



# WILLOW TREE Academy

## A Restorative Academy



THE LEAF CENTRE



## Guidance Policy for Restorative Practice

# **Guidance Policy for Restorative Practices**

## **at Willow Tree Academy**

At Willow Tree Academy we believe that every member of our school community should have an equal opportunity to achieve his or her full potential regardless of race, colour, gender, disability, special educational needs or socio- economic background.

We believe that it is the right of all our pupils to be educated in an environment free from disruption by others.

This policy sets out the framework for the behaviour, responsibilities, values and attitudes expected of our community members within a Restorative Practice philosophy. Restorative Practice aims to build the Willow Tree Academy community and to repair and strengthen relationships within this community.

The school embraces Restorative Practice (RP) as a means of empowering teachers to be successful and effective practitioners within their classroom, raising standards and achievement across the school and developing aspirational, motivated and responsible pupils.

### **Aims of the Policy**

- To create a consistently orderly environment, both inside and outside of the classroom, which will enable everyone to work and learn.
- To reward students for academic achievement, completing and returning home learning, being equipped for school and behaving well in lessons.
- To ensure that 'equality for all' is firmly embedded into all aspects of school life.
- To embed the use of Restorative Practices in all aspects of school life.

### **Restorative Approach**

At Willow Tree Academy, we have high expectations of all of our pupils. We encourage all children to try their best to achieve their goals. It is the responsibility of all staff and pupils to uphold and maintain our school expectations, which all children know and understand. Through regular and planned use of proactive restorative circles, we build close class communities where all children feel valued and they have a strong sense of belonging.

All members of staff are trained in the key principles of RP and we understand the importance of modelling positive language and behaviour and we take time to develop positive and meaningful relationships with colleagues and pupils. When positive relationships are developed and deep connections are made, individuals are less likely to cause harm to others or choose to damage relationships.

For occasions when unwanted behaviours arise, we use restorative approaches as outlined in this policy, to help pupils understand the impact of their actions and behaviour. This is done through a structured reactive circle in which we guide and teach the children how to make things right.

We believe that by using this restorative approach we are giving pupils the skills to independently make better, more responsible and more informed choices in the future.

Children at Willow Tree Academy are held accountable for their own behaviour choices and they accept and understand challenges by staff and the associated consequences.

### **Restorative Practices Philosophy Statement**

Effective Restorative Practices foster awareness of how others have been affected by inappropriate behaviour. This is done by actively engaging participants in a process which separates the deed from the doer and rejects the act not the actor, allowing participants to make amends for the harm caused. Restorative Practices acknowledges the intrinsic worth of the person and their potential contribution to the school community.

Restorative Practices framework will:

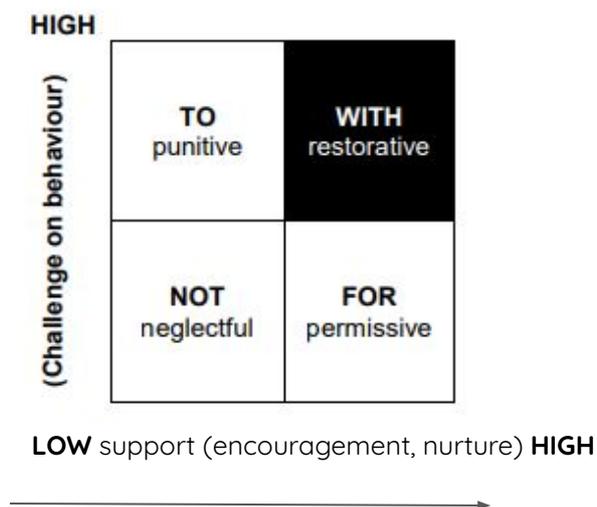
- Improve behaviour and attitudes
- Provide explicit tools within a defined framework to challenge unacceptable behaviour, resolve conflict and repair harm
- Improve relationships, establish rights, accountabilities and responsibilities to the community
- Provide a safe, philosophical basis for staff, pupils and parents to share ideas and discuss issues

There are four key elements of Restorative Practices.

These are:

- Social Discipline Window.
- Fair Process.
- Restorative Questions.
- Free Expression of Emotions.

## Social Discipline Window (Framework for working with children)



Wherever possible we should try to work in the 'with box', offering high support, nurturing and encouragement in conjunction with consistently setting clear boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Staff should always, within their professional conduct, be positive and respectful role models to all children.

### The Three Principles of Fair Process

1. Engagement – involving all participants in the process
2. Explanation – shared understanding
3. Expectation Clarity – clear vision for the future

### Key Restorative Questions (for use in reactive circles)

During the week, if there are any issues or conflict between children or adults they are dealt with in a restorative way, using a structured reactive circle. All members of staff and children know that issues will be dealt with fairly with a 'no blame' approach. Reactive circles work through the 'Three Principles of Fair Process' and the language used is fair, consistent and respectful. Reactive circles are held in a calm, quiet place and must be led by an objective third party. All staff are trained to lead reactive circles, and a large group of RP Reps are also equipped to do so, when appropriate.

Both the victim and perpetrator attend the reactive circle and the following questions are asked:

#### **1. To help those harmed by others actions:**

##### **What happened?**

Drawing out each person's story one at a time, starting with the person who has caused the harm. The aim is not to come to a definitive conclusion on what has happened, but for each person to have their point of view listened to

## How did you feel at the time?

What each person was thinking and feeling at the time, before and since

## What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

How do those people agree and negotiate meeting the needs identified above and what support might they need to do this? Staff support pupils in this process but try to ensure the pupils form their own agreement when possible.

## 2. To respond to challenging behaviour

- What happened?
- How did you feel at the time?
- How has the victim been affected by what you did?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right

The aim here is that the outcome is fair for everyone. If somebody is upset, we aim to make them feel better. If someone has done something wrong, we expect them to be accountable for their own behaviour, take responsibility for their actions and fix the situation by making things right with those who have been affected.

This approach encourages those involved to identify ways in which a relationship can be repaired or how they can move forward. By giving pupils this responsibility we are supporting them in developing their own strategies for avoiding and resolving conflict. We also believe that if pupils reach their own agreement as to how to move forward after a conflict, they are more likely to abide by it than if it is suggested by an adult or imposed upon them. By involving the pupils in the design of the agreement, we give them ownership over it and ensure it is helping them to resolve the situation and make amends in their own way.

All staff working within our school use active listening skills when dealing with a conflict. This enables them to draw out more from those involved.



Most situations can be dealt with fairly and promptly by using the above questions. If a child continues to misbehave, teachers consult with their phase leaders to seek additional advice and a Restorative Practice Conference may be needed.

### **The Restorative Approach and the use of Consequences**

When using consequences at Willow Tree Academy, the child(ren) should always be involved in a restorative conversation and be an active part of deciding upon any consequences. Staff ensure that these conversations are constructive and enable the child to learn from what has happened, as opposed to a sanction being imposed and the child seeing themselves as the victim of a punishment being done 'to' them.

We aim to help the children look out at the harm they have caused to others and see that their sanction is a way of putting things right with the person who has been hurt, as well as with the school community, which expects a high standard of good behaviour.

Some children with social, emotional or mental health difficulties require time to calm down and this is an important part of developing a child's self management skills. 'Time outs' can be offered to children before an incident is dealt with.

### **Differentiation within a Restorative Approach**

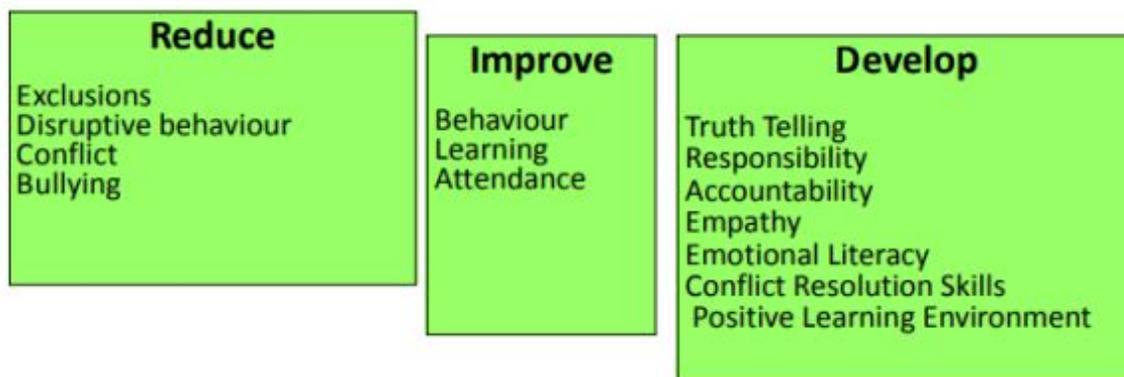
At Willow Tree Academy, we recognise that all children are unique individuals and therefore we are flexible in the manner in which we address any incidences of negative behaviour. The stages of the restorative approach always underpin our method in dealing with behaviour issues, but we are conscious that we adapt our approach to ensure it is suitable for the pupil's age and level of understanding.

When working with pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage our focus is on the initial stages of the Restorative Approach. Staff working with these pupils focus on helping them to grasp the concepts of feelings and how they are caused. Modelling, small group work, peer support and visual resources such as photographs are all used to support the pupils' understanding and development of empathy.

This approach is also adapted for other pupils throughout the school wherever required. Pupils with low levels of emotional maturity or those with SEND can require support in recognising how their actions have affected others or how they feel about an incident. Pupils are supported in developing their understanding of the restorative approach using tailored resources, lessons and at their own pace and level. Visual prompts and social stories are used to support this teaching.

Children identified as having significant social, emotional or mental health needs may require an alternative approach, which will be discussed and decided upon by the team around the child on an individual basis. Staff use their discretion and in-depth knowledge of the child/ren involved to determine how best to implement this approach and who to involve.

It has been found that by using a flexible restorative approach, it can



### 'Check In' Circles

Each class begins the week with a 'Check In' Circle. During this time classes sit together in a circle and everyone says something about themselves and how they are feeling. This ensures that all classes start the week in a personal way, and allows all children to have a voice and be heard. Staff intervene and support any child who may share an uncomfortable feeling and further discussion with an adult may be required to ensure that the child is ready to learn.

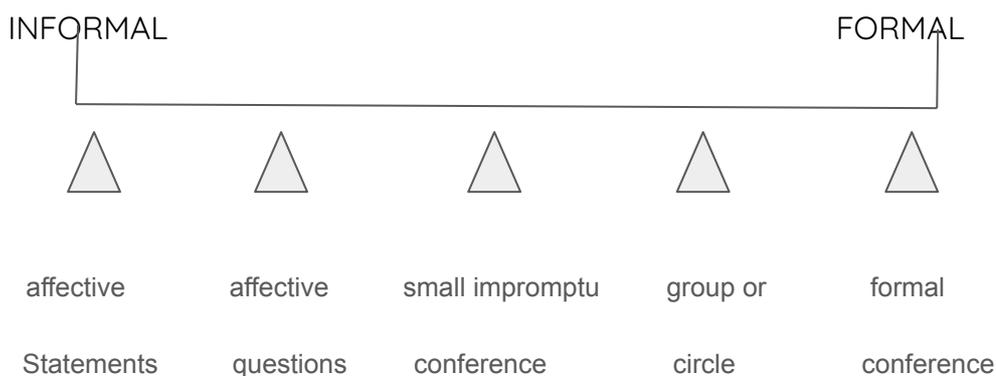
During the week, classes will check in or check out at different times, as and when appropriate. Through our proactive circles, expectations of behaviours are taught and reinforced on a regular basis and this is on-going throughout the year. Each class develops their own class rules for learning, circles and behaviour.

Classes also use other restorative proactive circles, which all staff are trained to facilitate. These may include:

- Icebreaker circles
- Restorative Norm Circles - rules of engagement as P4C
- Aspirations Circles
- Aims for the Day Circles

### Restorative Practices Continuum

At Willow Tree Academy we believe it is best to do things WITH PEOPLE. Wherever possible we use fair process and our responses to challenging behaviour always involve building relationships and repairing harm. It is our aim that our community follows this Restorative Practices framework. :



Much of the work carried out to address challenging behaviour should be accomplished by working within the informal end of the spectrum.

### **Restorative Language:**

It is important that staff deal with situations in a restorative manner, to establish and develop their own relationships with children. We always aim to separate the deed from the doer and the act from the actor, as integral to Restorative Practice philosophy.

Listed below are some examples of affective statements and questions which all staff use with pupils:

### **Informal- Affective statements**

I am sorry that I misunderstood the situation .....

I feel really proud of you when I heard .....

I feel really pleased and encouraged that you made the right choice.

I respected your honesty and thank you.

I want to thank you for your cooperation.

I was very disappointed when you did that to ....

I am upset and angry by what has just happened.

I feel that all the work I have done has been wasted through your actions.

I feel that (describe action) was very disrespectful.

I feel disrespected and angry when you ignore me.

### **Formal- Restorative Practice Conference**

A pupil may be asked to attend a Restorative Justice Conference if they are having a more serious conflict at school. This is a meeting with everyone involved and would always involve a senior member of staff. The aim of the Conference is to:

- Discuss what is happening
- Look at who has been affected or upset
- Decide how it can be put right
- Find a way forward

- in a way that is fair to everyone -

To make sure that those who have been using poor behaviour can be held accountable they will be expected to take responsibility for their actions before the meeting starts.

This allows the school to:

- Hold pupils accountable for their poor behaviour
- Give those affected by this behaviour the opportunity to be acknowledged and have the wrongs 'put right'
- Support those displaying poor behaviour to make better choices in the future

During a conference an agreement is made, this will list actions or promises that the individual's need to agree to carry out so the conflict can be put right and doesn't happen again. Someone within school will make sure that everyone is keeping to the agreement.

Parents/carers may also be invited to attend a conference if it is felt that it would be helpful for your child that you were there.

To be reviewed October 2025