



Samford Valley  
Steiner School

# **Restorative Practices in Steiner Schools: Building Relationships, Repairing Harm**

*Restorative Practices Policy Explainer*

## **Introduction and Alignment with School Policies**

Restorative practices are a cornerstone of our approach to student wellbeing and conflict resolution, aligning with our Student Bullying Policy and Social Health and Wellbeing Policy. These practices are part of our commitment to fostering a respectful, caring and safe learning environment while ensuring consistent follow-through in addressing behaviours of concern.

## **What is Restorative Practice?**

Restorative practice is an approach to building community and responding to conflict that focuses on repairing harm and restoring relationships. Rooted in open dialogue, empathy and accountability, it encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact they have on others. Unlike traditional disciplinary methods, which focus on punishment, restorative practice prioritises healing, learning and meaningful outcomes.

## **Why Do Steiner Schools Use Restorative Practice?**

Restorative practice aligns deeply with Steiner education's focus on holistic development, community and personal growth. It reflects the school's commitment to nurturing the whole child, head, heart and hands. By addressing conflict through conversation, reflection, and repair, we guide students toward developing empathy, self-regulation and social responsibility. This approach supports the objectives outlined in our Social Health and Wellbeing Policy to foster emotional intelligence and resilience.

## The Research Behind Restorative Practice

Research consistently shows that restorative approaches lead to better outcomes than punitive methods. Studies have found that schools using restorative practices experience:

- Reduced bullying, suspensions and exclusions.
- Improved student relationships and sense of belonging.
- Higher academic engagement and improved classroom behaviour.
- Greater student and parent satisfaction with conflict resolution processes.

Restorative approaches help children understand the consequences of their actions, make amends and repair relationships, a process that builds resilience and emotional intelligence.

## When Restorative Practice Applies and When It Does Not

While restorative practice is our primary approach for resolving conflicts and repairing relationships, some behaviours are too serious to be addressed solely through this process. For more severe behaviours, such as violence, threats or repeated bullying, our Student Bullying Policy and Behaviour Management Framework outline a clear escalation process involving appropriate disciplinary measures, including possible suspensions or expulsions.

## How Parents Can Support Restorative Practice at Home

Parents play a vital role in reinforcing restorative values. Here's how you can support our approach:

- **Model Restorative Language:** Encourage your child to express their feelings and listen to others without blame.
- **Promote Accountability:** Help your child understand the impact of their actions and guide them to make amends.
- **Use Restorative Questions:** When discussing conflicts at home, ask, "What happened? Who has been affected? How can we make it right?"
- **Stay Engaged with the School:** Participate in restorative conversations and meetings when invited.

## Restorative Practice in Action: Examples

**Restorative Conversations:** A teacher facilitates a conversation where students involved in a conflict share their feelings and agree on how to repair the relationship.

**Circle Time for Conflict Resolution:** A teacher holds a restorative circle to address class-wide issues, allowing students to share perspectives and collectively decide on solutions.

## Restorative Practice in Action: Examples

**Restorative Agreements:** Students involved in a dispute create a written agreement outlining how they will treat each other moving forward.

**Reintegration Meetings:** A meeting with peers and teachers helps a student returning from suspension acknowledge harm caused and express readiness to rejoin the class respectfully.

Restorative practice is an integral part of our commitment to fostering a safe, supportive and connected school community. Together, with parents as partners, we can help our students develop the empathy, accountability and conflict-resolution skills they need for life.

## Restorative Practice in Steiner Schools: FAQs and Myth-Busting:

### **Q: Does restorative practice mean there are no consequences?**

No. Restorative practice ensures consequences are meaningful and constructive, focusing on repairing harm rather than just punishment.

### **Q: What research supports restorative practice?**

Independent research from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health and Harvard Kennedy School reports that restorative practices reduce student misconduct and increase positive behaviours ([read more](#)).

### **Q: Is this approach too soft?**

Not at all. It requires students to take responsibility and make amends, which often takes more courage than a simple punishment.

### **Q: Does it work better than traditional discipline?**

Yes. Research supports that restorative approaches reduce repeat behaviour issues and contribute to a safer school environment.

### **Q: Is it only for serious incidents?**

No. Restorative practice is also used for everyday interactions to strengthen relationships and resolve minor issues.

### **Q: Is it time-consuming?**

Building relationships takes time but prevents bigger issues from arising. Over time, conflicts decrease, and the overall culture becomes more positive and connected.

### **Q: What if I am worried about my child's experience with restorative practices?**

Contact your child's teacher or the wellbeing team to share your concerns. We will listen, explain the approach, and work with you to ensure your child feels safe and supported.

# What is it?

## Rude

When someone says or does something hurtful unintentionally, and it happens once.

**Example:** A thoughtless comment or action that wasn't intended to hurt.



## Unkind or Mean

When someone intentionally says or does something hurtful, and it happens once.

**Example:** Leaving someone out, teasing, or saying something hurtful on purpose.

## Harmful

When someone intentionally hurts another (physically or verbally), even after being asked to stop or when the victim shown signs of distress.

**Example:** Repeatedly criticising, intimidating or excluding someone despite their discomfort.



## Bullying

When harmful behaviour becomes a pattern- repeated words, actions or social behaviours that misuse power and cause ongoing harm.

**Example:** A sustained pattern of behaviour that leaves someone feeling unsafe or diminished.