

**To what extent and in what ways do restorative approaches promote positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom setting and the wider school?**

The STeP Journal  
Student Teacher Perspectives  
Copyright © 2015  
University of Cumbria  
Vol 2 (3) pages 107-120

Ailie Grant  
University of Strathclyde

**Abstract**

This work focuses upon restorative approaches as a means of promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom and the wider school. This involves an examination of how restorative approaches are conceptualised within the Scottish policy context and the literature, including an outline of the philosophy underlying restorative approaches. The societal, political and ideological drivers for change are also explored. Building on this, there is an investigation of how restorative approaches are operationalised within the classroom and the wider school, including a consideration of the potential tensions and dilemmas surrounding this. Finally, there is a thorough examination and discussion to establish the ways in which restorative approaches promote positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom and the wider school setting. The main findings of the research suggest that whilst restorative approaches may not be the “right answer” (Kane *et al*, 2006), there are clear benefits to implementing them as a means of promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing.

**Introduction**

The Scottish policy context currently presents a holistic approach to education, as teachers, children and their families are encouraged to recognise that behaviour can be influenced by our experiences, environment and the people around us. This idea of looking at behaviour within a social context is echoed in the underlying theories of restorative approaches (McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead, Kane, Riddell & Weedon, 2008). This suggests that restorative approaches may be beneficial as a means of promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing within the Scottish context.

However, the Scottish Government (2013) found that 100% of Scottish teachers that were surveyed stated that they used behaviour management methods informed by behaviourist approaches on a regular basis. For example, reward systems, punishment exercises and exclusion. However, these methods do not consider the “bigger picture” or help children think about their actions and consequences. Children are therefore at risk of repeating negative behaviour because they don’t fully understand how their actions can impact themselves and others. (Hendry, 2009). This investigation will explore if restorative approaches can break the cycle of negative behaviour.

*Behaviour in Scottish Schools* (Scottish Government, 2012a) and *Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour* (Scottish Government, 2013) both highlight the importance of positive behaviour within the classroom and the wider school. However, they don’t clearly define what positive behaviour is. The reports provide examples of both positive and negative behaviour that could be observed within the classroom and the wider school. Yet many of the examples are illustrations of children complying with the wishes of adults in power (Kohn, 2006). This suggests

**Citation**

Grant, A. (2015) ‘To what extent and in what ways do restorative approaches promote positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom setting and the wider school?’, *The STeP Journal*, 2(3), pp. 107-120.

GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

that “positive behaviour” is a vague term that is open to interpretation, dependent on personal beliefs, values, aims and practice. Furthermore, the causes of behaviour are complex and, therefore, perceptions of “positive behaviour” have the potential to be highly subjective.

Within the classroom and the wider school, the goal is to create an environment for learning (Kohn, 2006), therefore “positive behaviour” could be seen as individuals demonstrating actions, beliefs and values that are conducive to this positive environment. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, “positive behaviour” will be understood as individuals demonstrating the attributes that underpin the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government, 2014) (Figure 1).

*Wellbeing*

Curriculum for Excellence highlights the importance of children promoting their own positive emotional, social and mental wellbeing, with teachers providing the environment and support to develop the required skills. This suggests that positive wellbeing can look different from one person to the next. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, “Wellbeing” can be seen as an essential part of overall health, with “positive wellbeing” meaning that you are comfortable, happy and healthy (Lu & Buchanan, 2014).

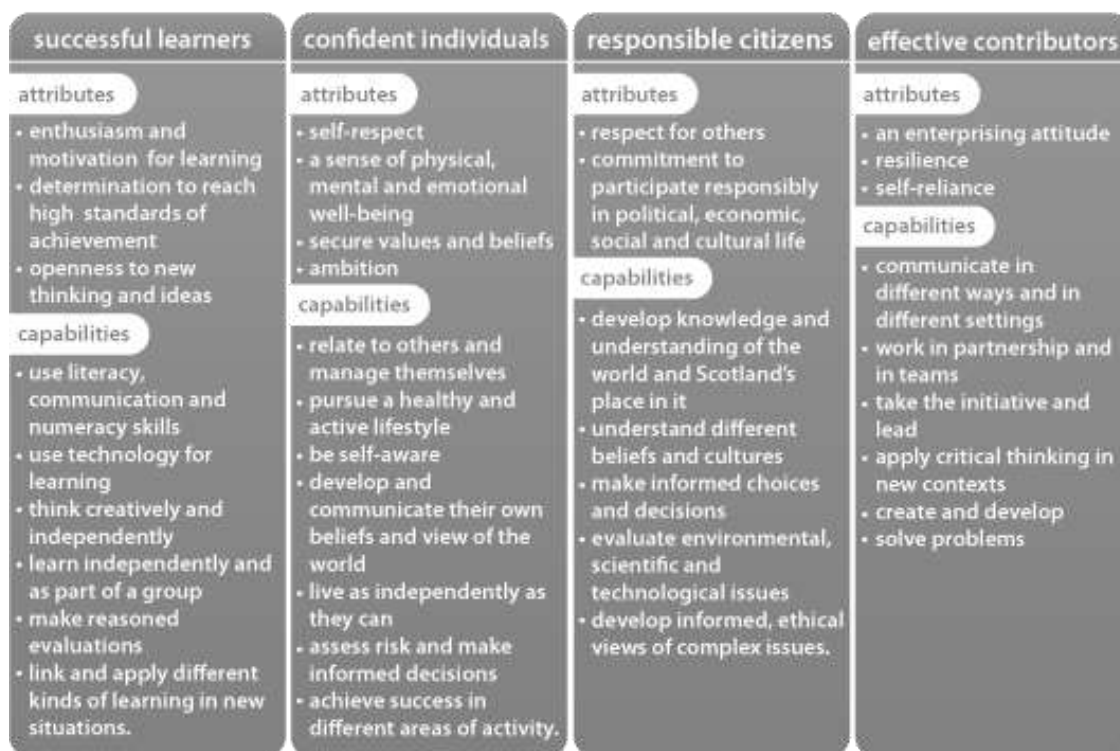


Figure 1. The Four Capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government, 2014).

**Approaches to promoting positive behavior**

*Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour* - the most recent policy guidance from the Scottish Government regarding behaviour in schools - highlights that good relationships and a positive school ethos based on trust, respect and wellbeing are the key to creating the best environment for teaching and learning (Scottish Government, 2013). This shows that more focus is being placed on the importance of relationships in regards to positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom and whole school context. Furthermore, *Behaviour in Scottish Schools*

## GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

(Scottish Government, 2012a) found that 87% of primary school teachers felt that the Curriculum for Excellence and current behaviour management approaches utilised within Scottish schools support the development of positive relationships and behaviour (Scottish Government, 2012a). This can be better understood in context by considering the approaches currently adopted in schools for promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing.

### *Social constructivist approaches*

Firstly, Head (2014) states that pupils' behaviours can be seen to be based on their social, emotional and behavioural needs, as well as the identities and relationships which pupils and teachers create and develop. This can be seen in social constructivist approaches to behaviour management. Mowat (2007) found that support groups can be used in schools to support pupils in reflecting upon and understanding their values, beliefs and relationships. This support can help pupils gain insight into their emotions and self regulate their behaviour, which in turn can enable them to make meaningful choices and develop positive behaviour and wellbeing. This approach can be seen to build self confidence as it looks to complement what the pupils have and develop this in collaboration with their teachers and peers (Head, 2014). Approaches based on or linked to Mowat's approach of implementing and utilising support groups can be seen to be used in Scottish schools, with 49% of primary school teachers "frequently" or "sometimes" using "targeted small group work" to encourage positive behaviour (Scottish Government, 2012a).

### *Psychological approaches*

Another important approach used in schools for promoting positive behaviour is nurture groups, which are based on psychological perspectives and attachment theory. The underlying theory and principles of this approach are that a child's early relationships shape brain development and therefore these relationships can have a significant impact on overall emotional, mental and social wellbeing (Gerhardt, 2004). Nurturing approaches are based on the premise that many children who struggle to maintain and develop relationships and work with others have missed out on healthy attachment experiences in their early life (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014). Nurture groups are set up with the purpose of providing children with the opportunities to have positive attachment experiences within the school setting, develop positive working models of themselves and in turn improve their social development and emotional wellbeing (Boxall, 2002). Hughes and Schlösser (2014) analysed the findings from a variety of studies into the use of nurture groups in primary schools and they found that overall, nurture groups improved children's "pro-social behaviour" and reduced their "emotional difficulties". In the Scottish context, 36% of primary school teachers state they "frequently" or "sometimes" use nurture groups to promote positive behaviour and relationships (Scottish Government, 2012a).

Approaches to behaviour management that do not consider other influences on a child's behaviour, such as their social interactions, environment or the curriculum itself can be seen as "deficit models" (Mowat, 2007). Considering this idea, the underlying theory of nurture groups is that the problem lies within the child and it is the responsibility of education staff to support the child in making changes to their thinking, values and behaviour. Therefore, nurture groups present a "deficit model" and do not take an holistic approach to behaviour management.

### *Behaviourist approaches*

A third approach used in schools for managing behaviour is the positive discipline model, based on behaviourist approaches. The underlying belief of this approach is that pupils should be expected to comply and show obedience. This is maintained mainly through the use of reward and sanctions to drive motivation and, if children are seen to be in deficit in terms of their learning and behaviour, this requires the teachers' remedy (Head, 2014). Examples of these

## GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

approaches can be seen to be used frequently in Scottish schools, with 100% of primary teachers surveyed using reward systems, 36% using punishment exercises, 40% using detention and 18% using exclusion to manage behaviour (Scottish Government, 2012a).

Behaviourist approaches can also be seen as a “deficit model”, as they focus on what pupils could be seen to lack. As well as this, pupils could become less motivated once the rewards are removed, which does not provide them with a good basis for their attitudes towards behaviour and relationships in the wider world (Kohn, 2006).

### *Restorative Approaches*

Finally, another approach used within the classroom and wider school to promote positive behaviour is a restorative approach. This can be seen as an holistic approach to behaviour, as it considers behaviour within the social context, with a strong emphasis on relationships (Hopkins, 2004). This approach has also been developed further within the Scottish context to embed a restorative culture within and throughout the whole school (Kane *et al*, 2006). Within Scottish primary schools, 76% of teachers state they use restorative approaches to promote positive behaviour and relationships (Scottish Government, 2012a). This approach to promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom and the wider school will be investigated and explored in more detail in future sections.

### *Concluding remarks*

There are many more approaches used in Scottish schools to manage and promote behaviour and wellbeing, such as Circle Time (Mosley, 1998) and the Motivated School (McLean, 2003). Only a select few have been outlined here, as these have been found to be the most widely used approaches in Scottish primary schools in recent years (Scottish Government, 2012a). In addition, it is also important to note at this point that, whilst many of the paradigms and approaches mentioned in this section offer conflicting theories and ideas, they can often be used alongside and combined with one another within the classroom and wider school. This can be seen to be a way for each school to create an approach that works for their unique learning environment (Kane *et al*, 2006). However, the conflicting approaches can also be seen to undermine each other, create challenges and potentially reduce effectiveness (Hopkins, 2012).

In conclusion, the current policy context in Scotland as it pertains to behaviour in schools gives a clear understanding that there is a focus on promoting positive behaviour, relationships and overall wellbeing of pupils and staff. Therefore, this paper will investigate, analyse and discuss the extent to which, if any, restorative approaches promote positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom and wider school.

### **Methodology**

I have chosen to take a literature-based approach to address my research question undertaking a systematic analysis, using a best-evidence synthesis approach (Slavin, 1995) as a means of identifying and accessing the relevant research studies, literature and policies. This approach allows for the systematic review of the literature and policies as they pertain to restorative approaches and the promotion of positive behaviour and wellbeing. It also allows for the prioritization of the most relevant set of studies and for the best evidence to be considered and synthesized (Treadwell, Singh, Talati, McPheeters & Reston, 2012).

I prioritised my evidence by considering the year of publication, risk of bias, conclusiveness of findings and the overall evidence strength (Treadwell *et al*, 2012). Therefore, I decided to mostly use peer reviewed journal articles and policies that have been published within the last 10 years.

## GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

However, I have referred to a number of older texts, that were influential in shaping current policy and practice (Cronin, Ryan & Coughlan, 2008).

### **Review of Literature**

#### *How are Restorative Approaches Conceptualised?*

Restorative justice began in 1975 in Canada, with the bringing together of victims of crime and offenders. The key benefits of Restorative Justice were identified as successful communication, reconciliation, offenders showing remorse and victims feeling empowered and valued (Hopkins, 2004).

The concept of working together and communicating to resolve harm and conflict can be applied within the education context and is referred to as restorative approaches to behaviour management. This approach is based on creating a positive ethos and environment within an education setting, which encourages and promotes positive, healthy relationships. This involves considering conflict and negative behaviour within a social context and supporting children and young people in taking responsibility for their behaviour, understanding the consequences of their actions and breaking the cycle of negative behaviour. This is embedded in practice through an understanding and appreciation of respect, empathy, fairness and communication (McGrath, 2004; Bitel, 2005; Kane *et al*, 2006).

Restorative approaches have since been further adapted within the Scottish context to be both responsive and preventative in nature, as the approach not only looks to repair any damage to relationships but also to promote a positive whole school ethos and environment (Nurturing Inverclyde, 2013). This approach could be seen to be in line with the Scottish Government's current policy guidance, which highlights the importance of both developing and maintaining relationships in regards to positive behaviour and wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2013). This involves looking at any conflicts that do arise, considering them within their social context, how they can be resolved for all parties involved and how they can be avoided in the future. Restorative approaches within the Scottish context can be seen to have two intentions. Firstly, to proactively prevent harm and conflict from occurring and, secondly, to respond to conflict as a means of restoring positive relationships and peace (Leach & Lewis, 2013).

#### *What is the philosophy underlying restorative approaches?*

The underlying theory that influences restorative approaches is the belief that behaviour must be viewed within its social context and a positive resolution will involve considering the relationships and wellbeing of all parties. This theory suggests that a wide range of factors influence behaviour and, as such, the causes of negative behaviour, disruption and violence are very complex and must be treated as such (Scottish Government, 2011). This supports the idea of focussing on relationships instead of behaviour and looking at conflict as an opportunity for social and experiential learning (Coetzee, 2005). It is the role of education staff to take their holistic knowledge of each individual child, identify what is being communicated and respond appropriately (Kohn, 2006). This idea challenges the notion embedded in our culture of punishing those to blame (Hopkins, 2004). Restorative approaches suggest that when something goes wrong, the situation is never fully resolved unless both parties feel they have been listened to and have had the chance to express their thoughts and feelings.

#### *What have been the drivers for change?*

Negative, disruptive and violent behaviour have all been linked to poor relationships, limited aspirations, peer pressure, exposure to abuse and racism and many other social factors (Scottish Government, 2013). This can be seen as a driver for change in the way we view behaviour within

## GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

the classroom and the wider school. Building on this, education can be seen as a complex process, influenced by the diverse world that we live in and one that is constantly changing as children and staff deal with the pressures of everyday society (Kane *et al*, 2006).

Furthermore, several recent reports and studies have discussed the benefits of moving away from punitive approaches to behaviour management, in favour of more holistic, community based approaches (Bitel, 2005; Wearmouth, Mckinney & Glynn, 2007; McCluskey *et al*, 2008; Rigby, 2014). One such benefit would be to promote the right to be heard and for children and young people to have an influence on decisions, policies and procedures affecting them (Leach & Lewis, 2013). What might be called “zero tolerance” behaviour management approaches can be seen to fail because they look at the individual within isolation and not as part of the community they belong to (Wearmouth *et al*, 2007).

There has been concern from teachers in regards to low-level disruption, as such behaviours can have a long term negative impact on the school experience for staff and pupils (Scottish Government, 2013). As well as this, there has been a call from the public to tackle youth crime, bullying and truancy. Yet, at the same time there is an increased focus on the importance of inclusion and preventing exclusion (Kane *et al*, 2006). This calls for a need to be proactive in preventing negative behaviour from arising and putting support in place to create an overall positive school ethos.

There has been an increase in stress levels in staff across primary and secondary schools in Scotland, with many teachers feeling under pressure to provide pupils with the support they require to learn when they themselves can be feeling unsafe, unsupported and unappreciated (Kelly & Colquhoun, 2005). This suggests that changes need to be made in the way that teachers are supported and that their relationships and wellbeing are as vitally important as those of the children they are educating every day.

### *How are Restorative Approaches Operationalised?*

Mediation is a restorative process that can be used within a school setting to support children and adults in conflict to find a mutually acceptable way forward. In theory, mediation takes place between two conflicting persons and is overseen by a neutral third party. This set up allows for both parties to talk through their experience of the conflict, to make sense of what has happened and express their thoughts and feelings to each other. The underlying theory is that our thoughts, feelings, needs and behaviours are intertwined and must be considered together in order to deepen our understanding, reflect on our actions and realise the consequences (Hopkins, 2004). The intention of mediation is to find a way forward together to reach an agreement and prevent future harm and conflict.

Restorative conferencing is another process that can be used within a school setting to deal with harm and conflict. In theory, this approach can be used when there has been harm within the community as a result of anti-social behaviour (Hopkins, 2004). This process involves a group meeting to discuss the incident, share how they are impacted by it and find a way forward. This meeting typically involves the “wrongdoer” and the “wronged” sharing how they have made each other feel and potentially for the “wrongdoer” to apologise and make amends (Hopkins, 2004). This process differs from mediation, as it involves other members of the community, such as family members, friends, school staff and any other relevant parties that have been impacted by the incident in question. However, it is similar to restorative mediation in that the objective is to come to a conclusion as to what can be done to make things right for all parties.

GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

The facilitator's role within both processes is to ensure everyone involved has the opportunity to share their perspective and feelings. They are also there to be supportive yet impartial, without leading or controlling the meeting. The facilitator must use their judgement and be prepared to adapt to meet the needs of each group of individuals.

In practice, both restorative mediation and conferencing can be approached and operationalised in a variety of ways, dependent on the climate and needs of the setting. Research has shown that Scottish, English and Welsh primary and secondary schools have implemented both restorative mediation and conferencing differently across schools and authorities, but can all be found to share the common underlying values and principles of the restorative approach (Bitel, 2005; Kane *et al*, 2006). For example, youth support teams and police officers were found to be regularly used to support mediation and conferencing processes within English and Welsh schools, with around half of the meetings facilitated by external people (Bitel, 2005). In contrast, Scottish schools were found to rarely use external sources for support, with a strong reliance on members of the school community to support in operationalising and facilitating the relevant processes (Kane *et al*, 2006).

Each setting across Scotland, England and Wales was found to use a mixture of formal, informal, structured, open ended and scripted processes, modified and adapted to meet the school community. At the same time, both studies found that the schools which had successfully implemented and operationalised restorative approaches emphasised the importance of adopting a whole school approach (Bitel, 2005; Kane *et al*, 2006).

A whole school approach to creating a "restorative school" is advocated by many (Hopkins, 2004; Bitel, 2005; Coetzee, 2005; Kane *et al*, 2006; Wearmouth *et al*, 2007; McCluskey *et al*, 2008; Leach & Lewis, 2013). A whole school restorative approach is seen as one which embeds the restorative values and principles within teaching, learning, interacting and working together on a daily basis. The principles and skills are not just for dealing with and reacting to challenges (Clarke, 2013). At the same time, it has been stated that restorative processes can also be used in isolation to respond to incidents within the school community, such as bullying. Rigby (2014) states that the conferencing process can be used to raise a bully's awareness of the harm they have caused and look for them to take responsibility and apologise for their behaviour. This suggests a more reactive approach than a proactive one and Rigby goes on to state a variety of challenges and dilemmas that may arise in such a situation.

For example, the bully could be coerced into saying or doing something "restorative", as they feel pressured by the approach and may not mean what they say, which could result in no meaningful resolution or a further deterioration of relationships. As well as this, there is the potential for manipulation of information or intimidation of "victims", especially if the mediator is not providing adequate support (Littlechild, 2011). However, it is important to recognise that the aim of a restorative conference is not to force or place blame on an individual, but to find a way forward past a challenging conflict or situation that has arisen. Arguably, such examples of failed processes could be prevented and avoided by implementing a restorative ethos throughout the whole school.

A whole school approach would involve teaching staff, management and the school community. This could support the implementation of restorative approaches, as a restorative mind set could be modelled by staff and therefore influence and inform all relationships and interactions (Hopkins, 2012). As well as this, all policies, procedures, services and support would be restorative in nature, which would mean that restorative approaches would underpin all actions and decisions throughout the setting (Coetzee, 2005), creating a "restorative school". Therefore,

GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

taking an approach that is both proactive and reactive is the most effective means of implementing restorative approaches within a whole school setting.

*What are the tensions and dilemmas?*

There are many tensions and dilemmas linked to the operationalisation of restorative approaches within the classroom and the wider school. Firstly, when looking for everyone within the school community to adopt a restorative approach, it is important to consider their existing beliefs and practice, particularly regarding behaviour management. This could involve a significant paradigm shift and conflict with the views and practice of many teachers and parents (Wearmouth *et al*, 2007). Therefore, if some parties within the school community are not committed to creating a restorative school, there is the potential for the approach to be undermined and not implemented effectively. For example, a staff member who prefers positive discipline approaches could feel that restorative approaches are conflicting with their principles and therefore not be willing to take part in a restorative conference or use restorative practice within the classroom.

Furthermore, restorative approaches are also used in education settings around the world and their approaches are shaped and developed to fit the cultural, social and political context of each area. For example, conferencing has been used in New Zealand to tackle anti-social behaviour within the community. Whilst the process has the same structure outlined by Hopkins (2004), there is a strong emphasis on the role of the community in resolving the conflict. Wearmouth *et al* (2007) found that attitudes and beliefs regarding what constitutes “negative behaviour” can cause challenges when addressing conflict through conferencing and mediation, as the community and school may not agree on the actions taken. He argues that the school staff may exert control over the situation and look to meet their own needs before those of the community. He suggests that the community elders take the lead role in facilitating and mediating any conferences and mediations, similar to the way it is implemented within Maori communities. However, it could also be argued that this approach could have similar implications, in that the needs of the community are addressed primarily, with the needs of the school and the young people involved being left inadequately addressed or unmet.

There is also the potential dilemma that the actions taken as a result of a restorative approach may not necessarily be seen as fair, beneficial and effective by some. Building on this, processes may be seen as restorative by some but not by others, therefore these could be seen as subject to personal and professional views and opinions (Kane *et al*, 2006). One potential dilemma that could arise as a result of this is that restoration can be seen as a form of punishment, particularly if those involved find the process stressful or upsetting. Leach & Lewis (2013) give an example of a group of pupils telling one boy that they feel sad and angry towards him, which results in the boy becoming upset and frightened. This could potentially be seen as detrimental towards the boy’s wellbeing, as well as having a negative impact on the group dynamic and future relationships. However, it could also be argued that such a situation could be avoided by ensuring that staff are appropriately trained and equipped to implement restorative processes.

In conclusion, there are a variety of ways in which restorative approaches can be operationalised within a classroom and the wider school. These can all be adapted and modified to meet the personal, social and cultural needs of each individual establishment and situation. There are many tensions and dilemmas that can arise when implementing restorative approaches and to ensure the approaches are operationalised effectively, these must all be thoroughly considered and planned for. Finally, it could also be said that many of the tensions and dilemmas could be prevented by adopting a whole school approach that is both proactive and reactive in nature. This



## GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

would consist of effective staff training, support from the management team and a clear framework, underpinned by restorative policies and procedures.

### *How effective are restorative approaches?*

In which ways, if any, do restorative approaches promote positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom and the wider school?

### *Wellbeing*

Restorative approaches have been found to support and encourage the positive wellbeing of all children and young people, not just those presenting with challenging behaviour (Kane *et al*, 2006). Several studies have found that the majority of children within settings that have operationalised restorative approaches feel listened to, valued and respected by their peers and staff (Bitel, 2005; Kane *et al*, 2006; Littlechild, 2011; Leach & Lewis, 2013). As well as this, it has been found that a whole school restorative approach can support children in having the confidence to report bullying and negative behaviour (Bitel, 2005).

Furthermore, Restorative approaches empower staff, children and their families to make changes, have a say and get involved in how relationships, behaviour and wellbeing are supported (McCluskey *et al*, 2008). This sense of empowerment and engagement can be seen as a means of promoting positive wellbeing for all.

### *Inclusion*

The fundamental principle of a restorative approach is that when harm is done, the most useful response is one which repairs, not retaliates. The Scottish Government is looking to improve inclusion and achievement while tackling the challenge of pupils disengaging from education at a younger age (Scottish Government, 2012a). However, two recent studies have found that implementing restorative approaches within both primary and secondary schools has resulted in no improvement in exclusion rates (Bitel, 2005; Kane *et al*, 2006). At the same time, Littlechild (2011) found that implementing restorative practices within young people's residential units has resulted in a decrease in police call outs. As well as this, he found that the young people felt more included and engaged in their living environment. Therefore, this suggests that inclusion is promoted through restorative approaches to a certain extent, but it is not reflected within the context of education.

### *Dealing with Conflict*

Restorative approaches support children, young people and adults in learning more appropriate ways to deal with conflict and dispute. This can be observed in the communication skills that are developed through conferencing and mediation (Leach & Lewis, 2013). A restorative culture also embeds social skills and values - such as respect and empathy - within the everyday practice of the school (Kane *et al*, 2006). As well as this, it can help children and young people understand and talk about their feelings (Littlechild, 2011). This can enable them to reflect upon their behaviour, relationships and any other aspects of their life and respond in an appropriate manner. Therefore, it can be said that restorative approaches promote positive behaviours such as resilience and self-reliance.

### *Behaviour in the classroom*

Restorative approaches can also be seen to promote positive behaviour within the classroom, to a certain extent. Bitel (2005) found that 18% of teachers within his study felt that pupil behaviour in class had improved after the implementation of restorative approaches throughout the school. As well as this, Bitel also stated that he received positive anecdotal evidence suggesting that less

## GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

time was spent in class responding to negative behaviour. However, he does not fully explore and establish the ways in which behaviour appears to have improved. For example, this change could be due to a change in teachers' approaches to managing behaviour or it could be due to a change in the children's behaviour. Therefore, while this evidence suggests that restorative approaches can promote positive behaviour, it doesn't clearly identify the ways in which they are promoted.

### *Restorative Processes*

Several studies into the impacts of using restorative conferencing and mediation have provided positive results. Firstly, Bitel (2005) found that 92% of restorative conferences reached a successful agreement, with only 4% of agreements breaking down within three months. This evidence shows that restorative conferencing can reduce negative behaviour, as conflict has reduced. Arguably, the reason for the success is that the individuals are avoiding one another, yet it could also be said that by staying away from each other, this is showing respect for others and openness to new thinking and ideas, which are both examples of positive behaviour. Secondly, Rigby (2014) found that using restorative conferencing and mediation to respond to bullying resulted in a 73% success rate. However, while negative behaviour appears to have decreased, the reasons for this could be questioned. Firstly, it could be seen that children view restorative processes as a punishment and are complying with the agreement to avoid future mediation sessions. This would suggest that restorative approaches are effective in the same nature as punitive methods. Furthermore, Rigby (2014) found that restorative approaches are no more or less effective in tackling bullying than punitive methods.

Therefore, restorative conferencing and mediation can be seen as ways for an individual to reflect on past, present and future behaviours. These processes allow for a person to consider the consequences and impacts their behaviour can have on their own wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of those within their class, school and community. As well as this, if they are causing less harm and conflict within their school and community, the quality of relationships with their friends and family could improve. Therefore, it could be held that using restorative processes - such as conferencing and mediation - to respond to harm and conflict within both the classroom and the wider school can promote positive behaviour and wellbeing throughout the community.

### *Whole School Approach*

It is widely acknowledged and agreed that restorative approaches are most effective when established through a whole school approach. Bitel (2005) found that the majority of school staff within his study believed that a whole school restorative approach was having a positive impact across the school. Furthermore, in a study of Scottish schools that were implementing whole school restorative approaches, 14 out of 18 schools were found to have made improvement in some areas (Kane *et al*, 2006). In addition, Coetzee (2005) states that, if restorative approaches are not implemented effectively at a whole school level, the approaches and processes may not have the desired effects and a paradigm shift may not take place. Finally, McCluskey *et al* (2008) state that once restorative approaches have been fully established and embedded within a school, the need for interventions decreases. A whole school approach supports the commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life, which is an example of positive behaviour.

However, restorative approaches are often implemented in school settings alongside and in combination with a variety of other behaviour and relationship management approaches (Kane *et al*, 2006). As well as this, the existing values and approaches of staff and pupils will have an influence on the implementation of an approach and this will vary from one establishment to the

next. Therefore, this makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of restorative approaches and the extent to which they promote positive behaviour and wellbeing.

The causes and consequences of children and young people's behaviour are complex and so are their needs. Therefore it could be held that there is no simple or straightforward way to respond to and support them. Restorative approaches provide a framework for creating a positive learning environment based on the importance of positive relationships and wellbeing. This can be seen as a means for each individual to get the best out of every experience in their education and to be supported positively through the challenging ones.

Therefore, it can be concluded that restorative approaches can promote wellbeing and positive behaviours, such as resilience, respect, self-reliance, a commitment to participating responsibly in life and openness to new ideas and thinking.

### **Conclusions**

This paper has explored restorative approaches as a means of promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing within the classroom and the wider school. While restorative approaches may not be the "right answer" (Kane *et al*, 2006), there are clear benefits to implementing restorative approaches as a means of promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing.

Restorative approaches support children in developing their own positive wellbeing, as well as respecting and contributing to the wellbeing of those around them. Restorative approaches also help children deal with conflict in a positive manner and encourage inclusion. Restorative conferencing and mediation are effective processes in implementing restorative practices and support the values and beliefs that promote positive behaviour and wellbeing. In addition, it has also been established that the most effective means of operationalising restorative practices is through a whole school approach. It is also important to acknowledge that the nature of supporting behaviour and wellbeing within the school setting is complex. Consequently it is challenging to observe restorative practice in isolation to try to accurately measure its effectiveness. It can therefore be concluded that restorative approaches promote positive behaviour and wellbeing in the classroom and the wider school, to a certain extent. There will always be conflict, competing ideas, harm and challenging situations with the classroom and the wider school and restorative approaches allow for these to be managed fairly and positively (McCluskey *et al*, 2008).

There are a range of interpretations and understandings of positive behaviour and wellbeing, particularly within education. As discussed, the ways in which these terms are understood across the policy context and literature can vary significantly. Therefore, there is not a set standard for what positive behaviour and wellbeing looks like within each study. Clear definitions were set at the start of this paper, which were used consistently when reviewing and evaluating the evidence. However, it has not been possible for this limitation to be entirely removed.

Furthermore, many of the studies focused on reducing instances of negative and antisocial behaviour. Whilst the benefits of this are apparent, an absence of negative behaviour doesn't necessarily indicate an increase in positive behaviour. Therefore, the ability to identify where positive behaviour was being promoted was, at times, limited.

This research has shown that restorative approaches can be undermined and ineffective if not implemented appropriately. Therefore, if restorative approaches are to be implemented within a school setting, it would be recommended that this is undertaken by the staff with a full

GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

understanding of the time, energy and commitment required to do this. Staff expectations and responsibilities must be identified from the outset, with effective training and consistent support in place throughout.

In regards to future research, the next steps from this investigation would be to explore the links between restorative approaches and Curriculum for Excellence and identify the ways in which they can be interlinked to create a positive learning environment.

### References

- Bitel, M. (2005) *National Evaluation of the Restorative Justice in Schools Programme*, Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
- Boxall, M. (2002) *Nurture Groups: Principles and Practice*. London: Paul Chapman
- Clarke, P. (2013) The restorative classroom: using restorative approaches to foster effective learning, *Educational Psychology in Practice: theory, research and practice in educational psychology* 29(1)
- Coetzee, C. (2005) The Circle of Courage: Restorative Approaches in South African Schools, *Reclaiming Children and Youth: The Journal of Strength-based Interventions* 14(3)
- Cronin, P., Ryan, F. and Coughlan, M. (2008) Undertaking a literature review: a step-by-step approach, *British Journal of Nursing* 17(1)
- Gerhardt, S. (2004) *Why love matters: how affection shapes a baby's brain*. London: Routledge.
- Head, G. (2014) *Identity, Relationships and Behaviour* in Carroll, M. & McCulloch, M. (Eds.) (2014) *Understanding Teaching and Learning in the Primary Classroom*, London: SAGE.
- Hendry, R. (2009) *Building and Restoring Respectful Relationships in Schools*. London: Routledge
- Hopkins, B. (2004) *Just schools*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Hopkins, B. (2012) Restorative Justice as Social Justice. *Nottingham Law Journal*, 21(12)
- Hughes, N. K. & Schlösser, A. (2014) The effectiveness of nurture groups: a systematic review, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 19:4
- Kane, J., Lloyd, G., McCluskey, G., Riddell, S., & Stead, J. (2006) *Restorative Practice in Three Scottish Councils: Final Report of the Evaluation of the first two years of the Pilot Projects 2004-2006* An Evaluation funded by the Scottish Executive
- Kelly, P. and Colquhoun, D. (2005) The professionalisation of stress management: Health and well-being as a professional duty of care, *Critical Public Health* 15(2)
- Kohn, A. (2006) *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall
- Leach, T. & Lewis, E. (2013) Children's experiences during circle-time: a call for research-informed debate, *Pastoral Care in Education*, 31(1)
- Littlechild, B. (2011) Conflict Resolution, Restorative Approaches and Bullying in Young People's Residential Units, *Children & Society*, 25(1)
- Lu, C. & Buchanan, A. (2014). Developing Students' Emotional Well-being in Physical Education, *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 85(4)
- 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)
- McGrath, J. (2004) *Restorative Practices in Education: Managing Challenging Behaviour*, Evaluation Report for Southend-on Sea, Newry: Netcare Consultancy
- McLean, A. (2003) *The Motivated School*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing
- Mowat, J. (2007) *Using Support Groups to Improve Behaviour*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Mosley, J. (1998) *Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom: Your Essential Guide to Enhancing Self-esteem, Self-discipline and Positive Relationships*, London: LDA

GRANT: TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO RESTORATIVE APPROACHES PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND WELLBEING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTING AND THE WIDER SCHOOL?

- Nurturing Inverclyde (2013) *Getting it Right for Every Child, Citizen and Community through Promoting Positive Relationships and Positive Behaviour in our Education Establishments*, Inverclyde: Inverclyde Council
- Rigby, K. (2014) How teachers address cases of bullying in schools: a comparison of five reactive approaches, *Educational Psychology in Practice: theory, research and practice in educational psychology*, 30(4)
- Scottish Government (2011) *Building Curriculum for Excellence Through Positive Relationships and Behaviour*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government
- Scottish Government (2012a) *Behaviour in Scottish Schools 2012*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government
- Scottish Government (2013) *Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government
- Scottish Government (2014) *The purpose of Curriculum for Excellence: The Four Capacities*, Retrieved from <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp>
- Slavin, R. (1995). Best evidence synthesis: An intelligent alternative to meta-analysis, *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 48(1)
- Treadwell, J., Singh, S., Talati, R., McPheeters, M. and Reston, J. (2012) A framework for best evidence approaches can improve the transparency of systematic reviews, *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 65(11)
- Wearmouth, J., Mckinney, R. & Glynn, T. (2007) *Restorative justice in schools: a New Zealand example*, *Educational Research*, 49(1)