

SAS AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Restorative Practice is founded in concepts of accountability, responsibility and empathy to support all members of the community by transforming the way people respond to wrongdoing. It strengthens connections to restore social capital, productivity and emotional wellbeing.

Spearwood Alternative School (SAS) has engaged with restorative practice for over 20 years. The school's original intent was to build a strong culture in which relationships are valued and any harm to those relationships could be repaired through a restorative approach. This involves relationships between students, staff, families and community members. This inspired the school ethos of *Education through Community: Community through Education* and the establishment of the SAS Harmony Groups and engagement with the Rock and Water program to support this intent.

SAS has partnered with Margaret Thorsborne (<https://www.thorsborne.com.au/margaret-thorsborne>) to facilitate restorative practice workshops and professional training for staff and families that has consolidated restorative practice in the school setting.

Restorative practice resonates with SAS values and positive behaviour approach and aligns with our signature pedagogy of student centred learning. SAS strives to nurture meaningful relationships and to build a strong sense of community.

SAS' whole school approach to restorative practice involve:

- creating a culture where individuals and the school community flourish and thrive;
- building, repairing and maintaining healthy relationships; and
- developing conflict resolution and capacity for children and adults.

This is achieved through:

1. Deepening connection and relationships with regular circle practices that involve the whole group to build speaking and listening skills, share knowledge and problem solve issues.
2. Teaching and modelling communication skills so that children share and listen to diverse opinions, embrace dissenting ideas and perspectives as part of the learning process.
3. Practicing facilitated learning that connects children with themselves and each other.
4. Explicitly teaching problem solving strategies in an individual and group context.
5. Curiosity – asking questions, not making assumptions, listening for understanding.
6. Treating conflict as natural, necessary and an opportunity to learn.
7. Investing time in developing relationships that are honest, supportive and collaborative.

Restorative Approach to Conflict

All SAS members learn to bravely engage in community through honest, and sometimes difficult, conversations. It is a way of being, thinking, interacting, teaching and learning – with relationships at the centre of all the school does. Adult conflict is managed in the same restorative way as the children. When relationships break down, as they can, SAS manages the following processes:

- sharing stories;
- hearing the impact of actions;
- repairing harm to the relationship/s; and
- working out the best way forward, together.

Restorative Practice underpins the SAS Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedures.