adequate time afforded to respond to situations at the earliest opportunity and work through to successful resolution with all involved and

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affected



- Availability of a dedicated and suitable room/space always available to speak with pupils, undertake preparation and/or run any restorative meeting or conference without interruptions
- Clear understanding of alternative restorative approaches e.g. shuttle mediation, creative RP solutions and that not all RP intervention requires a conference level response
- Continued visual displays of restorative questions and ethos around the academy environment
- Considering amendments within restorative questioning to use of simpler language for younger pupils and those with additional learning needs and styles
- Pupil involvement in creation of displays as integral part of Restorative Practice Development :-
 - Creation of Restorative Wonderwall to celebrate restorative success across the learning community
- Creation of awards for “Most Restorative Class/Pupil/Staff” for engagement in restorative conversations, sorting things out independently using restorative language etc
- Consideration of training a number of pupils e.g. Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, School Council, in RP to enhance role modelling of RP by adults within the academy community (embedding RP into the school environment locally has seen pupils facilitating their own restorative conversations and agree their own way forward)
- Increased use of circle time element across academy community :-
 - After break and lunchtimes as “check in” to allow pupils to share and resolve any issues arising from the playground, defuse and move forward into the lesson
 - Opportunities for pupils to be encouraged to request a circle time to share a problem – increases confidence and knowledge that they are being listened to
 - Circle time for staff to share thought and concerns providing base for discussion around daily teaching challenges, concerns around individual pupils
- Continue to involve of whole class in development of class charters/class agreements to underpin restorative approaches development across the academy
- Development of group agreements for ongoing issues between pupils as a way forward



- Creation of dedicated “Thinking Spaces” within classrooms :-
 - Differentiated reflection sheets to support pupils to consider impact of actions, others feelings
 - As the catalyst to in class developments of a restorative value base e.g. taking of **responsibility**
- Introduction of targeted restorative discussion groups with pupils who may benefit from additional emotional literacy and empathy development opportunities
- Focused workshops for parents on Restorative Approaches Development and crossover to the home environment :-
 - Provision of RP information leaflets, RP question cards
 - Consideration of individual family RP workshops led by Lead RP Practitioners to offer further support in managing difficulties within home environment
- Investing in attending the half termly Restorative Practice Network Meetings to :-
 - Source support from colleagues in the network around challenges with implementing RP e.g. whole school embedding, staff resistance to change
 - Share own RP development
 - Collectively share ideas around next steps for further RP development
 - Each schools’ involvement and participation at the Restorative Practice Network meetings will be significant in the ongoing support to the RP leads as it enables regular reflection, sharing of practice and resources and continual support in the development of being a restorative community

Freemantle CofE Community Academy aims to provide a supportive learning community for both pupils and staff, with many elements and evidence of restorative approaches seen during these observations

With further embedding of a whole academy restorative approach, and use of restorative language across the academy community, pupils will have the opportunity to develop empathy for others, reflect on their actions, acknowledge responsibility, and feel confident and comfortable in engaging in restorative conversations with those who have harmed them or for pupils with those they have harmed,

Parents will also understand that any difficulties will be managed with a wholly restorative focus, with the aim of encouraging positive dialogue to resolve and rebuild relationships.

Staff will also see the benefits of a restorative learning environment through engagement of pupils in learning, whilst also feeling comfortable themselves in sharing their thoughts and feelings in restorative conversations following incidents

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