

Creating a safe and inclusive culture at North Ainslie Primary School



North Ainslie promotes a non-coercive student management approach where our goal is to repair harm, sustain positive respectful relationships and build a safe, calm and supportive learning community in which all members of our school community are able to build relationships and connections

Rationale

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. As an IB school, North Ainslie's goal is to maintain a learning environment in which children can grow and learn. Our school community agrees that learning environments are needed in which every member, child and adult alike, feels safe, supported, respected and valued. Our curriculum is underpinned by *restorative and relational practices* and the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile attributes. In order to achieve these goals we have social and emotional learning programs and explicitly teach the IB attributes and attitudes. We use a range of strategies to work with all community members, including Circle Time, corridor conferencing, informal and formal restorative conferencing, evaluation and reflection of learning, affective statements, relational questions, problem solving circles and mediation. Everything we do is underpinned by restorative and relational practices.

The North Ainslie School Culture:

All members of our school community have a voice that is heard and demonstrate a capacity and willingness to:

- Actively participate in the school community (including parents)
- Accept responsibility for addressing issues
- Work collaboratively in response to problems
- Recognise, acknowledge and repair relationships when harm has been done
- Respect and trust others in the community
- Reflect and evaluate
- Accept challenge
- Empower others

Non-coercive behaviour management strategies

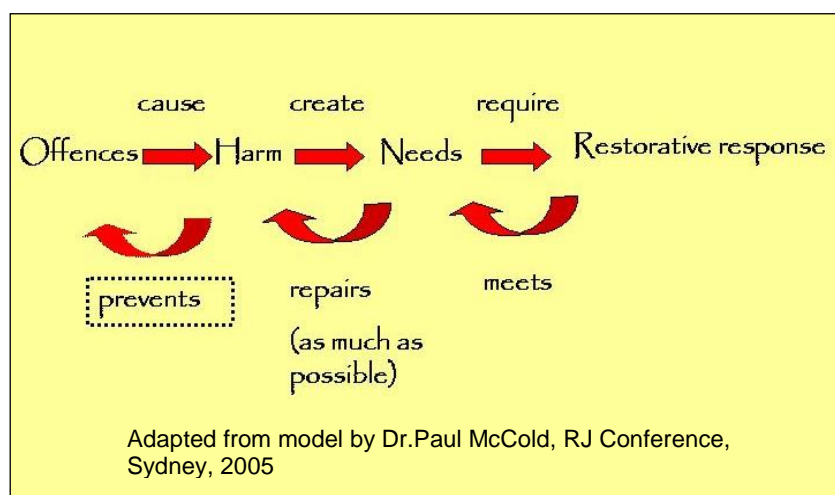
Our experiences have demonstrated to us that punishment and exclusion are ineffective strategies for addressing harm in schools. The implementation of restorative practices has provided us with a framework, which improves the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies being used by students and teachers, and empowers victims and offenders to restore relationships and establish new, supportive alliances with others.

At North Ainslie we operate using the “firm but fair” model, encouraging all members of our community to denounce unacceptable behaviour and clarify values, and to seek just resolution of conflict which will meet the needs of the victim, offender and others involved in the conflict. Our goal is to develop social capacity within our school community by involving all parties in decision-making processes.

The Restorative Justice framework provides a simple set of carefully delivered questions for use in informal and formal conference situations where harm has occurred, which will meet the needs of all concerned. We encourage staff and community to use these questions in cases of conflict both in the classroom and on the playground. Where a more formal approach is required, we provide support from a member of the leadership team, or a teacher who is trained to facilitate restorative processes.

A Snapshot of the Theory of Restorative Justice

- **Crime harms people and relationships**
- **Justice requires repair of these harms (as much as possible)**



“A restorative process means any process in which the victim and the offender and, where appropriate, any other individuals or community members affected by a crime participate together actively, generally with the help of a facilitator” (UN, April, 2002).

“A restorative outcome is the result of a restorative process, namely this process”.

Restorative Justice seeks to meet most of a victim’s needs, and to empower victims by letting them tell their story. The key restorative questions focus on who has been harmed by conflict, and what needs have been created by the harm.

During a restorative process, harm is acknowledged, the stakeholders propose solutions to meet their needs, and agreements are made by the offender, which will repair the harm done to the victim, as much as possible. Restoration is made “in kind” wherever possible and is relevant to the offence. Just and fair outcomes are essential. Exclusion and stigmatisation are avoided. Collaboration, compassion and reintegration are sought.

During the Restorative Conference Process we use the following questions to guide our repairing of relationships.

| Restorative Questions I |
|---|
| <p><u>When things go wrong.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened?• What were you thinking of at the time?• What have you thought about since?• Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?• What do you think you need to do to make things right? |

| Restorative Questions II |
|---|
| <p><u>When someone has been hurt.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did you think when you realised what had happened?• What impact has this incident had on you and others?• What has been the hardest thing for you?• What do you think needs to happen to make things right? |

At North Ainslie these words reflect our vision of a Restorative Justice school which looks to the future:

Challenge, Cooperation, Commitment and Compassion

- We challenge all members of our community to seek and find answers, and to be accountable for excellent social and academic outcomes
- We foster cooperation between all members of our community to find solutions and work together towards excellent outcomes
- We demand commitment of teachers and students to build a strong and safe learning community
- We model compassion for all who enter our doors

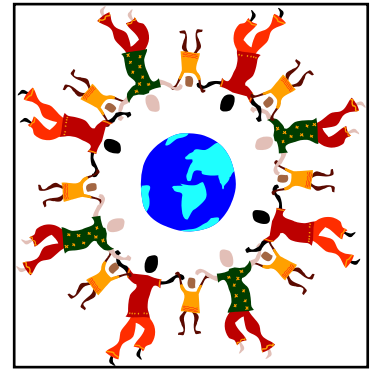
We also ask that our teachers and staff use these questions to ensure we consistently use restorative and relational practices across our school.

As a classroom teacher how restorative and relational are your practices?

- Do you take other's opinions into account?
- Are you genuine?
- Are you impartial?
- Can you speak less and listen more?
- Do you understand that victims have the right to say "no consequence"?
- How are you compassionate?
- How are you firm but fair?

Circle Time

Circle Time provides an opportunity for people to come together in a safe, supportive and enjoyable way to learn more about each other, to grow together as a team, to develop communication skills, to share exploration of problems and to celebrate achievements. Participants are able to develop their social, moral and emotional skills and develop a sense of shared purpose. (Belinda Hopkins)



Circle Time has been used in schools for some years. It is a group activity, which provides a forum in which issues can be identified, problems can be solved and conflict can be resolved. Active participation by every member of the circle is encouraged. Where the principles of circle time are incorporated into a whole school policy and are practised by adults and students, it can make a fundamental difference to the ethos of a school.

Circle time has several aims:

- To develop communication (listening and speaking) skills
- To develop emotional literacy
- To develop empathy and promote respect for others
- To promote an ethos of inclusion and acceptance
- To develop and maintain confidence and self esteem
- To build cohesion within a group or community
- To establish sound relationships

“Circle time has an important role to play in the prevention of bullying. It is a forum within which the nature and effects of bullying can be considered; and it can be used to develop an anti-bullying code to which all members of the school community have contributed.”
(*“Information on Circle Time”* by Andrew Mellor and Pamela Munn, 4//4/00, Anti-Bullying Network web site, accessed 24/10/04)

What does Circle Time look like? The teacher and children sit in a circle, either on cushions or chairs. Care is taken to have a circle of integrity, allowing each face to be seen by all other participants. Often a `talking object is used to facilitate discussion (e.g. a cuddly toy, a cushion or a small soft ball). This talking object is passed around the circle and the only person who is allowed to talk is the person holding the talking object. Often Circle Time will begin with a fun activity. The teacher acts as facilitator, and has a special responsibility to ensure that the agreed rules are kept and that the emotions of individuals are protected. The teacher will close Circle Time if students are persistently breaking the rules.

Three basic rules govern circle time:

- Only one person should speak at once - the talking object helps this rule
- You can "pass" if you don't want to speak about something
- No put downs