RESTORE

RECOGNITION of what's happened and that our experiences during lockdown have all been different, life-changing for many and significant for us all. How do we encourage everyone to share their story of the pandemic so far?

EMPATHY for the mix of emotions that we have in response to events at home, in school, the community and in the wider world. How can we respond with empathy, compassion and self-care, whether we are staff, students or parents?

SAFETY will be paramount, both emotional and physical. How do we re-establish a sense of safety for this new normal so that students are able to learn and all are able to thrive? How do we help those who may have felt unsafe whilst they've been away from school, feel safe again?

TRAUMA is now a collective as well as an individual experience, how does the school community process this? How do we support people who have experienced very particular traumas during lockdown or who are facing an even more uncertain future?

OPPORTUNITY to change what needs to be changed, to reflect on what matters to us and if we'd like to do anything differently. How do we learn from this experience, now that we know we can question even seemingly fixed aspects of our world?

RELATIONSHIPS are key, as they always have been. How do we reconnect, and (re-)build inclusive, responsive relationship at all levels in school?

ENGAGEMENT in our own health and well-being and with the issues that affect us: our teaching, learning and community. How do we foster a culture that enables staff and students to have ownership of and agency in their lives?

RESTORE provides a restorative perspective that can inform how we plan for the return to the classrooms, playgrounds and corridors of physical schools.

It highlights seven key areas which, alongside learning, are where we need to stimulate thinking and make decisions in order to collectively move forward into a healthy 'new normal'. The areas intersect, interconnect and affect each other, as we all do. RESTORE is a lens through which staff, children and parents can look at the strategy and plans that are needed for everyone's well-being in a fast changing environment and for a safe and healthy return to school.

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INTRODUCTION

RESTORE is the fruit of an ongoing collaboration among a group of Head Teachers, consultants, researchers and charities working in and with schools to implement and embed a restorative approach.

We are connected by a shared belief in the value of the philosophy and practice of restorative approaches to help schools at this unprecedentedly difficult time. The details of the people and organisations involved can be found on the RESTORE poster and at the website: restoreourschools.com

The restorative approach in schools is values-based and needs-led. It highlights the importance of relationships for emotional wellbeing, resolving conflict, preventing harm and building resilient communities. The approach works by ensuring a consistent and congruent approach to the building, maintaining and repairing of relationships. The approach enables decisions to be made with reference to five core restorative principles:

- Everyone has a unique perspective

- Our thoughts and feelings influence our behaviours

- Our actions have a ripple effect

- We have needs that connect us to people and purpose

- The people best placed to find solutions to problems are the people affected by the problem

The seven themes represented by the seven letters of the word RESTORE emerged from our discussions on the current pandemic and its impact on us all, but particularly on schools: the students, parents and care-givers and the school staff.

The letters of the word RESTORE, could be seen as falling into two areas of need, one the recent past and our experiences of it, and the other looking ahead to how we want to be as a result of this experience:

- The first four letters of the acronym, relating to **Recognise**, **Empathise**, **Safety** and **Trauma**, are connected to what has happened and its effects on us.

- The last three letters, relating to **Opportunity**, **Relationships** and **Engagement**, are key to how we are going forward into a new normal.

It is not meant to be a linear model, to be followed letter by letter. Rather, the themes from RESTORE are connected, they shade into one another and influence each other, they overlap and interlock and reflect one another.

Our aim is to support schools in their strategic thinking in preparation for re-opening, whenever and in whatever shape that takes, and in their operational planning for the return of pupils. We hope that this guidance material provides a framework to help school leaders, teachers and support staff critically assess and reflect on the school's practice and provision as they prepare for a phased return to school.

The write-up for each theme includes a definition of the theme, why it particularly matters at this time, and some suggested questions to guide thinking and planning. We actively encourage you to make contact with us via the website to let us know what we might provide that would be of value to you.

The resources we are co-creating are shared here freely, for anyone to use as a complete tool or to dip into, whether the school has a restorative ethos or not. Above all, we hope that when the time is right for schools to re-open, this model can provide a useful contribution to building safe and healthy schools and communities.

▪ RECOGNITION

RECOGNITION of what's happened, and that our experiences during lockdown have all been different, life-changing for many and significant for us all. How do we encourage everyone to share their story of what's happened and their experiences of the pandemic so far?

What is recognition?

The word recognition has two meanings:

- ▪ To identify someone or something, often from a previous encounter, with a meaning more akin to *acknowledging* or *discovering*.

- ▪ To give value or validity to something, with a meaning more akin to *appreciation* and *affirmation*.

People can give recognition to themselves and their experiences, and give recognition to others, in both senses referred to above.

Why is recognition important now?

As people return to school there will be an urgent and important need to share personal experiences of lockdown – to talk and to feel heard. Experiences will have been very different:

- ▪ For some people it will have been a **very special time of deep connection** with their family and may have involved shared activities that deserve to be cherished and maintained. Recording these special times may help people to recognise for themselves what they want to keep hold of and build on. They may feel sad that this special time could be over and that the moments they cherished will be forgotten, the activities they enjoyed will become memories.

- ▪ For some people the lockdown **will have been challenging, even traumatic**. Tempers may have been frayed; conflicts with family members may have been a regular occurrence. They may have struggled to meet school expectations of on-line work through lack of adequate equipment (even basics like pens, pencils and paper, let alone access to a computer and to wi-fi).

- ▪ And for some people lockdown **will have been a terrible and frightening experience**, with some or all of the following – food shortages, hostility, violence or threats of violence, fear and pain. There may have been sickness, hospitalization of family members and even death in the close or extended family. Some people may have attended their first funeral. Any of these events could be **traumatising**.

Experience of **trauma** will impact on people's capacity to respond to the usual expectations of behaviour and output. **Recognition** of this will be important for managing these expectations on self and others, and may involve adapting systems, policy and practice.

One final point about recognition – and this is the recognition that whatever we see and hear people do in school there is much more going on beneath the surface. The restorative way of thinking about behavioural challenges will become very important as children and young people return to school.

There is no doubt that behaviour will not be 'normal'. The old normal is gone and the new normal has yet to be established. Behaviour may well be abnormal, as people respond to an abnormal situation. Patience, tolerance and **empathy** are going to be required in large measure and the **recognition** that all behaviour is coming from a place of unmet need.

How can we give recognition to what has happened at this time?

See questions to stimulate thinking on the next page.

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■ RECOGNITION *continued*

» With the Senior Leadership Team and with the
staff group:

- How will you make time for recognising the impact the experience has had on you?

- How will you ensure that all of your staff have access to a non-judgemental listening ear so that their needs can be addressed, and they can return to school ready to give their best?

- What is the best listening frame for this recognition? One-to-one with listening buddies/mentors, or in circles/groups?

- How will you encourage staff to recognise that they will need to start all over again establishing new norms for a new normality – working *with* their students to establish how things will be?

- How can you encourage staff to resist responding to abnormal or needy behaviours in punitive ways, and instead recognise that these behaviours are likely to be signs of distress as pupils grapple with what they have been through and are going through?

With children:

- How can every pupil be supported to recognise their own growth during the lockdown, no matter how positive or how challenging the time has been for them?

- How can they be supported to record this growth through a variety of mediums?

- How can their own listening skills be developed to offer recognition to each other?

- How can pupils be involved in creating the new normality?

With parents and carers:

- Can this group be encouraged to support each other?

- Are there ways to recognise what they have been through?

- Not all parents/carers will have managed to support their children in their academic learning as the school would have wished. However, many may have been even more creative. How can recognition be given to everyone – whatever has been achieved? How can all ways of teaching and all ways of learning be recognised in both senses of the word?

- What role could parent/carer circles/groups play in this recognition?

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EMPATHY

EMPATHY for the mix of emotions that we have in response to events at home, in school, the community and in the wider world. How can we respond with empathy, compassion and self-care, whether we are staff, students or parents?

What is empathy?

Empathy is "the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling".

"Empathy is communicating that incredible healing message of 'You are not alone'" (Brené Brown).

Why is empathy important now?

Beginning interactions with empathy can keep people **safe** by preventing unnecessary escalation of conflict. Empathy is also important for recognising and **responding** to **trauma**. We should also be aware of the signs that individuals may be suffering. Challenging or difficult behaviour can often be a sign that children and young people are struggling to manage their emotions. According to Marshall Rosenberg, "every violent action is a tragic expression of unmet need", and now more than ever we should be responding to these unmet needs with empathy.

It is crucial that we as educators find opportunities to develop empathy amongst children, young people and adults (staff, parents etc) to acknowledge and **recognise** that we have all had different experiences of COVID-19 as we emerge from lockdown.

How can we enact and build empathy at this time?

With the Senior Leadership Team and with the staff group:

- Can you start meetings with a check-in to ask how people are feeling and **recognise** what is important to them before beginning an agenda?

- What formal and informal networks are already in place to support staff and students who may be struggling? Does additional space need to be created in the school routine for peer support?

- How do you **recognise** those for whom empathy can lead to burn out? What targeted support is in place to support them?

- How can you communicate 'It's ok to not be ok'? What plans are needed for the possibility that staff and children may need extra time/ support as needs become identified?

- What has the school already taught about the importance of empathy and the ways it can be developed? Can this be revisited and developed as part of a return to school curriculum?

■ SAFETY

SAFETY will be paramount, both emotional and physical. How do we re-establish a sense of safety for this new normal so that students are able to learn and all are able to thrive? How do we help those who may have felt unsafe whilst they've been away from school, feel safe again?

What is safety?

Safety is a state or a place where you are not in danger or at risk of harm.

Why is safety important now?

Chidlren and staff will have had their sense of safety – physical and emotional – threatened in different ways by the pandemic:

- **Physical safety:** Young people and staff may be concerned about whether it is safe to be in school yet, how the physical distancing measures will be met, whether to wear masks or not, what to do about sanitation, coughing and sneezing.

- **Emotional safety:** Fear and anxiety may be prevalent. Fear of catching a potentially deadly virus, fear of larger groups, fear for their parents and wider family. Ongoing physical distancing requirements may increase anxiety and impact on people's ability to engage with one another and with teaching and learning.

Once it has been deemed safe to re-open schools, getting back to normal – albeit a new normal – in the routines and the rhythm of school life will help to restore a sense of safety. People's emotional and physical safety will be restored through having the opportunity to **recognise** and share their experiences at a safe distance, alongside experiencing success in the course of the school day.

How can we restore physical and emotional safety at this time?

Our need for safety can be addressed by **recognising** this need in ourselves, articulating it to others, listening to others with **empathy** and then discussing how we can all behave so that our collective need for safety can be addressed. If we do not deal with the difficult questions and feelings, they may present 'underground' through bullying behaviours, or social isolation of individuals through misinformation and/or misunderstanding.

In addition, the emotional turbulence may lead to difficulties in learning and attention in different parts of the school day.

With the Senior Leadership Team and with the staff group:

- What changes do we need to make to classroom layout? What changes can we make to ensure safer movement around the school?

- How can we develop a time and space to engage with young people so they can share their concerns and how do we record and act on the concerns we hear?

- How do we provide a time and space to engage with staff so they can share their concerns and feedback on the changes? What opportunities are there for supervision?

- How and when do we communicate changes? To staff, students, parents, the community.

- How do we ensure we get the balance right? Making sure we don't over-protect?

- What data are we using to identify those in most need? How will we know if the changes are working? Where are we getting the data from? Parents, agencies, students, staff?

- How will we re-establish routines in a way that keeps people both physically and emotionally safe?

With children:

- What do you need to help you feel safe physically and emotionally?

- What can you do to help yourself?

- What can you do to help others in the school community?

- How can learning help? How can the school environment help?

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TRAUMA

TRAUMA is now a collective as well as an individual experience, how does the school community process this? And how do we support people who have experienced very particular traumas during lockdown or as a result of facing an even more uncertain future?

What is trauma?

Trauma is damage done by distressing events, to individuals and communities.

Many schools are familiar with adverse childhood experiences (the ACEs model) and the effect of trauma on our children and young people, but what about collective trauma? This is felt in the aftermath of seismic events and can last a long time.

Why is trauma important now?

The massive upheaval we are going through potentially brings trauma from many sources: fearing for loved ones, losing loved ones, economic insecurity, fear of an unseen enemy out there, isolation and separation during lockdown, generalized anxiety, unsafe homes, the barrage of news and social media, and life changing in the blink of an eye.

It is the effects of trauma that are of concern. Many staff in schools will be familiar with the symptoms of individual trauma as shown by some young people being on high alert all the time. Symptoms of collective trauma, as identified by experts such as Thomas Hübl and Bruce Perry, include feeling separate, isolated and distancing ourselves internally from what is experienced as difficult. Our nervous systems don't regulate well, and we can experience hyper-vigilance and emotional dissonance (a conflict between what we experience and what we express).

Being aware and **recognising** these effects of trauma is important as we return to school as we all feel a great pressure to normalize things for ourselves and young people, to rush back into the familiar, to be positive. Of course, these things are important, but **if not addressed, the event and the ensuing trauma can be the invisible enemy in the room**. This then has implications for health, learning, education, and physical, emotional and social development

How can we address the effects of trauma at this time?

The good news is that, according to specialists like Thomas Hübl, what helps heal this collective trauma are things that we have and can emphasise in school culture and community: healthy **relationships**, a human skill set (what we might call social and emotional learning, including **empathy**), and being there for one other, **recognising** this as a collective event that has affected, and continues to affect, us all.

With the Senior Leadership Team and with the staff group:

- What preparation/training do staff need to **recognise** and cope with not only their own upheaval and perhaps trauma, but that of students? How can you ask them? Who can provide this and how?

- What balance do we need to find between being positive, giving a sense of normality and recognizing difficulty and pain?

- How can we help children (and ourselves) process in indirect ways what has happened, without necessarily focusing directly on the experiences we've had?

- What social and emotional learning were we doing before the pandemic that we can build on? What particular learning content and methodologies best support students to process what has happened (bearing in mind different starting points and capacities)?

- What are the **opportunities**, **safely**, to come together in collective experiences to reduce feelings of isolation and separateness? (music, movement, art, drama, ritual etc.)

- Is there any specialist support we need to plan for, for those students who may have experienced individual trauma in addition to our common experience?

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OPPORTUNITY

OPPORTUNITY to change what needs to be changed, to reflect on what matters to us and if we'd like to do anything differently. How do we learn from this experience, now that we know we can question even seemingly fixed aspects of our world?

What is opportunity?

The word *crisis* in the Japanese language is made up of two characters, a time of *danger* and a time of *opportunity*. Opportunity means a favourable, an opportune, time to do something. The Coronavirus crisis brings dangers, but also opportunities. Here, we focus on the opportunities.

Why is opportunity important now?

There is an incredible opportunity right now for us individually and collectively to rethink what matters and reshape what we do and how we do it. The disruption that we are experiencing from 'life as normal' has brought an opportunity for us to reflect: to reflect on what really matters, to reflect on what we do and why we do it, to think afresh about things that we may have taken for granted.

We have seen so many things we thought could not happen, happen. While this has been threatening, it also opens up our sense of possibility for what could be.

How can we make the most of the opportunities that this crisis brings?

With the Senior Leadership Team and with the staff group:

- How can we capture collectively our individual reflections?

- What thoughts have we been having about our school, about what matters, about how we work?

- What have we come to realise that we value most about our school, our work, our colleagues, our children and their families?

- Based on what we value, what areas of school life can we change for the better?

With staff:

- What opportunities does your subject area offer to help us reconnect as a community after being apart from one another?

- What have you come to realise really matters about your subject area? How are you planning to change what you teach and how you teach?

With children:

- What did you enjoy from doing things differently for a while, that you think we should learn from?

- What did you miss about school?

- What things are really important to you about our school?

- Based on what's really important, how can we make our school even better?

RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIPS are key, as they always have been. How do we reconnect, and (re-)build inclusive, responsive relationship at all levels in school?

Why are relationships important now?

The impact of national isolation has increased our awareness of the importance of relationships. A priority, as schools reopen, will be rebuilding relationships and repairing relationships where there has been harm.

Relationships between staff and children, and between children, will be the vehicle for effective communication in classrooms, corridors and communities. However, we must **recognise** that all the relationships on which schools depend will have been impacted. For example, children will return with varying degrees of anxiety as peer dynamics re-emerge, relationships with adults in school re-establish, and **recognition** of the level of progress relative to others emerges.

Some staff will return with new insights into the needs of the children they are teaching, and many staff will be negotiating different expectations from home or in their school role. These, alongside ongoing uncertainties as guidance on social distancing develop, will all impact the social and emotional capacity within the school system. An intentional focus on relationships will be essential for increasing a sense of being **safe** and accepted.

Effective leadership that prioritises building, maintaining and repairing relationships has always been the foundation for creating a whole school ethos of care. This must be a priority as schools move through the phases of react, RESTORE and reset for the future.

How can we build, maintain and repair relationships at this time?

With the Senior Leadership team and with the staff group:

- How have relationships changed?
  - Have some groups found improved ways of building relationships? Eg. Staff responsible for a group of children through the pandemic? Links to community?

- How have relationships been harmed?
  - Who has been isolated or excluded from communication/social media groups?
  - Have children experienced online bullying? How have we responded so far?
  - Which adults/children will be most vulnerable when we return?

- What will be the key relationships for an effective and speedy re-integration of the children and staff?
  - Will some children/staff need specific additional relationships? Will some capacity need to be re-deployed to focus on specific groups? How will those groups be identified?
  - How will systems for behaviour management respond to increased levels of emotional distress as routines and expectations are re-established?
  - How will space for children be created to rebuild relationships, mindful of social distancing both within and outside of school? How will the curriculum give re-building relationships priority?

- What strategies will support repairing relationships?
  - How can restorative approaches be used to address harm?
  - How could peer-mediators (where present) be prepared to support?

With children:

- Which relationships have you missed whilst being away from school?

- How have your relationships changed? With friends, parent/carer, with staff?

- Who is the person in school you would speak to if you are finding things difficult?

ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT in our own health and well-being and with the issues that affect us: our teaching, learning and community. How do we foster a culture that enables staff and students to have ownership of and agency in their lives?

What is engagement?

Engagement means 'to participate, to take action'. Much like many of the other RESTORE themes, this will be different for all of us. An individual's agency is perhaps the most important ingredient in successful engagement. Without agency, engagement may be meaningless. It's like the difference between consultation and collaboration. We know that when we **"do change to people they experience it as violence, but when people do change for themselves they experience it as liberation"**.

Why is engagement important now?

School leaders will of course need to return to some kind of normality and inevitably there will be a drive to return to routines of the past. This is unsurprising, as those rules and routines are the very things that keep schools safe providing both physical and emotional containment. But before we jump back into those routines it is going to be essential to engage with the school community and allow people to share their stories. Without a period of recognition and understanding the 'now' – enabling student agency will be almost impossible.

How can we encourage and enable engagement at this time?

With the Senior Leadership team:

- How will you be explicit as a school leader and demonstrate that you value people's engagement?

- Are you willing to take risks and allow others to lead?

- How will you ensure that all stakeholders are included?

- How do you promote equity of engagement where inequality is prevalent?

- What is the best listening frame for this engagement? Open forums, coaching conversations, circles, school council type meetings?

With the staff team:

- How can students regularly articulate their needs?

- How can this be made an intrinsic part of the feedback loop for curriculum development?

- How do you endorse the process, validate the work of others and demonstrate that you want to plan for recovery?

Within the curriculum:

- How will you address the need for additional pastoral and social emotional development?

- How will you demonstrate that you understand the grief that others have experienced?

- How will this be reflected in the curriculum?

With parents and carers:

- How can we offer empathy and spend time listening?

- When we do this, how can we ensure that we are being sensitive to individual family circumstances, cultural backgrounds and additional needs?

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