

Restorative Approaches - A Parents' Guide

Pirbright Village Primary School



At Pirbright, we pride ourselves in sharing our school values by using a “Restorative Approaches” principle when dealing with behaviour incidents during the school day. The purpose of this guide is to give parents an idea of what this might look like and allow us to share our ideas and philosophies with you. Restorative Approaches sits alongside our behaviour policy and is another strategy we have to deal with conflict in a peaceful and respectful manner. Such principles and values not only underpin the more formal Restorative Approaches described above, but they can also be practised in our informal, day-to-day interaction with others. Adults who do this ‘model’ effective ways of building and maintaining emotionally healthy relationships. Restorative Approaches is a strategy which has found particular success in primary schools and has been adopted by Surrey Schools as both a behaviour management tool and a set of guidelines for day-to-day interactions.

The aim of the school’s behaviour policy is to promote a positive, understanding and respectful atmosphere where we encourage good behaviour amongst our pupils who understand the impact of their actions and words. Whilst we value the importance of recognising achievements and promoting a positive atmosphere where children enjoy learning, at times we have to deal with issues within friendships as well as conflict. Restorative Approaches therefore provides a framework in which we can all work to ensure a successful resolution.

Restorative Approaches has been developed with the aim of promoting healthy relationships by repairing any harm done. This involves taking the time to understand the situation from a number of viewpoints and encouraging the children to understand their behaviour and have a greater input into what can be done to resolve a situation. Rather than simply establishing blame and then a consequence, Restorative Approaches seeks to fully understand the incident, feelings of those involved and encourages a collaborative resolution in order to put things right. By focusing on repairing relationships, the behaviours are less likely to occur again with a greater focus on taking responsibility.

The guidelines for Restorative Approaches involve establishing the following from each person’s perspective:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking when it happened?
- How were you feeling at the time?
- Who has been affected as a result?
- What needs to happen so that things can be put right?
- How could this situation be avoided in the future?

As part of encouraging Restorative Approaches vocabulary and conversations between pupils, children can volunteer to be an ‘RA Ambassador’ where they receive help and advice that they may use with their peers in times of conflict. This is always still monitored and supported by staff but helps to give a little ownership to the children.

Sometimes these things will be established through a restorative conference where everyone sits down for a discussion, at other times a brief chat on the playground following the principles is enough. Some children will be asked to fill out an incident form to give them a chance to calm down and think about what happened to them. Other children may just be encouraged to use some of the vocabulary, which they can find in classes and around school, and think about how to repair relationships independently. This approach can also be used during circle time to think about wider school issues or on a more individual basis and children are encouraged to follow the principles whenever appropriate. As the ideas are based on valuing everyone’s opinions and trying to do the right thing, there really isn’t a time when we can’t apply the approach in school.