

# *Developing a Whole System Approach to Embedding Restorative Practices in Youthreach, Youth Work and Schools in County Donegal*



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**DONEGAL ETB RESTORATIVE  
PRACTICES PROJECT**

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# Acknowledgements

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# 1.0 Introduction

Donegal ETB has been developing restorative practices in schools, colleges, and Youthreach centres throughout the county for a number of years. Through the EU Peace III Programme, Donegal ETB was funded to expand restorative practices within education, informal education and the youth service. This represents a significant step towards the vision of Co. Donegal becoming a 'Restorative Practices' county.

The University of Ulster has contributed to this in the following ways:

- Four one day workshops exploring core concepts held in November/December 2011. Ninety-nine participants from schools, Youthreach and youth work organisations took part.
- The delivery of a Postgraduate Certificate in Restorative Practices to fifteen participants from across these settings, held between September 2012 and May 2013.
- Research to capture the development and delivery of restorative practices from Spring 2012 to Spring 2013. This report concentrates on the material from this research.

## 1.1 Understanding the Donegal Landscape

In 2012, the Restorative Practice team at the University of Ulster was commissioned to research the application of restorative practices in schools, Youthreach and youth work organisations in County Donegal participating in Donegal ETB's Peace III funded Restorative Practice project. The purpose was to investigate and establish a baseline measure of behaviours that caused difficulties and gauge current practice and application of restorative principles in these settings.

An initial step for the University was consultation with staff, managers and young people in Donegal. This was done through focus groups and individual interviews held in October/November 2011. This process informed the design of self-assessment instruments to enable organisations to measure and assess their progress towards the delivery of restorative practices. The impression at that point in time was of the commitment of principals, Youthreach Co-ordinators, youth service personnel and young people to meet with us and speak openly about the value and relevance of restorative practices in their programmes and organisations.

The important themes that emerged from these conversations included:

- A strand of restorative practices in the county that some traced to the 2004 Restorative Justice in Schools Initiative promoted by the HSE.
- The contributions of Paddy O'Connor, Margaret McGarrigle and Jim McGrath as individual trainers.
- The tension around restorative practices being viewed as central to the culture of the organisation or regarded as a behavior management tool.
- Variations from one setting to another in the ways restorative practices were used.
- An account that some staff saw restorative practices as a 'weak' response to problem behaviour in young people.
- The perspective of some that restorative practice was a movement that was dismissive of other good practice.
- The ways in which social media was used to cause harm to relationships.
- How young people discerned favourable differences between the approach from Youthreach staff compared to school staff.
- Some of the young people we met had a sound understanding of restorative practices and supported it. However, they also had expressed scepticism over how much power teachers are willing to give up and whether teachers would ever admit being in the wrong.

The success of restorative approaches, as an alternative tool to resolve difficult social issues, has extended beyond the domain of youth justice into a variety of sectors including education (Buckley, 2007). In the last decade, the application of restorative concepts within the field of formal and informal education has largely developed in response to the demands of improving inclusive practice within these environments. Within school settings some concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of traditional approaches to deal with issues associated with pupil disaffection, disengagement, non-attendance (DfES 2004; Webb and Vulliamy 2004) and growing concerns relating to disruption and increasing violence in schools (Cremin 2007; Hayden 2007; McCluskey 2008, Reid 2006, Parsons 2005; Munn, Lloyd, and Cullen 2000). As a result some schools have been looking for solutions to such concerns.

Some research studies have demonstrated that restorative conferencing offers a constructive mechanism to respond to inappropriate behaviour of a serious nature in schools (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Varnham, 2005). In this regard, Bitel concludes that although restorative practice in schools is not a panacea, if implemented correctly it can “improve the school environment, enhance learning and encourage young people to become more responsible and empathetic” (Bitel, 2005:13). In our view restorative practices are also understood and relevant in youth work and Youthreach programmes.

Restorative practices are based on valuing respectful relationships. To take restorative practices seriously implies that organisations will address their relational practices. This will mean cherishing caring, supportive relationships within which everyone is supported and challenged to grow. When harm occurs it is understood as damaging relationships. All restorative responses are directed at addressing the harm in ways in which relationships are restored. Some researchers have highlighted a more limited approach to restorative practices where it is viewed as another plank in a behavioural management strategy (McCluskey et al, 2008; Buckley and Maxwell, 2007; Blood 2005; Chmelynski 2005; Drewery 2004).

International research evidence suggests that comprehensive approaches to implementation through the integration of restorative philosophy, practices and principles into the wider relational culture are therefore required. A holistic approach to restorative practice, with its emphasis on relationships, requires that organisations attend to all aspects of the culture and organisation by developing relational practices which can help prevent incidents of inappropriate behaviour from occurring. In this context, Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) suggest that restorative practices must focus attention on the relationships between all members of the community to achieve quality outcomes and that “*Restorative Justice views misconduct not as rule-breaking...but as a violation against people and relationships in the wider community*” (*ibid.*, 183). Therefore, restorative practice in all education settings involves the whole community, including all staff, young people and parents to be involved and supportive (Hopkins 2004). This permits a more proactive approach to cultivate the best environment for the development of healthy relationships across the community which are critical for the delivery of improved student learning outcomes (Lingard et al., 2002; Blum et al., 2002; Weare, 2004).

In this report, the findings reveal the experiences of the sample of participating organisations. This includes their view of the challenges and benefits of restorative practice. The findings may have a number of policy and practice implications across all the settings researched in Co Donegal.

## 2.0 Methodology

The Restorative Practices project was premised on a sample of ten participating post-primary schools, five Youthreach centres and two youth work organisations in County Donegal over a continuous one year period. The study utilised a non-probability sample, which is a sample that is not selected through random sampling. The sampling procedure was purposive in that the participating organisations were identified as utilising or being interested in utilising restorative practices and invited to participate in the research. This procedure was considered suitable for the study because it was essential for the sample group to comprise of organisational leaders within a defined geographic location in order to collate meaningful and accurate data (Grinnell, 1993). Initially, fourteen post-primary schools participated in round one of the study, however, four schools did not participate in the second stage of the research.

### 2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires can be exploratory in nature (Bryman, 2004) and useful to compare responses over a set of standardised questions. As questionnaires are perceived to be a prompt method of obtaining data, this approach was adopted as it both permits a number of stages to be used over a period of time and facilitates data collection over large distances.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide an empirical measure of the inappropriate behaviours by young people within the organisational cohort and to empirically establish the use and understanding of the cohort in the application and use of Restorative Practices. To achieve this, focus groups and interviews with staff, managers and young people in Donegal (n=20) were conducted in October/November 2011. This process informed the design of self-assessment instruments to enable organisations to measure and assess their progress towards the delivery of restorative practices. Furthermore, academic literature and research were used in the questionnaire construction to formulate questions (DeVos, 1998). It was also important that the questionnaires collected both quantitative and qualitative data in order to generate multi-dimensional information to triangulate data and achieve greater validity of results (Ragin, 1994). Therefore, the questionnaires included both quantitative and qualitative data collection measures through the use of Likert Scale responses to establish measures of attitudes (Bryman, 2008) and qualitative questions to understand and interpret the findings.

#### 2.1.1 Questionnaire One

Questionnaire One was designed to explore how inappropriate behaviours by young people can be identified and classified as base lines for each organisation and collectively. The instrument was divided into eight areas which sought to unearth information relating to behaviour encompassing the mechanisms and sanctions utilized to control and respond to inappropriate behaviour and what restorative practices, if any, each organisation has initiated. This would provide a baseline from which to measure progress. After a period of 12 months, and following a period of work with participating organisations, they were again asked to complete Questionnaire One. This would allow the responses to be compared in order to identify and assess what progress has been made over the year period.

#### 2.1.2 Questionnaire Two

Questionnaire One was designed to establish the use of Restorative Practices amongst the participating organisational cohort. The instrument was divided into four component strands to identify and assess a whole organisational approach to restorative practices. After a period of 12 months the organisations were asked to complete Questionnaire Two. This would allow the responses to be compared with time period one in order to identify and assess what progress has been made.

## 2.2 Questionnaire Pilot

A pilot study of the questionnaire instrument can help to improve understanding and procedural difficulty. Prior to the questionnaire dissemination, a small number of education professionals (n=4) were provided with a copy of the questionnaire to streamline ambiguity, clarity of language, and confusion in format, which were contained within the initial design (Mason, 1996). The principal alterations from the pilot responses necessitated mainly cosmetic adjustments to the layout of the questionnaire, with a few changes to the terminology suggested to make issues less ambiguous.

## 2.3 Analysis of the Questionnaires

The results from Questionnaire One were organised and analysed around a number of areas pertaining to the identification and classification of behaviour including (1) use of warnings; (2) on report and warnings; (3) detention (schools); (4) time out; (5) suspension; and (6) expulsion. The results from Questionnaire Two were analysed pertaining to the four thematic stands relevant to a whole organisational approach and the elements and context in which restorative practice is used including: (1) the strategy supporting the governance, structures and processes; (2) whole organisation approaches with all staff and young people; (3) targeted approaches to maintaining relationships and resolving conflict in the daily management of the organisation; and (4) intensive responses on those occasions when significant harm has occurred.

### 2.3.1 SPSS Analysis

The results from the questionnaires were imputed into IBM SPSS Statistics software. This allowed the collated data to be easily analysed to produce descriptive statistics and frequency outputs, revealing which issues were particularly significant and recurrent throughout the sample. SPSS further facilitates the application of additional statistical analyses including cross-tabulations to explore the relationship between some variables. As the sample size is small ( $N < 30$ ) it is appropriate to apply an exact sampling theory (Spiegel and Stephens, 1999). Therefore, the analysis applied a paired-samples *t*-test to gauge statistically significant differences between the sample population across the two experimental conditions. This test applies the *t*-statistic in order to establish whether two means collected from the same sample (or related observations) differ significantly from zero (Field, 2012).

### 2.3.2 NVIVO Analysis

The qualitative evidence from the Questionnaires was analysed using NVivo 8 'computer assisted qualitative data analysis software' (CAQDAS). This software facilitates the systematic management of qualitative data (Bazeley, 2007) and adds rigour to the research in that it also allows for a degree of triangulation to the methodology (Sarantakos, 2005).

The use of NVivo provided a platform from which qualitative data can be analysed down to the finest levels of granularity to capture the concepts, categories and ontologies that describe and constitute the issue under investigation (Gibb, 2002). Considering this, the research approached the data analysis in two ways: the first approach was a content analysis along particular themes and categories to extract various groupings among the cohort to explore additional correlation and identification of any linearity of relationships between issues. The second approach was a holistic narrative analysis to identify the subject matters to be grouped together according to the prevailing characteristics and fruitful groupings of the results. Therefore, the qualitative evidence will be used to explicate and interpret the baseline statistics, identifying congruence with Restorative Principles and Practice and revealing potential areas of weakness and where change is required.

## 2.4 Distribution and Response Rate

The questionnaires were distributed to schools, Youthreach Centres and youth projects who identified themselves as using or interested in using restorative practices. At stage one (T1), fourteen schools completed responses for Questionnaire One and twelve for Questionnaire Two. At stage two (T2) of the research, ten completed responses were obtained for Questionnaire One and Two respectively (Table 1). Five Youthreach centres and two youth projects completed questionnaires at stage one (T1) and stage two (T2).

TABLE 1: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATE

Response Rates	T <sub>1</sub> Responses (Jan 2012)	T <sub>1</sub> Response Rate (%)	T <sub>2</sub> Responses (Mar 2013)	T <sub>2</sub> Response Rate (%)
Questionnaire One	14	88%	10	63%
Questionnaire Two	12	75%	10	63%

## 2.5 Data Validity and Ethics

The research involved the collation and analysis of primary data. The data was therefore confidential and held in full compliance with section 1 of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University of Ulster's 'Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research'. Ethical approval to conduct the research was obtained from the Filter Committee of the School of Education, University of Ulster, in January 2012.

The primary data was collected at two stages over a one year period in March 2012 and March 2013. As some of the participating schools withdrew from the research after the first stage, for robustness, it was necessary to discount these responses from these schools from the overall sample results and final analysis. Also, as the research sample was a purposive non-probability sample, it may not be representative. Finally, it is important to bear in mind the subjective nature of the research and that the data may be skewed or subject to bias.

## 2.6 Limitations of the Data

The questionnaires were not designed to be comprehensive in every case as this would be impractical and difficult to achieve. It was highlighted from the outset that the participating organisations would be at different stages in the development of restorative practices within their idiosyncratic and contextual settings. Moreover, it was acknowledged that each organisation may wish to develop in their respective method and pace. Furthermore, when conducting statistical analyses the small sample size of the research means that the findings of the research should be treated with an element of caution.

# 3.0 Restorative Practices in Schools

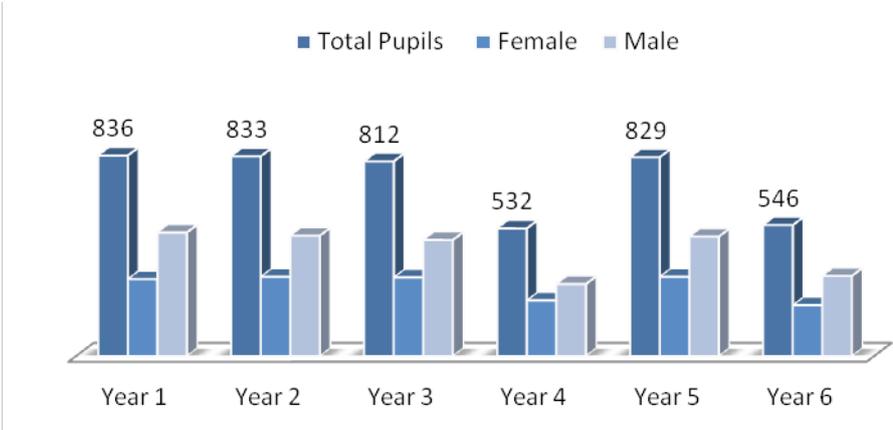
The Restorative Practices project purposively sampled ten schools in County Donegal from a variety of socio-economic contexts and education backgrounds. It should be noted that the research sample measures the behaviour and potential restorative outcomes for 4,388 pupils (Table 2). This indicates the potential expansive nature of the project and should a whole school approach be achieved and fully embedded across the school cohort this has the potential to radiate restorative philosophy to the wider macro population and community.

**TABLE 2: TOTAL PUPILS BY YEAR GROUP AND GENDER**

Pupil Year Group	Total Pupils	Female	Male
Year 1	836	321	515
Year 2	833	331	502
Year 3	812	328	484
Year 4	532	232	300
Year 5	829	331	498
Year 6	546	212	334
<b>Total Pupils</b>	<b>4388</b>	<b>1755</b>	<b>2633</b>

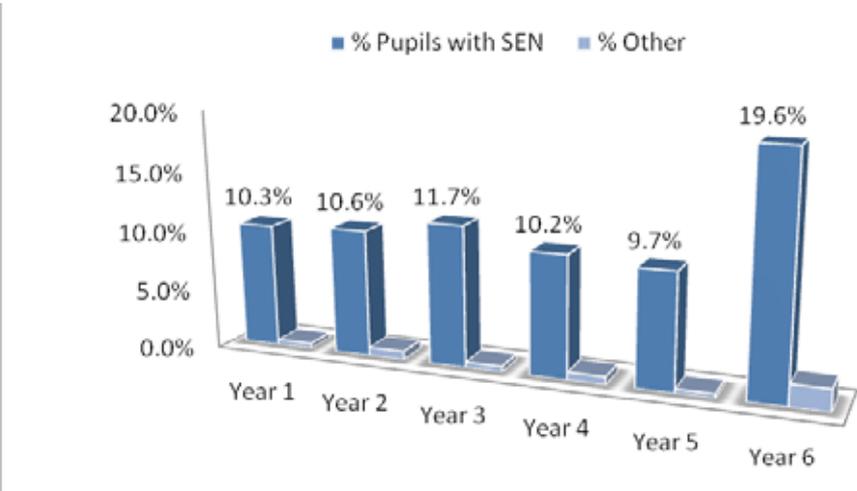
When the student cohort is disaggregated by year group (Figure 1, below), the figures reveal there to be relatively consistent numbers of pupils across year groups one (836), two (833), three (829) and five (829) with a lower, but similar, numbers observed in years four (532) and six (546). It is also notable that there are a higher proportion of males (60%) across each year group than females (40%).

**FIGURE 1: PUPILS BY YEAR AND GENDER**



Overall, 11.7% of pupils of the school cohort were identified as having special educational needs and 0.73% were identified as ‘other’ students who did not have special educational needs. The figures also indicate that there is a high level of pupils with special educational needs in year six (19.6%) compared with other year groups (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS IDENTIFIED WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



These figures are important to bear in mind, in that the application of restorative principles and practices within each school setting may need to be tailored to the differing needs of the young people within the context of managing behaviours, attitudes and outcomes.

# 4.0 Establishing a Baseline on Inappropriate Behaviours

In order to develop an understanding and baseline of school experiences of inappropriate behaviour by pupils, it was necessary to identify and measure what disciplinary sanctions were in operation and employed in the sample. To achieve this, the first questionnaire instrument was designed to obtain responses relating to (1) Teacher warnings; (2) On Report and Warnings; (3) Detention; (4) Time Out; (5) Suspension; and (6) Expulsion. This would establish an understanding of the current experience and application of restorative practices within the participating organisation and would be measured approximately one year apart to gauge what progress, if any, had been achieved in affecting student behaviour.

## 4.1 Teacher ‘Warnings’ as a Result of Poor Behaviour

The findings revealed that nine out of ten schools in the sample used an informal warning system in class for disruptive pupils at  $T_1$  (Table 3). The distinction between an informal and formal warning centres around recording. An informal warning is applied verbally and not formally logged within the school system. Notably, when this was surveyed almost a year later, all schools were using this system. Furthermore, 70% of the schools operated a formal warning system after an informal warning was given to pupils. The fact that three schools did not operate a formal warning system suggests that informal warnings are followed by pupils and is a positive approach to holding young people accountable.

**TABLE 3: SHOWING THE PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS WHO USE INFORMAL AND FORMAL WARNINGS**

Teacher Warnings	$T_1$		$T_2$	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Informal Warning system	90%	10%	100%	0%
Formal Warning system	70%	30%	70%	30%

The results indicate that teachers’ discretion around the use of informal warnings is significant. Exploring this further, cross-tabulation of the formal warning system results with the number of informal warnings results revealed that, at  $T_1$ , teacher discretion (42.9%) and 3-4 informal warnings (28.6%) were the prominent reasons. However, at  $T_2$ , 60% of the sample recorded 1-2 informal warnings as sufficient to escalate to the formal warning system, with 3-4 informal warnings accounting for 20% of responses (Table 4).

**TABLE 4: SHOWING CROSS TABULATION OF FORMAL WARNING WITH THE NUMBER OF INFORMAL WARNINGS**

Time			No. For Warn					Teacher Discretion	Total
			No System	1-2	3-4	5-6			
T1	Form Warn	No	Count	3	0	0	0	0	3
			% within Form Warn	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
			% within No. For War	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	30%
			% of Total	30%	0%	0%	0%	0%	30%
	Yes	Count	0	1	2	1	3	7	
		% within Form Warn	0%	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	42.9%	100%	
		% within No. For War	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	70%	
		% of Total	0%	10%	20.0%	10%	30%	70%	
	Total	Count	3	1	2	1	3	10	
		% within Form Warn	30%	10%	20%	10%	30%	100%	
		% within No. For War	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
		% of Total	30%	10%	20%	10%	30%	100%	
T2	Form Warn	No	Count	2	1	0	-	-	3
			% within Form Warn	66.7%	33%	0%	-	-	100%
			% within No. For War	100%	16.7%	0%	-	-	30%
			% of Total	20%	10%	0%	-	-	30%
	Yes	Count	0	5	2	-	-	7	
		% within Form Warn	0%	71.4%	28.6%	-	-	100%	
		% within No. For War	0%	83.3%	100%	-	-	70%	
		% of Total	0%	50%	20%	-	-	70%	
	Total	Count	2	6	2	-	-	10	
		% within Form Warn	20%	60%	20%	-	-	100%	
		% within No. For War	100%	100%	100%	-	-	100%	
		% of Total	20%	60%	20%	-	-	100%	

The change in the number of informal warnings over time suggests that there appeared to be no uniform view on what was understood as inappropriate behaviour, with an implicit assumption that the behaviour was a low level incident. Furthermore, against a background of the idiosyncratic nature of each school and the unique levels of recording incidents to each school, it is difficult and indeed questionable whether there should be a uniform ‘situation description’ applied across all schools. The findings also showed that it was generally the Year Head who oversaw formal warnings (T<sub>1</sub> 50%, T<sub>2</sub> 40%) with the Assistant/Principal overseeing this in 20% of cases and the teacher in 10% at both points in time. This indicates that across the sample the formal warning system is concomitant with higher authority and possibly disciplinary sanctions.

Overall, the findings indicate that this issue is worth some follow up although it was positive that there appeared to be a relational culture in many of the descriptions that saw the relationship between teacher and student capable of resolving many behavioural challenges before they progressed to a formal situation. That said, the lack of change over the year in relation to the proportion of schools using the formal warning system suggests that there is a value in maintaining and developing a ‘relationship culture’ to promote the resolution of difficulties without the over use of formal warnings or losing authority.

## 4.2 ‘On Report’

The results showed that 90% of the school cohort offered a system of ‘On Report’ at T<sub>1</sub> and that this increased to all schools over the year period (T<sub>2</sub> 100%). The responses also highlight a range of inappropriate behaviours which generated ‘On Report’ however, these could be generalized under a number of categories (Table 5).

**TABLE 5: FORMS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR WHICH GENERATES ON REPORT**

Forms of Inappropriate Behaviour	Time	
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>
Low level disruption	10%	0%
Breach of rules	10%	10%
Persistent behaviour	70%	60%
When required	10%	30%

Considering this, evidence of positive practice can be glimpsed at with the reduction of the use of On Report for persistent behavior and low level disruption. The increased incidence of “when required” further suggests that teachers are using their discretion more to determine when the threshold for On Report has been reached and, in the context of restorative practice, suggests that tolerance and greater understanding are being applied. In general, this indicates that punitive action for low level incidents has reduced.

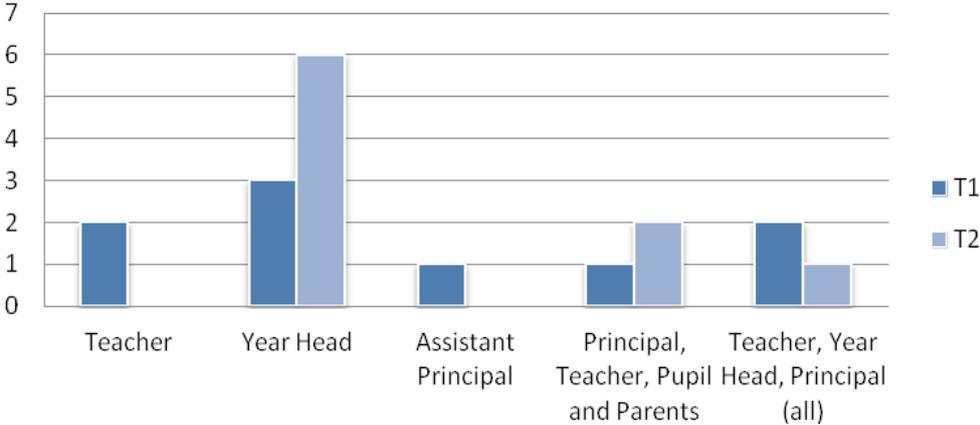
Similarly, a range of reasons were advanced relating to the redemption or conclusion of the On Report sanction. Grouping these reasons thematically (Table 6), the results found that the prominent reasons to conclude the On Report sanction is related to a perceived improvement in behavior (50%) and end of one week probation (30%). It was also observed that meetings with parents/pastoral care and formal meetings with Assistant Principal/Year Head were also used. Notably, there was no change in these reasons over the year period showing little movement in policy and greater involvement of parents and pastoral care teams.

TABLE 6: SHOWING FREQUENCY OF REASONS TO CONCLUDE ON REPORT

Form of Conclusion	Time	
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>
Behaviour improves	50%	50%
1 week probation	30%	30%
Meeting with Parents/Pastoral Care	10%	10%
Formal meeting with Assistant Principal/Year Head	10%	10%

Finally, the responses also identified the responsible person(s) associated with the supervision of On Report sanction. The results indicate that at T<sub>1</sub>, there were a mix of staff involved in this sanction. Although the results at T<sub>2</sub> show that there has been greater streamlining in supervision, possibly bringing an element of consistency. It also seems that there is a movement towards greater involvement with parents alongside some decrease in senior school management directly being involved in responses. The findings also show a significant change in the supervisory role of teachers and Year Heads for this sanction, which may have repercussions for informal outcomes and relationship building (Figure 3). In general the findings point to the need for consistency in this approach across schools and that lower level authority monitoring (Teacher/Year Head) and pastoral/parental involvement is needed.

FIGURE 3: SHOWING STAFF WHO MONITOR ON REPORT



### 4.3 Detentions

The responses show that 90% of the school sample used a detention system to respond to types of pupil inappropriate behaviour. Of the nine schools that operated a detention system, seven used formal detention as a sanction with two adopting an informal approach (Table 7). The results further highlight that use of the detention system adopted did not change over the year period inferring a lack of change in policy or approach.

**TABLE 7: SHOWING THE PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS USING FORMAL AND INFORMAL DETENTIONS**

Detention System	Time	
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>
Informal Warning system	22%	22%
Formal Warning system	78%	78%

This table indicates that two schools proceed directly from using informal warning to using detention. The other schools state that they moved through a process from informal warning to formal warning before arriving at detention as a sanction. Unfortunately, the research did not collate the number of recorded detentions across the sample. Responses on the reasons for detention were collated in addition to the number of incidents which typically result in the use of detention. Reasons for the use of the sanction were wide but could be grouped into a number of component themes (Table 8). At T<sub>1</sub>, the results indicate that use of detention was related to accumulation and frequency of specific types of low level incidents such as disruption, failure to do homework and lateness. In many cases, it was reported by schools that some of the infringements around homework and lateness generate an automatic detention.

**TABLE 8: SHOWING TYPES OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR WHICH GENERATES DETENTION**

Inappropriate behaviour resulting in detention	Frequency over time		Percentage change
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>	
Low level disruption	1	1	0%
Homework/performance/lateness	7	4	-42.9%
After Formal Warning	1	4	300%

The results from T<sub>2</sub> suggests that there has been some movement insofar as 44% of those schools operating detention systems now relate it to behaviour after the issuance of a formal warning to pupils. However, despite the significant improvement in practice, from a restorative perspective, the continued use of automatic detention for specific offences in 44% of schools using this sanction may need to be reconsidered. Indeed, instead of detention, use of a timeout sanction with pastoral care may be a better option or the enhanced use of an informal approach could mitigate the chastisement element of the detention approach.

### 4.4 Time Out

The results reveal that four of the schools operated a time out system where pupils were required to attend a time out room to consider their behaviour or to meet with a senior teacher for reflection of behaviour (Table 9). The application of this system remained the same (40%) over the year period.

**TABLE 9: SHOWING THE PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS USING TIME OUT**

Time Out	T <sub>1</sub>		T <sub>2</sub>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Use of Time Out System	40%	60%	40%	60%

Comments on the use of time out suggest this sanction was used for anger management issues, as a form of internal suspension, ‘cooling down’ upset students or to create time with counsellors, Year Heads and Deputy Heads. Cross-tabulation of those schools who use time out systems with the use of sanctions shows that, at T<sup>1</sup>, 75% linked the use of this sanction to both the accumulation of warnings or triggered by a single incident. At T<sup>2</sup>, 50% of schools linked this to both the accumulation of warnings or triggered by a single incident. Half the schools said they may use time out with a pupil even if there is no previous record of inappropriate behaviour.

When considered by year group, it was observed that the time out sanction was used most frequently for year group three (30%) and year group five (28%). The findings show that the frequency across the school cohort who operate this approach was extremely high at T<sup>1</sup> (Table 10 below). The incidents that time out was used for include disruptive behaviour (176), challenging teacher’s authority (99), physical horseplay (58), verbally demeaning other students (57) and verbally demeaning staff (40). Year groups three and five accumulate the highest number of incident.

**TABLE 10: SHOWING THE NUMBER OF TIME OUT SANCTIONS USED BY BEHAVIOUR TYPE AND YEAR GROUP**

Behaviour Type	Time Period	Year Group						Total
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Disruptive Behaviour	T <sub>1</sub>	2	35	60	33	34	12	176
	T <sub>2</sub>	8	8	5	6	4	0	31
Physical Horse-play	T <sub>1</sub>	7	8	24	8	11	0	58
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
Verbally De-meaning other students	T <sub>1</sub>	3	8	19	10	16	1	57
	T <sub>2</sub>	6	1	0	0	1	0	8
Verbally de-meaning Staff	T <sub>1</sub>	1	3	14	10	10	2	40
	T <sub>2</sub>	1	6	6	3	4	0	20
Relationally Diminishing other students	T <sub>1</sub>	7	11	8	4	14	1	45
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Challeng-ing Teacher authority	T <sub>1</sub>	0	18	27	15	33	6	99
	T <sub>2</sub>	3	3	1	1	1	3	12
Cyber bullying 1st offence	T <sub>1</sub>	1	2	5	1	7	1	17
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	5	3	2	1	0	9
Smoking	T <sub>1</sub>	0	1	1	0	11	4	17
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	10	0	10
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Incidents by year &amp; time</b>	T <sub>1</sub>	21	86	158	81	146	27	<b>519</b>
	T <sub>2</sub>	18	23	15	13	12	5	<b>84</b>

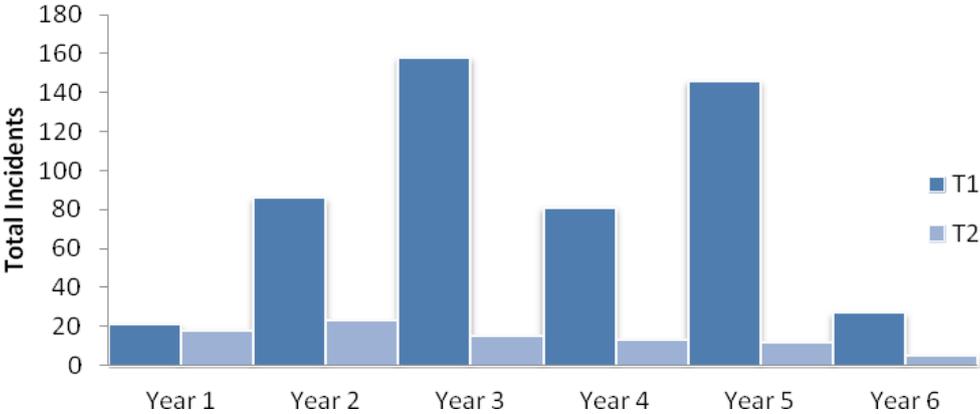
Comparative analysis of the findings at T<sub>2</sub> highlight that, following additional work with schools, the incidence of time out sanctions has generally decreased across all behaviour categories with a significant decline observed in the total number of incidents at T<sub>2</sub> (84) compared with T<sub>1</sub> (519), representing an overall percentage change decrease of 83.8% (Table 11). This table also indicates a decline in incidents of disruptive behaviour and incidents of challenging teacher authority.

**TABLE 11: SHOWING THE PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN INCIDENTS BY SELECTED BEHAVIOUR TYPES**

Behaviour type	Total incidents		Percentage Change (%)
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>	
Disruptive Behaviour	176	31	-82.4%
Verbally Demeaning other students	57	8	-86%
Relationally Diminishing other students	45	0	-100%
Challenging Teacher authority	99	12	-87.9%
<b>Total Incidents by year and period</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>-83.8%</b>

These findings are extremely encouraging and also reveal distinct decreases in the year groups three and five across all behaviour types. In this context, the findings show that across the year three group there was a significant overall percentage change decrease (90.5%) in incidents resulting in this use of time out sanction. Similar findings were evident for the year group five cohort which saw a percentage change decrease in incidents of 91.8% and years two (73.3%) and four (84%).

**FIGURE 4: SHOWING TOTAL INCIDENTS BY YEAR GROUP AND TIME PERIOD**



The results suggest change is occurring in the way staff and students address issues of misbehaviour.

These findings are further validated by the application of *t*-test (summary statistics and paired correlation coefficients for the experimental conditions are evidenced in (Appendix 1). Analysis of the paired *t*-test findings are observed in Table 12, which illustrates whether the difference between means at each time dimension is statistically different. Examination of the timeout system across all year groups reveals that a number of the type of incidents recorded over the two conditions display a statistically significant difference, inferring that additional work with schools significantly affected the amount of incidents recorded. Specifically, with regards to ‘timeout’ incidents, disruptive behaviour across the time periods is significantly different ( $t = 2.697, p < .01$ ). This is similar for the physical play predictor ( $t = 2.264, p < .05$ ), the verbal demeanour of fellow students level ( $t = 2.346, p < .05$ ), relationally diminishing other students ( $t = 3.628, p < .01$ ) and challenging teacher authority ( $t = 2.672, p < .01$ ). The results do however, show no statistically significant difference for a number of the incidents including verbally demeaning staff members ( $t = 1.110, p > .05$ ), cyber bullying ( $t = .871, p > .05$ ), smoking ( $t = 1.578, p > .05$ ) and other incidents ( $t = 1.000, p > .05$ ). These findings show this may have been due to an endogenous change in the nature of the relationship between student and teacher and the improved relational culture.

TABLE 12: T-TEST FINDINGS FOR TIME OUT

	Mean	Std. D	S. E Mean	t	Sig.
<b>Time out</b>					
A_Disrup_Behav - A_Disrup_Behav2	2.417	6.941	.896	2.697	.009
B_Phys_Play - B_Phys_Play2	.900	3.079	.398	2.264	.027
C_Verb_Demean_Stu - C_Verb_Demean_Stu2	.817	2.696	.348	2.346	.022
C_Verb_Demean_Staff - C_Verb_Demean_Staff2	.333	2.326	.300	1.110	.272
D_Relat_Demean_Stu - D_Relat_Demean_Stu2	.750	1.601	.207	3.628	.001
D_Chall_Teach_Auth - D_Chall_Teach_Auth2	1.450	4.204	.543	2.672	.010
E_Cyber_Bull - E_Cyber_Bull2	.133	1.186	.153	.871	.387
F_Smoking - Smoking2	.283	1.391	.180	1.578	.120
K_Other - K_Other2	.167	1.291	.167	1.000	.321

### 4.5 Use of 1-3 Day Suspension

The results in Table 13 show that the entire school cohort (100%) operated a 1-3 day suspension system within their disciplinary code and that there was no change in this policy over the time period.

TABLE 13: SHOWING THE PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS USING 1-3 DAY SUSPENSION

SUSPENSION	T <sub>1</sub>		T <sub>2</sub>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Use of 1-3 Day suspension System	100%	0%	100%	0%

Cross-tabulation of the number of suspensions shows that at T<sub>1</sub>, 80% linked the use of this sanction to both the accumulation of warnings or triggered by a single incident, with 10% willing to use this sanction irrespective of warnings and 10% linking this to warnings only. At T<sub>2</sub>, 60% of schools linked this to both the accumulation of warnings or triggered by a single incident. 30% stated use can be triggered by an isolated incident only. Additional analysis of the suspension figures reveals some notable findings. When considered by year group, it was observed this sanction was used across all year groups and that, overall, year groups three (25%) and five (24%) accounted for half of all suspensions. The findings show that the incidence of this sanction is high at T<sub>1</sub> (Table 14), particularly for incidents involving continued disobedience (55), physical assaults on other students (35), verbal assault on staff (30) and smoking (20). Moreover, when these categories are analysed by year group, it was observed that incidents of continued disobedience and verbal assault on staff were generally spread across year groups two, three, five and six. Year one had the highest number of recorded incidents (37%) with years two and three accounting for 23% respectively.

**TABLE 14: SHOWING THE NUMBER OF 1-3 DAY SUSPENSIONS BY BEHAVIOUR TYPE AND YEAR GROUP**

Behaviour Type	Time Period	Year Group						Total
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Continued Disobedience	T <sub>1</sub>	2	14	12	7	12	8	55
	T <sub>2</sub>	2	1	7	1	3	1	15
Physical assault on other students	T <sub>1</sub>	13	8	8	0	6	0	35
	T <sub>2</sub>	2	7	11	5	3	1	29
Physical aggression on staff	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	2	3	5
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Verbal assault other students	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	4	2	2	0	8
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Verbal assault staff	T <sub>1</sub>	3	7	8	1	5	6	30
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	9	9	2	12	3	35
Relational assaults on other students	T <sub>1</sub>	1	0	1	0	2	0	4
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Relational Assaults on staff	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	2	1	2	0	5
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyber Bullying other pupils	T <sub>1</sub>	2	0	2	3	3	0	10
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	2	0	2	1	0	5
Breaking Rules on Smoking	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	3	3	9	5	20
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Breaking Rules on Alcohol	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Theft, Vandalism	T <sub>1</sub>	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	1	2	3	0	0	6
Substance Misuse	T <sub>1</sub>	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	3	0	2	1	6
	T <sub>2</sub>	5	10	13	0	12	2	42
<b>Total Incidents by year and time</b>	T <sub>1</sub>	25	30	46	17	45	23	<b>186</b>
	T <sub>2</sub>	9	32	42	13	32	12	<b>140</b>

Comparative analysis with the findings at T<sub>2</sub> highlight that the total number of suspensions has decreased from 186 (T<sub>1</sub>) to 140 (T<sub>2</sub>), showing an overall negative percentage change of -24.7% (Table 15). In addition, it was observed that the incidence of suspensions has generally declined across most behaviour categories with a significant decline observed in continued disobedience (-72.7%), relational assaults on staff (-100%), verbal assaults on other students (-87.5%) and smoking (-80%).

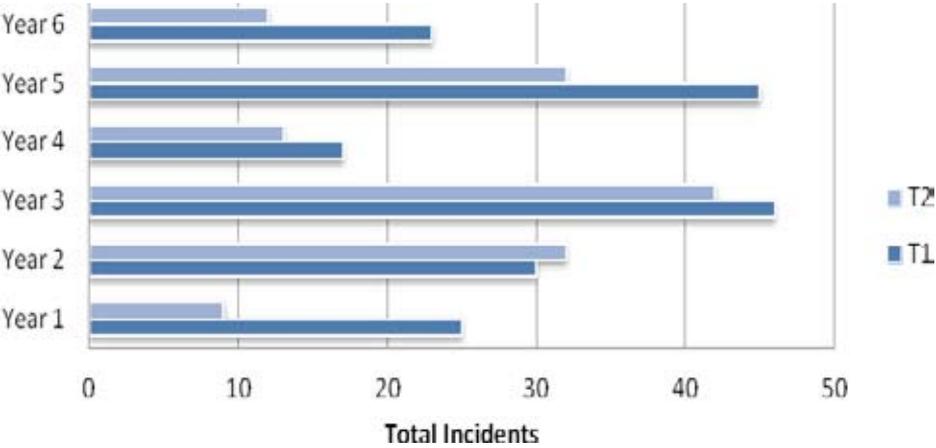
This suggests an overall improvement in behaviours which lead to suspensions. Some categories observed an overall percentage increase notably verbal assault on staff (16.7%), and theft, vandalism (20%) although this represents little variation in real terms. One area of concern was the significant increase in offences recorded as 'other' which showed a percentage increase of 600% and was noted in all year groups except year four. Further work is required to understand what 'other' refers to.

**TABLE 15: SHOWING THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN 1-3 DAY SUSPENSION INCIDENTS**

BEHAVIOUR TYPE	TOTAL INCIDENTS		PERCENTAGE CHANGE (%)
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>	
Continued Disobedience	55	15	-72.7%
Physical assault on other students	35	29	-17.1%
Physical aggression on staff	5	1	-80%
Verbal assault other students	8	1	-87.5%
Verbal assault staff	30	35	16.7%
Relational assaults on other students	4	1	-75%
Relational Assaults on staff	5	0	-100%
Cyber Bullying other pupils	10	5	-50%
Breaking Rules on Smoking	20	4	-80%
Breaking Rules on Alcohol	0	0	0%
Theft, Vandalism	5	6	20%
Substance Misuse	3	1	-66.7%
Other	6	42	600%
<b>Total Incidents by year and period</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>-24.7%</b>

The figures also reveal an overall decrease for all year groups. The largest change in observed incidents over the period was for year group one (-64%) and year group six (-47.8%) and to a lesser extent year group five (-28.9%). Year group three saw little variation in incidents with a nominal percentage change decrease (-8.7%) suggesting that additional attention needs to be directed at year groups two, three, and four.

FIGURE 5: SHOWING TOTAL INCIDENTS BY YEAR GROUP AND TIME PERIOD



The significance of the findings, with regards to the temporal difference between incidents when applying a 1-3 day suspension can be found in Table 16 which shows that smoking ( $t = 2.346, p < .05$ ) and other ( $t = 2.574, p < .05$ ) incidents are the only incidents that display any statistical difference across conditions. Verbal assault of other student's falls marginally outside the 95% confidence interval ( $t = 1.989, p .051$ ), but is significant at the 90% level. These are expected findings as the severity of these incidents are symptomatic of what would traditionally warrant a short-term exclusion period. Surprising findings pertain to the lack of statistically significant differences over the two conditional periods for the physical assault and aggression incidents which do show a drop off in the number of incidents; however, in real terms this is most likely due to the nominal adjustment in variance.

**TABLE 16: T-TEST FOR 1-3 DAY SUSPENSION**

	MEAN	STD. D	S. E MEAN	T	SIG.
<b>1-3 Day Suspension</b>					
B_Phy_Ass_Stu - B_Phy_Ass_Stu2	.100	1.386	.179	.559	.578
B_Phy_Ass_Sta - B_Phy_Ass_Sta2	.067	.446	.058	1.158	.252
C_Ver_Ass_Stu - C_Ver_Ass_Stu2	.117	.454	.059	1.989	.051
C_Ver_Ass_Sta - C_Ver_Ass_Sta2	-.085	1.330	.173	-.489	.626
D_Rel_Ass_Stu - D_Rel_Ass_Stu2	.050	.341	.044	1.137	.260
D_Rel_Ass_Sta - D_Rel_Ass_Sta2	.083	.381	.049	1.692	.096
E_Cyber_Bull - E_Cyber_Bull2	.083	.671	.087	.962	.340
F_Rul_Smok - F_Rul_Smok2	.267	.880	.114	2.346	.022
G_Theft_Vand - G_Theft_Vand2	-.017	.504	.065	-.256	.799
H_Sub_Misuse - H_Sub_Misuse2	.033	.317	.041	.814	.419
K_Other - K_Other2	-.600	1.806	.233	-2.574	.013

The results show that schools continue to use the 1-3 day exclusions. The general findings are positive as they indicate decreases in the total number of incidents across most year groups and across most behaviour types.

### 4.6 Suspensions for Four Days and Longer

The figures revealed that 70% of the school cohort used a 4 day plus suspension. This figure remained unchanged over the sample period indicating that those schools who operate restorative practices use this as part of their disciplinary code (Table 17).

**TABLE 17: SHOWING THE PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS USING 4 DAY AND LONGER SUSPENSIONS**

Suspension	T <sub>1</sub>		T <sub>2</sub>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Use of 4 day and longer suspensions	70%	30%	70%	0%

The number of suspensions of 4 days or longer was low. Analysis of the results indicate that use of suspensions of 4 days or longer at T<sub>1</sub> related to specific incidents of continued disobedience; physical assault on other students; physical aggression on staff; verbal assault on staff; theft, vandalism and substance misuse. Table 18 shows that over the full period of the research there was a total of 20 such suspensions with 8 of these relating to year three.

**TABLE 18: SHOWING THE NUMBER OF 4 DAYS AND LONGER SUSPENSIONS BY TYPE AND YEAR GROUP**

Behaviour Type	Time Period	Year Group						Total
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Continued Disobedience	T <sub>1</sub>	0	1	3	0	1	0	5
	T <sub>2</sub>	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
Physical assault on other students	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Physical aggression on staff	T <sub>1</sub>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal assault other students	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal assault staff	T <sub>1</sub>	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Relational assaults on other students	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relational Assaults on staff	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyber Bullying other pupils	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Breaking Rules on Smoking	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Breaking Rules on Alcohol	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Theft, Vandalism	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Substance Misuse	T <sub>1</sub>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	T <sub>1</sub>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T <sub>2</sub>	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
<b>Total Incidents by year and period</b>	T <sub>1</sub>	1	3	4	0	3	0	<b>11</b>
	T <sub>2</sub>	1	1	4	0	2	1	<b>9</b>

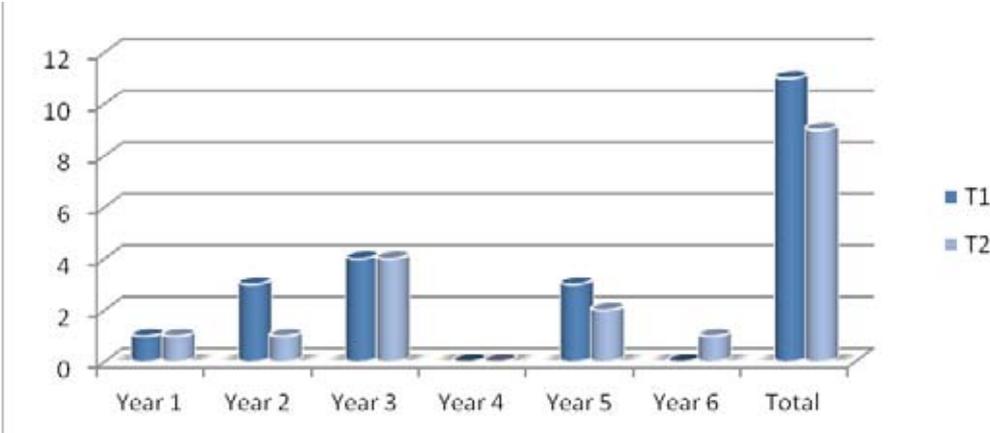
When comparing the results at T<sub>2</sub> with those categories which invoked the use of this sanction at T<sub>1</sub>, there was a general decline from 11 incidents (T<sub>1</sub>) to 9 incidents (T<sub>2</sub>). The number of incidents involving continued disobedience, physical aggression on staff and verbal assault on staff all declined (Table 19).

**TABLE 19: SHOWING NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN 4 DAYS AND LONGER SUSPENSION INCIDENTS**

BEHAVIOUR TYPE	TOTAL INCIDENTS		PERCENTAGE CHANGE (%)
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>	
Continued Disobedience	5	3	-40%
Physical assault on other students	1	1	0%
Physical aggression on staff	1	0	-100%
Verbal assault staff	2	1	-50%
Theft, Vandalism	1	1	0%
Substance Misuse	1	0	-100%
Other	0	3	-
<b>Total Incidents by year and period</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-18.2%</b>

When the figures are considered by year groups (Figure 6), it is difficult to draw meaningful inference due to the small number of observations, however, in general terms it can be observed that there has been little change across year groups one, three and four and a nominal decline in the number of incidents across years two and three. Compared with T<sub>1</sub> (91%), years two, three and five accounted for 78% of suspensions at T<sub>2</sub>.

**FIGURE 6: SHOWING TOTAL INCIDENTS BY YEAR GROUP AND TIME PERIOD**



Finally, the lack of statistically significant differences over the two conditional periods for the 4+ day suspension (Table 20) is most likely due to the limited number of observations across incidents and schools and the relatively low variation in mean scores.

TABLE 20: T-TEST FOR 4 DAYS AND LONGER SUSPENSIONS

	Mean	Std. D	S. E Mean	t	Sig.
<b>4+ Day suspension</b>					
Contin_Disob - Contin_Disob2	.033	.410	.053	.629	.532
B_Phy_Ass_Stu - B_Phy_Ass_Stu2	0.000	.184	.024	0.000	1.000
B_Phy_Ass_Sta - B_Phy_Ass_Sta2	.017	.129	.017	1.000	.321
C_Ver_Ass_Sta - C_Ver_Ass_Sta2	.017	.225	.029	.574	.568
G_Theft_Vand - G_Theft_Vand2	0.000	.184	.024	0.000	1.000
H_Sub_Misuse - H_Sub_Misuse2	.017	.129	.017	1.000	.321
K_Other - K_Other2	-.050	.287	.037	-1.351	.182

## 4.7 Expulsion

No schools recorded any expulsions for the categorised behaviours at any stage during the research period. It is encouraging that schools have not utilised this disciplinary sanction over the sample period and this may be a result of the restorative practices already initiated across the cohort and embedded in behaviour policy.

# 5.0 Establishing an Overall Baseline of Inappropriate Behaviours

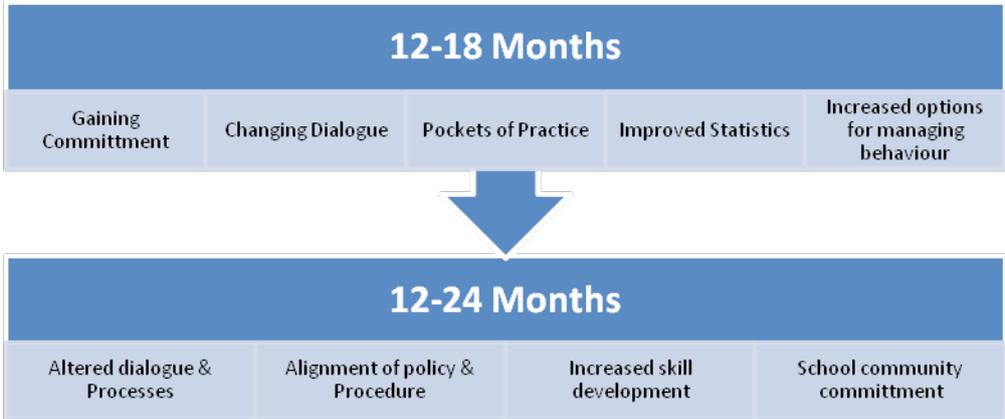
The findings in this section have explored the responses of the school cohort at both periods of time and can be summarised in Table 21, below.

**TABLE 21: SUMMATIVE TABLE SHOWING OVERALL BASELINE OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS**

Behaviour	School Using Sanction		Percentage change	Incidents Recorded		Percentage change
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>		T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>	
Informal Warnings	90%	100%	11.1%	-	-	-
Formal Warnings	70%	70%	0%	-	-	-
On Report	90%	100%	11.1%	-	-	-
Detention System	90%	90%	0%	-	-	-
Time Out	40%	40%	0%	519	84	-83.8%
1-3day suspension	100%	100%	0%	186	140	-24.7%
4+ day suspension	70%	70%	0%	11	9	-18.2%
Exclusion	100%	100%	0%	0	0	0%

The findings appear to show that school practice reflects the use of traditional sanctions as well as restorative practices. This suggests that restorative schools are operating between paradigms. One position is to see the need for a shift to occur so that restorative practices are supported and can be seen as a whole school management system (Buckley and Maxwell, 2007). Findings in this research appear to accord with the indicators of change described by Blood and Thorsborne (2005) as set out in Figure 7.

**FIGURE 7: TIMEFRAME AND INDICATORS OF CHANGE**



(Adapted from Blood and Thorsborne, 2005)

Therefore, the collective results clearly indicate that there is evidence of good practice, development and improvement of relational cultures within schools resulting in overall reductions in the incidents of behaviour and use of punitive sanctions, which show statistically significance differences over the period of the research. This highlights that overall expected progress has been achieved by this stage in time and that continuing work is required over time to alter process, align policy and improve skills to embed a whole school restorative approach in schools. The mechanisms and vehicle through which this can be achieved, or indeed inhibited, is explored in greater detail in Section 8 below.

# 6.0 Restorative Practices in Youth Work Organisations in County Donegal

While youth work organisations are designed to support the learning and development of young people, they are different in many ways to schools. Youth work operates from within an informal education paradigm. The quality and nature of relationships are central in youth work processes. Issues of power and control, participation, the diversity of young people and the significance of peer networks are significant for practice. Consequently the methodology designed for the research into youth work services required an adaptation from the schools questionnaires.

What emerges is that the participating youth organisations have a culture where:

- sanctions are not commonly used (but are available to workers);
- when used these sanctions are used with the intent of inclusion rather than further exclusion;
- these sanctions can be useful in calling young people to be more accountable and respectful with their peers and the adults supporting them.

## 6.1 Youth Worker Warnings

On those occasions where the behaviour of young people gave concern both youth organisations used a system of informal warnings. If the negative behaviours deteriorated then formal warnings could be applied. These would be noted by and usually overseen by a senior youth worker.

There were different approaches about how informal warnings could lead to formal warnings. In one organisation discretion meant it depended on the young person and the situation. In the other there was a system of three informal warnings leading to a formal warning. To administer the formal warning in one organisation the youth worker and a manager met the young person along with their parent or guardian. In the other, it was carried out by a relevant staff member, overseen by a second staff member and monitored by a senior staff member.

## 6.2 One to One Contracts

In response to unhelpful behaviours both organisations used an individual contract with the young person. This is used to agree goals and expectations and to create an opportunity to reflect on what has been going on. In one project it was a method used for a measured re-engagement with the programme after a young person has been suspended. These contracts were usually a response to bullying, drug or alcohol misuse, criminal behavior, disruptive behaviour, violence, persistent foul and abusive language, and vandalism. These contracts can be dissolved at the stage when a young person has reestablished their credibility by behaving responsibly.

## 6.3 Time Out

Both organisations operated time out which would normally be triggered by a serious incident. One of the organisations did not keep a record of time out prior to the research project commencing. For the other, the 2012 figures and reasons are in Table 22 below.

**TABLE 22: NUMBER OF TIME OUT SANCTIONS USED BY ONE YOUTH WORK ORGANISATION 2012**

REASON FOR TIME OUT	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS
Disruptive behaviour	20
Physical horseplay with other young people	5
Verbally demeaning other young people	8
Verbally demeaning staff	10
Relationally diminishing other students	8
Challenging a worker's authority	4
Cyber bullying – first offence	3
<b>Total incidents</b>	<b>58</b>

The figures indicate that the most prominent behaviour type which resulted in use of Time Out was disruptive behaviour, accounting for over a third (34.5%) of incidents. Verbally demeaning staff accounted for a further 17.2% of total incidents.

Figures from both organisations in 2013 showed that there were 341 incidents resulting in the use of time out at census point. When disaggregated by type, disruptive behaviour accounted for 34.9% of total incidents resulting in time out, with physical horseplay (23.5%) and verbally demeaning staff (17.6%) the other prominent reasons. Notably, there were no incidents of relationally diminishing other young people recorded in 2013 (Table 23).

**TABLE 23: NUMBER OF TIME OUT USED BY YOUTH WORK ORGANISATIONS IN 2013**

Reason for Time Out	Number of incidents
Disruptive behaviour	119
Physical horseplay with other young people	80
Verbally demeaning other young people	60
Verbally demeaning staff	45
Relationally diminishing other students	0
Challenging a worker's authority	27
Cyber bullying – first offence	10
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>341</b>

Overall, the findings clearly indicate that time out is clearly used as a regular means of managing behaviour within the youth work organisations, particularly low level types of behaviour.

## 6.4 Suspensions

One organisation used suspension sanction; the other did not. The figures for one organisation for 2012 and 2013 are detailed in Table 24, below.

**TABLE 24: NUMBER OF SUSPENSIONS USED BY ONE YOUTH WORK ORGANISATION IN 2012**

Reason for Suspension	Number of Incidents	
	2012	2013
Continued disobedience	1	3
Physical horseplay with other young people	2	0
Verbal assault on other young people	0	1
Verbally assaulting staff	3	2
Relational assaults on other young people	2	0
Challenging a worker's authority	0	0
Cyber bullying First Offence	0	0
Smoking	0	1
Theft, vandalism	2	0
Substance misuse	1	0
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>

The findings show that the number of suspensions overall reduced from 11 to 7 for one organisation, in percentage terms a decrease of -36.7%. Notwithstanding this, the figures highlight that, in real terms of overall membership numbers of young people, there were very small numbers of behavioural difficulties which resulted in suspensions. In 2012, verbally assaulting staff was the prominent reason for suspension, accounting for over a quarter (27.3%) of suspensions. Physical horseplay, relational assaults on other young people and theft or vandalism accounted for 18.2% respectively. In 2013, continued disobedience was the prominent reason for suspension (42.8%) with verbal assault of staff accounting for a further 28.6% of suspension incidents.

## 6.5 Expulsions

One organisation used expulsion if the matter was serious enough; the other did not. In 2012 the one organisation that used expulsion did so with two young people. Neither organisation reported any expulsions in 2013.

**TABLE 25: NUMBER OF EXPULSION USED BY ONE YOUTH WORK ORGANISATION**

Expulsions	2012	2013
Number of Expulsions	2	0

# 7.0 Restorative Practices in Youthreach Centres in County Donegal

Youthreach centres offer individualised learning programmes to young people who are struggling with formal education in schools and have since left to join this programme. Classes are smaller and tutors have more time to develop relationships with the learners. This research was designed to compare practices in relation to the management of behaviour at the beginning of the project with practices that had been developed and embedded after one year of the project. The first survey was completed in March 2012 and then repeated in March 2013.

## 7.1 The Use of Sanctions

When used as a mechanism to get young people to think about their actions and take responsibility, time out can create a thoughtful, reflective space to address issues of concern. To put the figures in Table 26 (below) in context, the Centres at the time of the survey were responsible for 116 young people. In relation to ‘warnings’ and ‘on report’ the centres were very clear that there were procedures in place under the supervision of the Centre Coordinator. There was a strong culture of wishing the learner to respond and continue with their involvement in the programme. ‘Detention’ was not part of the practices of the Centres.

Time out is used regularly in four Centres and one Centre does not operate this approach. In one Centre, time out was used before imposing any sanctions. Overall, the Centres reported that they used time out on 136 occasions in managing behavior of young people who may be difficult to motivate, who may resist structures that they do not understand or who may have come from negative experiences of school.

**TABLE 26: REPORTED USE OF TIME OUT IN 2012\***

Behaviour Type	Year Group 1	Year Group 2	Year Group 3	Year Group 4	Total
Disruptive behaviour	14	9	5	12	40
Physical horseplay with other learners	2	12	8	3	25
Verbally demeaning other learners	2	11	0	0	13
Verbally demeaning staff	12	1	2	0	15
Challenging a tutor’s authority	3	3	2	9	17
Cyber bullying First Offence	0	1	0	0	1
Smoking	7	2	7	9	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>136</b>

\*Based on figures obtained from 2 Centre’s

Figures for 2013 are detailed in Table 27, which includes reported use of time out for year group five.

TABLE 27: REPORTED USE OF TIME OUT IN 2013\*

Behaviour Type	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	TOTAL
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	
Disruptive behaviour	12	7	20	6	60	105
Physical horseplay with other learners	6	1	2	2	45	56
Verbally demeaning other learners	1	16	0	0	12	29
Verbally demeaning staff	5	2	2	1	10	20
Challenging a tutor's authority	5	1	9	10	30	55
Smoking	2	2	4	2	2	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>277</b>

\* Based on figures from 2 Centres

The survey did not permit an assessment of how time out is used and whether it is experienced by the young person as an opportunity to reflect upon responsibility and to learn or whether it is perceived simply as a punishment. Nonetheless, the figures indicate that there has been consistent use of the time out sanction to manage the behaviour of young people. Moreover, it was also observed in 2013 that 57.4% of time out sanctions were employed with year group five. One can only speculate on whether that is due to a growing reluctance to use heavier sanctions.

However, it should also be noted that a large proportion of these figures are estimated. Experience teaches that if new practices are to be embedded in an organisation, it is necessary to accurately record and monitor key indicators of change.

## 7.2 The Use of Suspension

Suspension for 1 to 3 days is a sanction that was used by all Centres. In this regard, there were very clear lines that triggered suspension and, at the same time, there was a hope that the young people would always return. In 2012, 36 suspension incidents were recorded from a population of 116 students. The relatively high number of suspensions may underpin the drive to develop more restorative cultures within these Centres as the disruption caused by such suspensions on the young person's education and development can be considerable and result in stress among both staff and learners. Figures also reveal that suspensions of 4 days or more were rarely used.

TABLE 28: REPORTED USE OF SUSPENSION IN 2012

Behaviour Type	Year	Year	Year	Year	Total
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	
Continued disobedience	2	1	6	3	12
Physical assault on other learners	0	0	0	0	0
Physical aggression on staff	2	1	1	0	4
Verbal Assault on other learners	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal assault on staff	3	1	1	4	9
Relational assaults on other learners	2	1	1	1	5
Breaking centre rules on smoking	1	2	0	0	3
Breaking centre rules on alcohol	0	0	0	0	0
Theft, vandalism	0	2	1	0	3
<b>Total:</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>

The results from 2013 show that, in total, three young people were suspended from Centres with all suspensions for continued disobedience. One Centre reported that, while suspension was still available to it, it had not been used throughout the year. Therefore, the figures reveal that suspensions have reduced from 36 incidents to 3 in a one year period. This is a remarkable change in practices.

### 7.3 The Use of Expulsions

Expulsion was a sanction available to and used by two of the Centres. In 2012, figures show that there were 6 recorded expulsions. However, in 2013, this had reduced to one expulsion.

TABLE 29: NUMBER OF EXPULSION USED BY CENTRES\*

EXPULSIONS	2012	2013
Number of Expulsions	6	1

\*Based on 2 Centres using expulsions

## 7.4 Overall Assessment

In conclusion, the findings suggest that Youthreach centres are relying more on inclusive methods such as time out and less on suspensions and expulsions in their responses to challenging behaviour.

Centre Co-ordinators reported that restorative practices approaches had been “discussed and agreed”. Interestingly the question asking if restorative practices are now incorporated into behaviour polices conveys little movement with the average response being that they are “moderately embedded”. By contrast the respondents state that restorative practices are mostly or fully incorporated into “pastoral care and support systems”.

In round one, two centres reported that they had not had “whole centre staff training”. In round two this had reduced to one centre stating that it had not been involved in such training. All other centres stated that within the last year they have spent between 11 and 20 hours on training in restorative practices. Four centres in round one said that they had not engaged in awareness raising of restorative practices among the young people. In round two all centres indicated that they had. Interestingly no centre has instigated training in peer mediation. This may indicate that restorative practices are currently regarded within an adult to young person paradigm. In 2012 two centres expressed aspirations to involve the Learner Council in conflict resolution measures. The round two responses don’t reveal whether or not this happens. One centre (in round two) does state that restorative practices are discussed at the learner’s induction period.

The aspiration some expressed in round one to work with parents has developed partially. In round one all respondents said they had not engaged with parents to make them aware of restorative practices. In round 2, two respondents stated they were now doing this through information being sent to parents to explain how restorative practices would affect the centre’s approach. Another indication of shift towards restorative practices in round 2 is when respondents say that informal restorative conversations are occurring more frequently than was reported in round 1. In round 2 “moderately” and “often” were selected whereas in round 1 answers were spread from never to sometimes with only 1 centre claiming “often” at that time.

One respondent ticked “never” and made a telling comment:

“I have difficulty with putting the ‘restorative’ word before what previously was our own practice – thus conversations, group work, family interventions, role play, drama, debates, discussions. There is a tendency to promote ‘restorative’ as the only way or the best way.”

Respondents in round 2 said that when it comes to restorative meetings to address harm they either use a balance of discipline and restorative practices, or mostly restorative practices with some traditional discipline. One respondent to round 2 said: “this is the biggest challenge facing us at the moment – getting the resources/time to work this way”, and they went on to say they may “try to have a specific/allocated time set aside to make this easier to manage”. When it came to the questions on “intensive responses to heal relationships and repair harm” the deficit in confidence and training for formal conferences seems to have shifted slightly with most centres saying that a few staff have been trained and a couple saying they will use a “major restorative conference” when there are “serious behaviour issues”.

# 8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

## 8.1 Conclusions

This report is based on the responses of 17 organisations that promote and support young people's learning and development in Co. Donegal. They completed two questionnaires at the beginning and end of a twelve month period commencing in the Spring of 2012. The report concludes that the concept of restorative practices and some of its principles and practices are reflected in all of the organisations who took part in this research. The detail of the story within each organisation is not captured in the questionnaires. To understand how restorative practices in Donegal have been developing it is likely that a number of factors are relevant.

1. The conversation that began some years ago within Donegal ETB about the value of restorative practices and the willingness of people to act on these conversations in practical ways.
2. The practice of "individual champions" including senior managers in a number of organisations.
3. The encouragement that stemmed from the use of conferences around more serious incidents and what were considered to be good outcomes from these conferences.
4. The training carried out by expert independent restorative practices trainers working across various settings over the last three years.
5. The participation of some staff in the University of Ulster Postgraduate Certificate course in Restorative Practices.
6. The possible impact of participating in the research.
7. The evidence of positive results from restorative practices in schools, Youthreach centres and youth services.

As a result there has been a reduction in behaviour management methods which exclude and an increase in approaches to discipline that include young people. This sort of change is sustainable in the long-term if all individuals see, hear and feel that fairness is upheld and individuals are supported.

Established forms of addressing difficult behaviour, especially in schools, still draw heavily on behaviour management policy and practices that may be at odds with restorative approaches. The rationale behind these approaches and the tensions that arise require further discussion. It is too simplistic to label these strategies as "good" or "bad". It is more useful to focus on the core purpose of educational settings and to foster communities of practice that give primacy to the individual, dignity, worth and talent of every member of these communities. When these are damaged by disrespectful words and actions or behaviours that cause more serious harm, restorative practices can offer more satisfying inclusive ways of making things right. Sometimes organisations may be really clear about the sort of behaviours they are against, for example bullying. A restorative approach enables organisations to become clearer in both words and actions about what they stand for.

The development of restorative practices in schools, youth projects and Youthreach centres is often associated with a major shift in the management of disruptive behaviour among young people. Instilling restorative practice can improve learning through the cultivation of responsible behaviour by young people for their individual actions and collective relationships within the school, Youthreach or youth work system including peers, teachers and parents. Adopting a restorative approach should therefore seek to promote and harmonise proactive relational support for parents, teachers and schools for the benefit of all. When research evidence and experiences of developing Restorative Practices in schools in Ireland, the UK, Canada, New Zealand, the US and Australia are gathered together there is a broad agreement on four inter-weaving levels of practice being relevant for a whole school approach. Therefore, the second questionnaire instrument was designed to obtain responses relating to the four inter-related levels of practice, specifically: (1) The Overall Strategy around Governance, Structures and Processes; (2) Whole School Approaches with all staff and students with the Focus on Growing Healthy Relationships and Preventing Harm; (3) Targeted Approaches with the Focus on Maintaining Relationships and Resolving Conflict in the day to day running of the school; and (4) Intensive Responses on those occasions when significant harm has occurred.

The model devised by the University of Ulster is based upon seeing a school or a youth project as a microcosm of society or as a community. In addition to planning for the desired results of education or personal development and organising resources and implementing processes to achieve these results, educational and youth organisations must find ways of maintaining safe and controlled environment conducive to learning and development just as communities need to find ways for diverse people to live together in peace. We believe that this works through sustaining a set of norms based upon shared values and beliefs. This is based upon the quality of relationships between people, characterised by the shared sense of community and common purpose.

A school, youth project and Youthreach centre needs to think carefully about how it will develop culture, relationships and socialisation processes to support its planned educational and developmental outcomes. However, we believe that it is through culture, relationships and socialisation that young people mature, develop respect and become responsible adults. In other words these aspects of organisational life provide opportunities for learning. A restorative approach within the school or youth work and Youthreach centre should not, then, simply focus on behaviour management and see restorative practice as some form of alternative sanction. A whole system approach focuses on changing the culture and relationships in a school to improve the overall academic and social learning processes and outcomes. The values of respect, safety, inclusion, responsibility and fairness will have primacy in the culture. All relationships within the school, youth project and Youthreach centre along with the language of communication will reflect these on a daily basis.

Specific restorative practices such as mediation and conferences are important but should not be the primary focus of a whole organisation approach. They are effective ways of addressing harm when values and skills are used to guide them. They give voice to individuals who are listened to. The whole story of what went wrong can then be addressed and when required amends can be made, an apology offered and accepted. Through these processes lessons on how to get on with people are learnt and the connections between people are strengthened.

In November 2011, when the University met 99 teachers, youth workers and Youthreach staff from Co Donegal, we proposed that conferencing and mediation should be regarded as part of a broader educational platform. We described a model which linked a culture of respect, fostering relationships and learning and achievement (Figure 8, below).

**FIGURE 8: THE RESTORATIVE SCHOOL: A DYNAMIC MODEL**



Each of these spheres of practice should be integrated and interacting so as to enable the school, centre or youth project community to grow and support its members. We believe that creating such a whole system approach is a long-term project. To this end, we offer the following recommendations.

## 8.2 Recommendations

1. Ensure that the ethos and operational architecture of restorative practices is reflected in the appropriate policy statements of all Donegal schools and Centres. This should clarify the meaning of “whole organisational approaches” to restorative practices, including relationships between staff, between staff and parents as well as between staff and young people. It should also address and resolve the tensions between competing paradigms of behaviour management and restorative approaches to discipline.
2. Develop policy and practice on the use of language by professional staff so that it reflects the desired culture and is used to affirm and enhance respect for personal identity.
3. Train young people in restorative practices.
4. Establish restorative practices training for family networks connected to all education/youth work establishments.
5. Develop pathways for current staff who have experience in restorative practices to become trainers in the above initiatives.
6. Establish reflective practitioner groups across the county to support practice development.
7. Publish a Donegal Restorative Practitioner Handbook to clarify restorative practices and its links to group work, mediation and other relationship based approaches to conflict.
8. Promote partnership work between the ETB network and other relevant agencies including the Gardaí, the HSE and Donegal County Council.
9. Present the Donegal ETB story so far to the North/South Ministerial Working Group.

In each of these recommendations, Donegal ETB can be assured of the support of the University of Ulster.

# 9.0 Appendices

## APPENDIX 1: PAIRED SAMPLE STATISTICS

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A_Disrup_Behav	2.93	60	7.011	.905
A_Disrup_Behav2	.52	60	1.242	.160
B_Phys_Play	.97	60	3.042	.393
B_Phys_Play2	.07	60	.312	.040
C_Verb_Demean_Stu	.95	60	2.626	.339
C_Verb_Demean_Stu2	.13	60	.676	.087
C_Verb_Demean_Staff	.67	60	2.144	.277
C_Verb_Demean_Staff2	.33	60	1.020	.132
D_Relat_Demean_Stu	.75	60	1.601	.207
D_Relat_Demean_Stu2	0.00	60	0.000	0.000
D_Chall_Teach_Auth	1.65	60	4.266	.551
D_Chall_Teach_Auth2	.20	60	.684	.088
E_Cyber_Bull	.28	60	.976	.126
E_Cyber_Bull2	.15	60	.606	.078
F_Smoking	.28	60	1.391	.180
Smoking2	0.00	60	0.000	0.000
K_Other	.17	60	1.291	.167
K_Other2	0.00	60	0.000	0.000
Question 5				
B_Phy_Ass_Stu	.58	60	1.441	.186
B_Phy_Ass_Stu2	.48	60	1.066	.138
B_Phy_Ass_Sta	.08	60	.424	.055
B_Phy_Ass_Sta2	.02	60	.129	.017
C_Ver_Ass_Stu	.13	60	.430	.056
C_Ver_Ass_Stu2	.02	60	.129	.017
C_Ver_Ass_Sta	.51	59	1.040	.135
C_Ver_Ass_Sta2	.59	59	1.116	.145
D_Rel_Ass_Stu	.07	60	.312	.040
D_Rel_Ass_Stu2	.02	60	.129	.017
D_Rel_Ass_Sta	.08	60	.381	.049
D_Rel_Ass_Sta2	0.00	60	0.000	0.000
E_Cyber_Bull	.17	60	.587	.076
E_Cyber_Bull2	.08	60	.334	.043
F_Rul_Smok	.33	60	.933	.120
F_Rul_Smok2	.07	60	.312	.040
F_Rul_Alco	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
F_Rul_Alco2	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
G_Theft_Vand	.08	60	.381	.049

G_Theft_Vand2	.10	60	.354	.046
H_Sub_Misuse	.05	60	.287	.037
H_Sub_Misuse2	.02	60	.129	.017
K_Other	.10	60	.477	.062
K_Other2	.70	60	2.165	.280
Question 6				
Contin_Disob	.08	60	.334	.043
Contin_Disob2	.05	60	.220	.028
B_Phy_Ass_Stu	.02	60	.129	.017
B_Phy_Ass_Stu2	.02	60	.129	.017
B_Phy_Ass_Sta	.02	60	.129	.017
B_Phy_Ass_Sta2	0.00	60	0.000	0.000
C_Ver_Ass_Stu	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
C_Ver_Ass_Stu2	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
C_Ver_Ass_Sta	.03	60	.181	.023
C_Ver_Ass_Sta2	.02	60	.129	.017
D_Rel_Ass_Stu	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
D_Rel_Ass_Stu2	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
D_Rel_Ass_Sta	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
D_Rel_Ass_Sta2	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
E_Cyber_Bull	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
E_Cyber_Bull2	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
F_Rul_Smok	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
F_Rul_Smok2	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
F_Rul_Alco	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
F_Rul_Alco2	.00 <sup>a</sup>	60	0.000	0.000
G_Theft_Vand	.02	60	.129	.017
G_Theft_Vand2	.02	60	.129	.017
H_Sub_Misuse	.02	60	.129	.017
H_Sub_Misuse2	0.00	60	0.000	0.000
K_Other	0.00	60	0.000	0.000
K_Other2	.05	60	.287	.037

PAIRED SAMPLE CORRELATIONS

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Question 4			
A_Disrup_Behav & A_Disrup_Behav2	60	.144	.272
B_Phys_Play & B_Phys_Play2	60	-.069	.600
C_Verb_Demean_Stu & C_Verb_Demean_Stu2	60	.023	.862
C_Verb_Demean_Staff & C_Verb_Demean_Staff2	60	.052	.695
D_Relat_Demean_Stu & D_Relat_Demean_Stu2	60		
D_Chall_Teach_Auth & D_Chall_Teach_Auth2	60	.170	.195
E_Cyber_Bull & E_Cyber_Bull2	60	-.073	.579
F_Smoking & Smoking2	60		
K_Other & K_Other2	60		
Question 5			
B_Phy_Ass_Stu & B_Phy_Ass_Stu2	60	.420	.001
B_Phy_Ass_Sta & B_Phy_Ass_Sta2	60	-.026	.845
C_Ver_Ass_Stu & C_Ver_Ass_Stu2	60	-.041	.758
C_Ver_Ass_Sta & C_Ver_Ass_Sta2	59	.241	.066
D_Rel_Ass_Stu & D_Rel_Ass_Stu2	60	-.028	.831
D_Rel_Ass_Sta & D_Rel_Ass_Sta2	60		
E_Cyber_Bull & E_Cyber_Bull2	60	.014	.913
F_Rul_Smok & F_Rul_Smok2	60	.330	.010
G_Theft_Vand & G_Theft_Vand2	60	.063	.634
H_Sub_Misuse & H_Sub_Misuse2	60	-.023	.862
K_Other & K_Other2	60	.802	.000
Question 6			
Contin_Disob & Contin_Disob2	60	-.058	.661
B_Phy_Ass_Stu & B_Phy_Ass_Stu2	60	-.017	.898
B_Phy_Ass_Sta & B_Phy_Ass_Sta2	60		
C_Ver_Ass_Sta & C_Ver_Ass_Sta2	60	-.024	.855
G_Theft_Vand & G_Theft_Vand2	60	-.017	.898
H_Sub_Misuse & H_Sub_Misuse2	60		
K_Other & K_Other2	60		

# Appendix 2: Participating Organisations

1. Donegal Youth Service
2. Foróige
3. Ballyshannon Youthreach Centre
4. Buncrana/Glengad Youthreach Centres
5. Gortahork Youthreach Centre
6. Letterkenny Youthreach Centre
7. Lifford Youthreach Centre
8. St Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs
9. Magh Éne College, Bundoran
10. Gairm Scoil Mhic Diarmada, Arranmore Island
11. Errigal College, Letterkenny
12. Finn Valley College, Stranorlar
13. Crana College, Buncrana
14. Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Béal an Átha Móir
15. Mulroy College, Milford
16. St Columba's Comprehensive School, Glenties
17. Pobalscoil Chloich Cheannfhaola (PCC) Falcarragh
18. Carndonagh Community School
19. St Eunan's College, Letterkenny
20. Rosses Community School, Dungloe
21. Royal and Prior Community School, Raphoe

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