

Well-being and Health in Schools (WHISP): co-production of a whole-school restorative approach intervention logic model

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Introduction

The Donaldson review set out a new vision for education in Wales and highlighted student health and wellbeing as an essential foundation for educational success. Restorative approaches offer one way of promoting health and wellbeing with whole-school proactive approaches considered most effective.

We aimed to understand how Monmouth Comprehensive has used a whole school restorative approach to promote student well-being by working with staff and students to co-produce an intervention logic model.

What did we do?

We ran focus groups with Monmouth Comprehensive staff and students in April and July 2016 and interviewed senior leadership. We recorded these sessions, transcribed them, and then analysed them by identifying themes and mapping these to a logic model. At a second round of focus groups we sought feedback on the developing logic model and expanded on underdeveloped areas.

Where did we do it?

Monmouth comprehensive is a mixed community school with 1639 students and 7.8% free school meal entitlement. It was the first UK secondary school to receive the Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM). Monmouth Comprehensive has adopted the restorative approach since 2010, resulting in clear measureable benefits such as increased student attendance and reduced exclusions, youth offending team referrals and staff absence. The school's motto is "Learning to lead our lives". Students, staff and governors set the school's values: respect, freedom with responsibility, security, independence and success.



"...with the restorative (conversations) you're having a discussion with them and linking in the respect and independence and helping them acknowledge the reason why they disrupted class. They're actually taking responsibility for their actions. So its letting them become more of an adult...and then they look at the ways to act differently and how it can impact on learning" - staff

"I was tired of being offered a key worker for mental health which lasted 6 months and then the funding ran out. ... Mental health (should be) build through learning, which is our core purpose. You teach behaviour as much as you teach Physics, Chemistry..." – senior leadership

"You have to make it right for your school. So you blend it and make it your own... but the concept is about giving people the opportunity to share, to talk, to be adult, to give perspective, help understanding and then build from it. It cannot be punitive." – senior leadership

"We're all equal here. Staff or students. We're all the same" – student

"...we (don't just) have restorative conversations... we want to create a restorative ethos" – staff

What did we find?

We mapped intervention inputs, activities and outcomes in a logic model. Inputs included leadership vision, staff engagement, structures to promote continuity and alignment of policies with restorative practice. Intervention activities include working with school values, restorative conversations and focus on relationships. The approach operates at 3 tiers: universal, targeted and intensive. Provisions of support are available at each of these tiers. Immediate outcomes include the development of supportive, trustworthy and responsive relationships between students, between staff and between students and staff. Students describe feeling valued with enhanced confidence. Staff develop confidence in using the restorative approach and a commitment to understanding student behaviour to facilitate accountability. Medium to longer term outcomes include increased school connectedness, positive student engagement in learning and enhanced school reputation. Students described the school culture as inclusive, trustworthy and supportive. The restorative approach has been integrated into a dynamic system and is maintained through on-going initiatives for engagement, reflection, review and re-alignment. Challenges to sustaining this approach were also identified.

"I was quite badly behaved when I joined this school and I came full circle." – student

"...conflict is seen as an opportunity to build community, rather than to punish and blame." – senior leadership

"They get down to your level, they don't stand at the front and say, 'I'm your teacher, you've got to respect me', they're not pushy. They (help) you to realise what you're doing wrong and how you can (sort it out)" - student

"(Wellbeing) is what the school runs on. If students feel safe and secure, almost like loved, its like a big family and then they're more likely to concentrate and get on with work" - student

What did we learn and what's next?

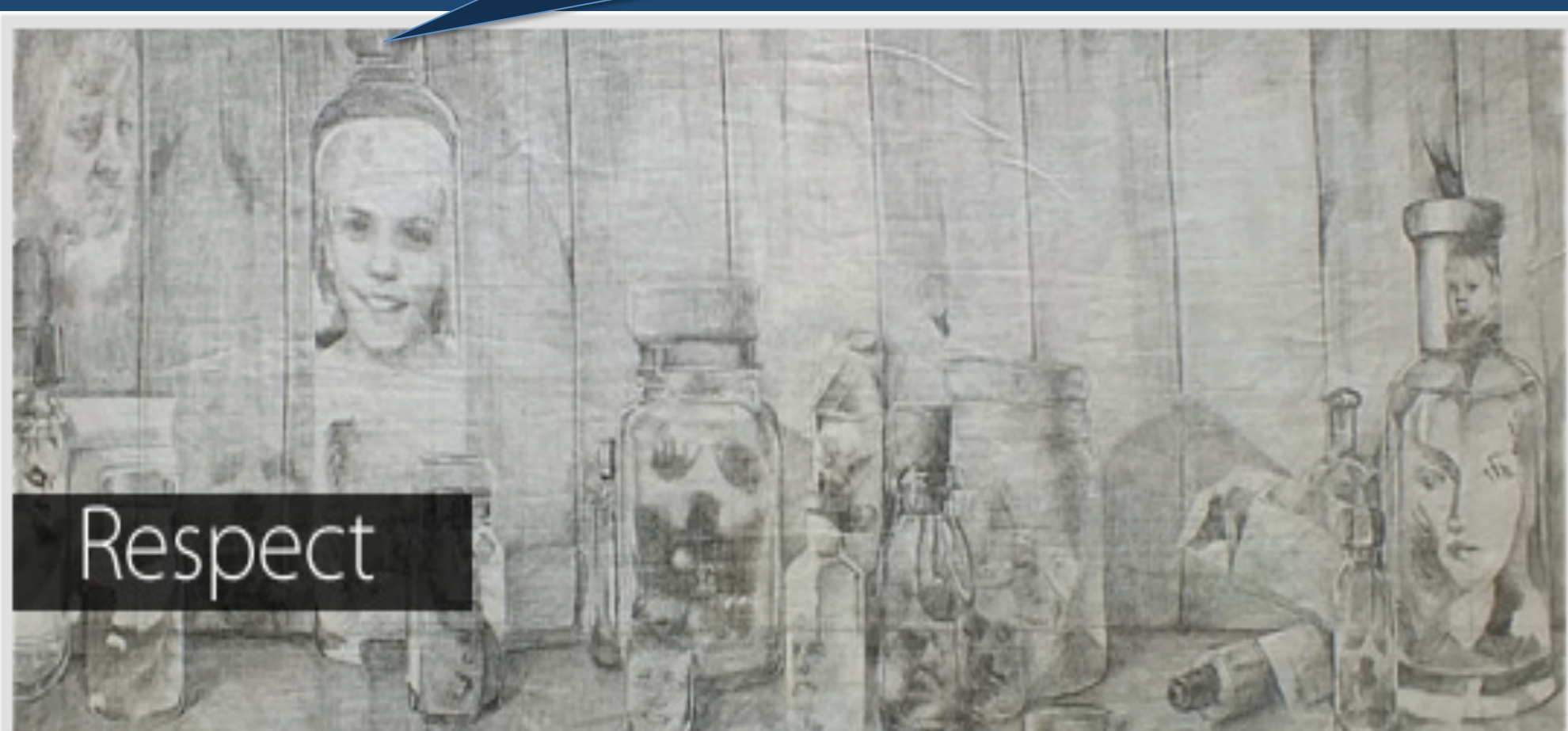
We co-produced a logic model for a whole-school, restorative intervention to promote student health and wellbeing delivered at Monmouth Comprehensive. Acceptability and sustainability of the intervention have already been demonstrated. We identified contextual and implementation factors that may compromise theory and inhibit outcomes.

We plan to develop and evaluate an implementation "roadmap" for other schools who might be interested in this approach.

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With thanks to Monmouth Comprehensive students and staff