Restorative Practice Policy

*St. Colman’s National School, Mucklagh*

The Restorative Practice Policy in St. Colman’s National School is a statement of good practice that reflects the restorative ethos of our school. The policy promotes whole-school preferred practices and the explicit building of positive and healthy relationships, recognising the centrality of such relationships to wellbeing and learning for all. This policy is underpinned by the philosophy of Restorative Practice (RP) which focuses on the building, maintaining and repairing of relationships.

“Restorative Practice is a values-based philosophy; it aims to consciously build relationships, respond to harm/conflict in a way that honours relationships, and CONNECT us to our best selves and to one another”, Michelle Stowe.

Our ethos builds relationships by recognising the voice of every child and member of our school community. We aim to develop self-awareness, self-esteem and resilience. Our curriculum allows each individual to follow a pathway of learning that builds on their interests and strengths, and supports their personal and academic aspirations. Our approach to learning supports recognition and inclusion for all within the local, national and international community. Our involvement with the community builds sustainability in relationships and connects our students with relevant learning opportunities.

**Our Core Value: Respect**

By working together, we can all achieve our potential in learning and in life. It is important that we have a literacy around our values so that we can model, cultivate and promote them in our daily interactions with each other.

**Relationships** – we value relationships and actively seek to build positive and healthy relationships across the school community

**Empathy** – being curious about the thoughts, feelings and actions of others; listening to understand; being compassionate and kind; perspective sharing

**Safety** – we aim to establish a safe environment as we know that this is key to all personal growth and development.

**Personal accountability** – we seek to be our best selves by being personally accountable; accepting responsibility for our own actions, and supporting others by seeking and finding the best in them when they find this difficult, particularly during times of emotional trauma or stress

**Equity** – we support each other by seeking to identify, understand and meet the needs of our community, respecting diversity and valuing everybody’s voice

**Community** – we recognise the importance of connection with others and strive to ensure that everybody feels valued and a sense of belonging. We aim to keep everybody in community even and especially when things go wrong

**Trust –** we value and cultivate trust by honouring truthful ways of being and by honouring the RESPECT values, even and perhaps especially, in times of challenge. We trust the goodness in others when we seek their best selves. We know that trust is essential to effective communication and to building strong relationships

RESPECT and unconditional positive regard for all as we are all human beings These values form the basis of all our decisions and approaches, informing how we intend to meet the community within our school and beyond. RESPECT shows up all day, every day, in a number of ways. It is our hope that anyone visiting the school will be able to identify our core values by the dispositions and actions they see and experience, and the feeling they get as they spend time in our school community.

**Relationships**

As a restorative school we are committed to the belief that everybody is worthy and interconnected, that respectful communication is essential to healthy relationships, and that power is to be shared in order to sponsor agency and support everyone to grow and flourish in a way that allows for individual and collective needs to be met. As such, we work WITH people, not doing things to, for or ignoring them, as is the heart of restorative practice.

Relationships are at the heart of everything we do in our school. We are committed to the building of positive and healthy relationships that support our wellbeing. Our hope is that we all feel valued and connected. When things go wrong, as sometimes they do, by developing compassion and accountability we will seek to find a way forward together. Acknowledging the harm that has been caused to relationship(s) and deciding on action(s) in community that will seek to make amends for what has happened, will support everybody involved. Whole-school practices are outlined below.

The promotion and modelling of positive engagement and relationships is the responsibility of the school community as a whole. The Board of Management, Principal and staff team are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the school’s Code of Behaviour and its application, promote the ethos and the restorative philosophy of the school.

**Commitment of Staff Members**

Staff members can demonstrate their commitment to our community by:

• Fulfilling the Mission Statement of the school

• Providing a curriculum that seeks to meet the needs of all students, that builds on their natural curiosity, initiative and talents, enabling them to develop their knowledge, understanding, skills and values to their maximum potential

• Setting high expectations for themselves and the students in learning and teaching

• Agreeing appropriate and meaningful tasks with clear guidance and a realistic timescale for completion

• Keeping students and parents/guardians informed about school affairs and individual student progress

• Being clear about community expectations and boundaries (what’s okay and what’s not okay)

• Caring for the safety and wellbeing of students

• Listening to concerns and responding to them sensitively with the school’s values in mind

**Responsibilities of the Teacher**

The teachers create a restorative environment by modelling our values and building positive learning relationships with the students. The teachers take the time to engage with the practices and processes, demonstrating competency and consistency to support the students in their care.

**Responsibilities of SNAs**

Special Needs Assistants model our values and build positive relationships. SNAs support the teacher in their role and can assist in running restorative practices such as conversations and meetings. SNAs have a significant role in contributing to a positive and restorative classroom and school culture.

Virtually all so-called ‘discipline issues’ tend to stem from, or result in, inter-personal conflicts, which leave two or more people feeling angry, hurt, resentful, anxious or even afraid.

**When in conflict people need:**

• A chance to tell their story

• Express their feelings

• Understand how the situation happened

• Understand how it can be avoided another time

• To feel understood by the others involved

• An acknowledgement of the harmed caused

• To find a way to move on.

**Punitive responses can:**

• Cause resentment rather than reflection

• Are rarely considered fair

• Do not repair relationships

• Leave wrongdoers feeling bad about themselves leading to further alienation

• Can often leave the adults who are expected to act punitively, feeling uncomfortable and frustrated.

**The key to a successful outcome is if it is arrived at by those people actually involved in the conflict.**

Restorative Practice has a set of explicit and observable practices that help to bring this way of being to life when responding to harm. They range from the informal to the formal depending on what is considered to be a suitable response.

**Restorative Conversations** – informal chat using restorative questions, allowing for feelings to be expressed and the promotion of empathy. Individual member of staff team takes initiative and models the process, seeking to share and invite responses in a reciprocal process.

**Restorative Circles** – build relationships and/or solve problems. Individual member of staff team takes initiative and leads process.

**Restorative Meetings** – group facilitated to resolve conflict and to respond to harm to relationships. Individual member of staff team takes initiative and leads process. The meetings follow a specific questioning format adhered to by all staff members. The questions are as follows:



**Restorative Conferences** – group facilitated to address wrongdoing and respond to harm. These require a great deal of preparation and planning. The progress leader / deputy principal / principal and/or the relevant members of the staff team will be involved.

**Teacher:**

• Facilitates discussions about what the class needs to work and to give of their best

• Facilitates Restorative Circles to build shared responsibility

• Designs seating plans and grouping as necessary, to be changed regularly to promote relationship building and inclusion

• Models affective language and emotional literacy to cultivate empathy

• Models Restorative Conversations modelled and promoted by Restorative Language as appropriate • Facilitates Restorative Meetings (with Agreement as appropriate)

• Monitors and evaluates progress.

**Special Needs Assistant:**

• Models affective language and emotional literacy to cultivate empathy

• Facilitates Restorative Conversations modelled and promoted by Restorative Language as appropriate and as agreed with the teacher when withdrawal may be necessary

• Facilitates Restorative Meetings (with Agreement as appropriate)

• Makes referrals to teacher, deputy principal or principal to scaffold and seek support where necessary.

**Principal:**

• Facilitate Restorative Conversations

• Facilitate Restorative Meetings (with Agreement as appropriate)

• Facilitate Restorative Conferences (with Agreement as appropriate)

• Co-create, share and review Support Programme where necessary

• Make referrals to outside agencies

• Observes patterns and documents progress

• Proceed to suspension when necessary and particularly when our school value of safety is in question

• Proceed to expulsion with the Board of Management when necessary with the intention of supporting the student and meeting their needs, when our school community can no longer seem to do so or when the health and safety of the community has been jeopardised.

**Monitoring and Evaluating**

The school will regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Restorative Practice Policy. This will inform the School Development Plan and lead to identification of targeted training for staff team members implementing the policy.

This policy was agreed by the Board of Management:

Signed: Fr. Mike Whittaker Date: 28/9/22

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: Kay Joyce Date: 28/9/22

Principal, St. Colman’s National School