

Our Beliefs and Restorative Practices

At Bertram Hawker Kindergarten we believe that our role as educators is:

- to provide an environment where children develop the social and emotional skills to build fulfilling, cooperative relationships,
- to support children to resolve difficulties that arise in relationships and learn to negotiate and empathise with others.

These two beliefs are the essence of restorative practices.

What are Restorative Practices?

Restorative practices involve creating trusting relationships, fair processes and involving children actively in repairing problems when conflict arises.

Instead of a blame and punitive approach to relationship problems the focus is on what can be done to build and restore relationships.

If children develop restorative skills then the need for others to intervene and manage difficulties and conflict is greatly decreased.

How do we support children to:

- **play safely, cooperatively and with purpose?**
- **learn through interactions with others, including conflict situations?**

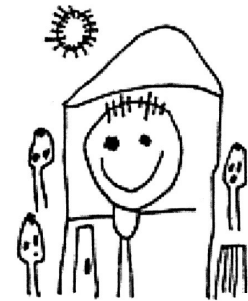
We provide an environment conducive to empathy and respect for others.

We involve children in decision making where they plan, choose, negotiate and share their interests and skills.

In our daily practice we encourage children to talk about what they are doing / seeing and why things are happening.

Children need to know that there are fair processes in place and that adults support this process.

We create a culture where the message is that:
“We can work this out”.



Restorative Practices at Bertram Hawker Kindergarten- building collaborative relationships



The importance of play.

Young children are developing their understandings of themselves and others every day. Participating in play with other children provides them with opportunities to work through problems and learn about the perspectives of others. Children are far more likely to learn social skills when they are engaged in stimulating experiences in which they are interested. Through learning with others, children also begin to identify and express their emotions and to empathise with the emotions of others.

So, our role is to challenge children's thinking and learning by providing social experiences that are based on their interests.



Restorative Questions

When children have relationship difficulties, restorative strategies include all children involved in the problem working together to resolve the situation.

Educators assist this process by asking questions that give all children the opportunity to think and talk about what happened and to think about how to repair the harm.

These questions can be used for instances where there are problems with sharing, where children have been excluded from play or when a child has been hurt.

All children involved are asked:

What happened?

How do you feel?

What can we do to make it better?

It is important to give each child time to reflect and answer each question.

You can also ask:

Does that seem fair? Is there anything else that needs to happen?

Remember to use silence. Say, 'tell me more' or 'say more about that'. Give time to reflect, and if necessary, come back to the questions.

The Value of Restorative Practices

The central focus is on relationships. repairing harm, responsibility and working together to strengthen relationships.

Establishing a culture where children feel confident to use restorative practices takes time. Children need to feel safe, secure and confident to approach adults.

By using restorative practice strategies children feel able to deal proactively and positively with tensions and conflict in relationships.

Children are more likely to ask for help from an adult to help them solve a problem regarding conflict, rather than expecting a teacher to solve the problem for them by punishing the 'wrongdoer'. 'Wrongdoers' are also more likely to be open about their role in a dispute because they know that the process is about repairing the relationship and does not involve blame or guilt.

Children who have observed the conflict are also often involved in the process and are able to give their perspective of what happened and their suggestions for resolution.