

HELP ME UNDERSTAND...

the
Building
Peaceful
Schools
Programme



APPEARANCE + PURPOSE

Building Peaceful Schools (BPS) is an intervention in which teachers at schools are guided through experiences of different skills they can use to **build peace, manage conflict** and use **Restorative Practices**.

What's it for?

It is to help schools **do discipline differently**

This helps them to understand their own and other people's feelings and reactions, and thereby **improve relationships** with other people and make schools into places of peace, safety and fairness for all.

It is grounded in the belief that

‘Peace begins with me’.



BUILDING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

APPEARANCE + PURPOSE

What does it look like?

The BPS programme is a repeated set of workshops or meetings, where people sit in a circle and do various activities together, including:

*listening exercises,
sharing from personal experience,
journaling,
discussions of various important topics
and guided reflections.*

These activities help them to learn skills they can use in their own lives.

BPS has developed interventions for use with **Teachers**, with **Peer Mediators** among Learners at a school, and for **Parental Engagement**.

This explainer talks mostly about the **Teacher** aspect of the programme, as this is the first step taken.



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APPEARANCE + PURPOSE

The workshops or meetings, when held with the same group of people at a school, help teachers to **learn different skills** they can use to *practice empathy, build peace* in themselves and in their classrooms, *manage conflict* between colleagues and between them and parents or children at the school, *respond to violence* in all forms, and *change the way they do discipline* at their schools.

**What
does
it do?**

BPS workshops and set-pieces offer teachers other ways of doing things, particularly discipline, conflict management, and salvaging damaged relationships so that they can be **restored.**

*“How can
I put
things
right?”*

They help teachers to move from a focus on punishment to Restorative Justice.



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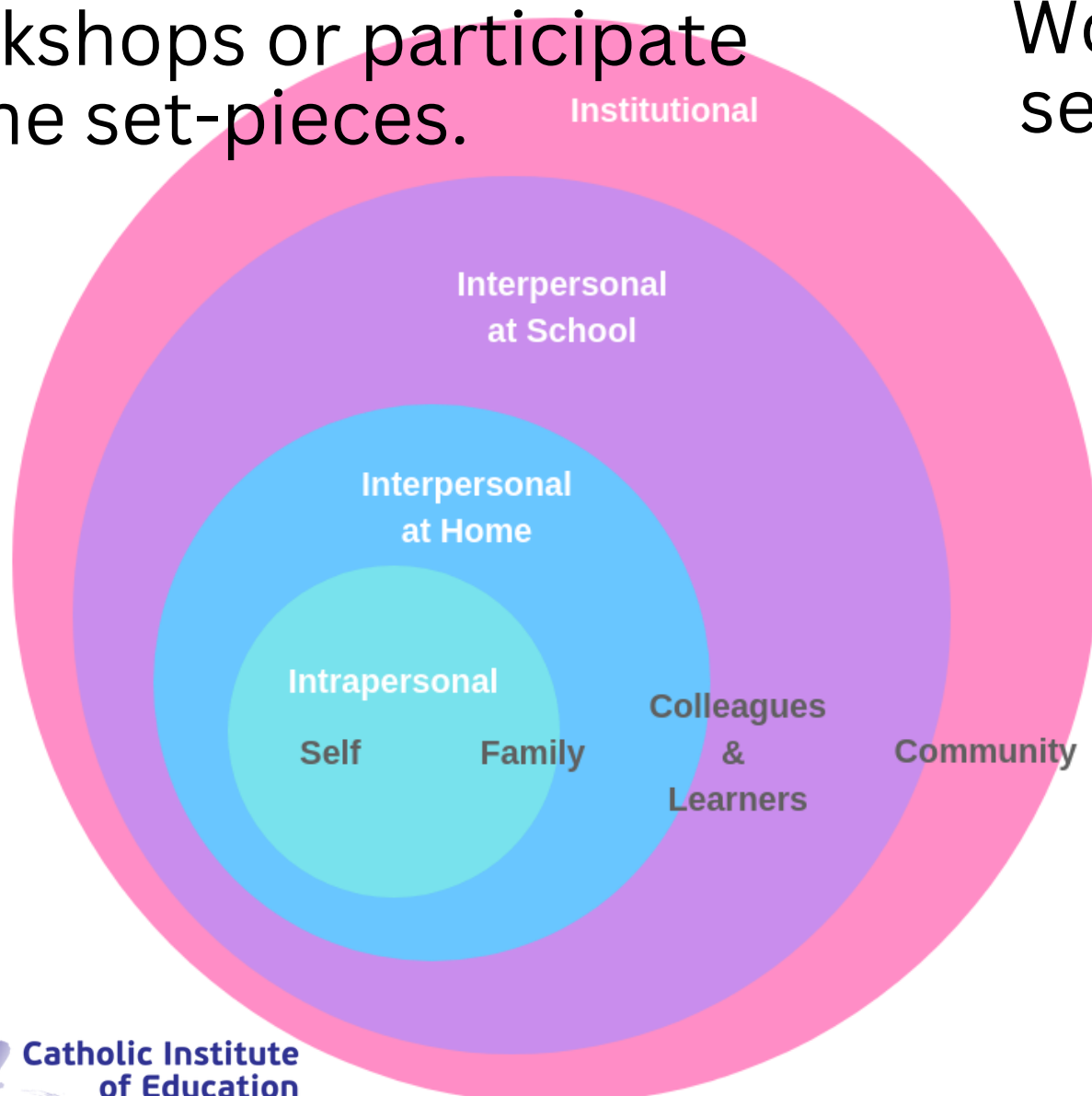
APPEARANCE + PURPOSE

BPS workshops and set-pieces help staff and learners to see a **different way** of living the Catholic Ethos.

Does the work change anything else?

CIE develops teachers and learners to resolve conflict in a non-violent way in schools, and we have noticed that the work continues in the personal lives of those who attend the workshops or participate in the set-pieces.

Workshops and set-pieces with teachers or learners help to create a **peaceful and harmonious culture** in our schools.



APPEARANCE + PURPOSE

A trained facilitator starts by inviting teachers to sit in a **circle** at the school, and asks them how much time they have available for the session.

Those in the circle will decide on the **boundary agreements** that are necessary for the session to go well, and the facilitator then guides them through an activity that is suited to the time they have available.

How is BPS conducted?

They then begin with a **reflection**, followed by a statement of the purpose of the session.

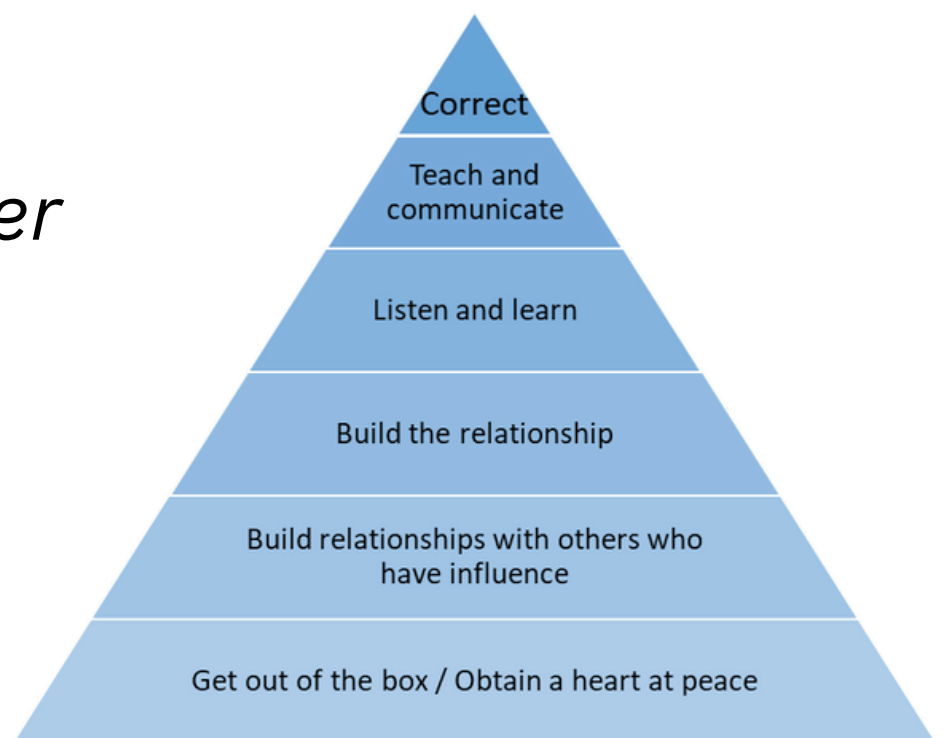
APPEARANCE + PURPOSE

What are the activities?

Trust Exercises
99 ways to say 'Good'
Secret Spot
Retributive or Restorative?
Zen Drawing
Guide to Transforming Power
"I" Messages
Peace Circles
6-point Problem-Solving
Steps to Forgiveness
Conferencing
and more!

Each activity fits into a specific one of the three aims of the programme:

**Peacebuilding,
Conflict Management
or
Restorative Justice.**

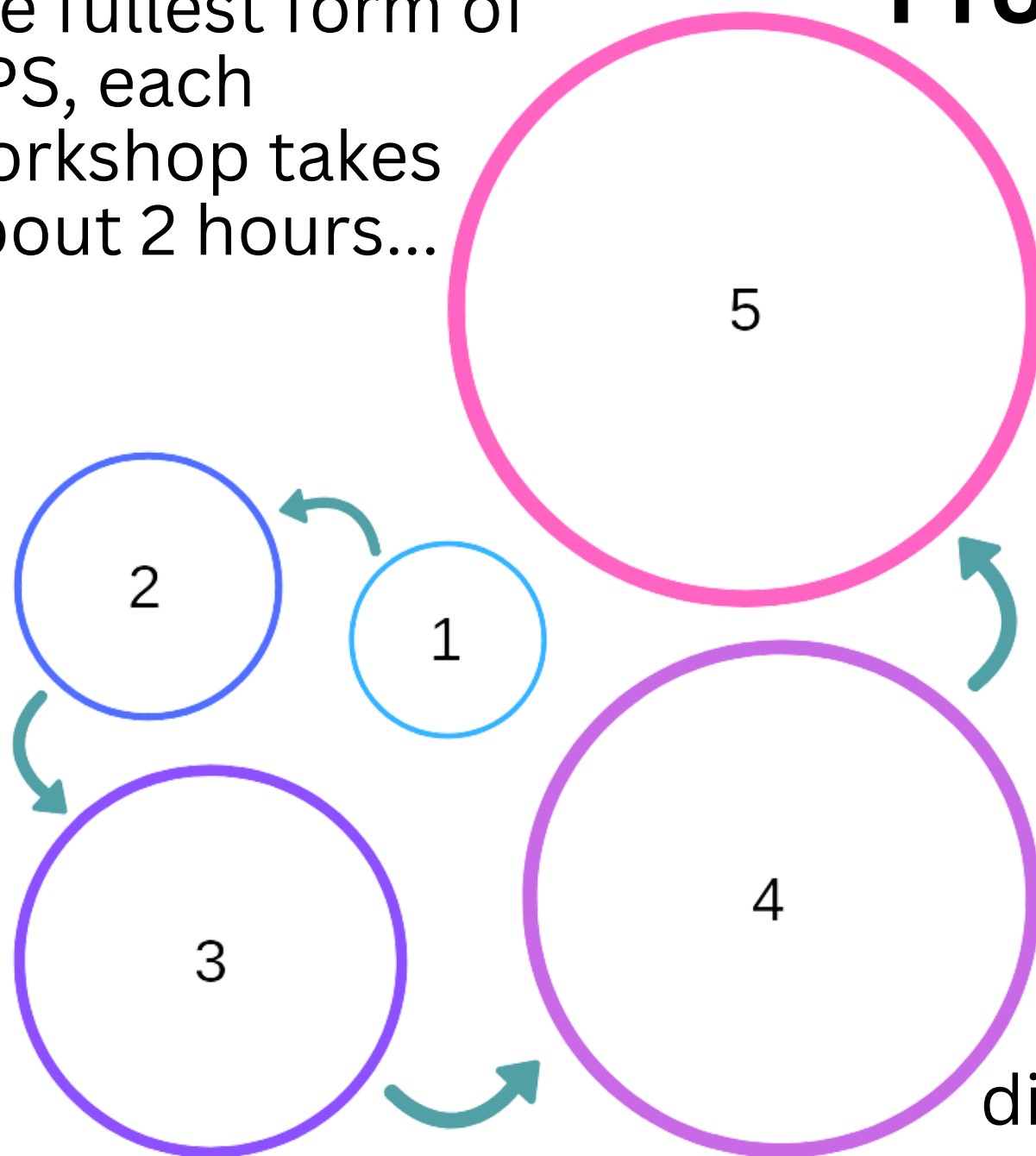


the Peacemaking Pyramid

APPEARANCE + PURPOSE

If those in the circle at the school have agreed to take part in the fullest form of BPS, each workshop takes about 2 hours...

How does the full BPS Programme look?



... with 17 completely thought-out workshops, which fit into **5 cycles** (iterations) done over 5 years, including specific sessions on different topics

e.g.

Anger & Forgiveness

Conflict Management & Gender

Affirming Identity & Challenging Racism

Practising Hospitality and Countering Xenophobia.

DEVELOPMENT

The Building Peaceful Schools Programme has been developed **since 2012** by the Programme Design Team at the Catholic Institute of Education, in close consultation with international Restorative Justice practitioners, social science researchers, educationists and other peacebuilding experts.

Who developed BPS?

Why was BPS developed?

It was developed to **respond to a direct need voiced by teachers** in South African Catholic schools during the 2012 workshops around Child Safeguarding, where they showed that they needed something to help them do discipline differently in their schools.



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DEVELOPMENT

Why else was BPS developed?

BPS is a response to the **lack of meaningful and systemic alternatives to corporal punishment**, which was outlawed in 1996 but which continues to be practised in South African schools. It is a general response to high levels of violence of all kinds in South Africa.

What are the core aims of BPS?

Develop the Catholic school ethos and a climate of care, thus **ensuring schools are safe spaces** for learners.

Design an approach for discipline that is mindful of the **dignity of all parties**, and which moves away from corporal punishment.

Develop citizens who are able to **respect, reason, and live in harmony** with each other.

Provide **safe, caring, peace-filled schools** that can contribute to building safer and more caring communities.



BUILDING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

LINKS WITH OUR OTHER WORK

BPS links to every aspect of the work that CIE does in the school.

How does BPS fit with CIE's other work?

Child Safeguarding (CSG)

Keeping children and vulnerable persons safe is a key condition for a school to be regarded as a peaceful place where there is fairness and justice for those who need it, and where the dignity of all is respected and upheld.

Ethos

BPS works with the character or ethos of the school, and the people who are in it, in keeping with Catholic social teachings.

Religious Education (RE)

Teachings about Peace, Justice and Forgiveness are central to Religious Education, and are part of religious traditions all over the world.



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Academic Work

Peaceful classrooms, where the needs of learners and teachers are met without violence or punishment, are places where academic outcomes improve. A person cannot learn when they are afraid.

The Education Access Programme (EAP)

This is the same as for Health Screening. Overcoming vulnerability and improving access to education is a key component of Social Justice.

Peer Mediation

Peer Mediation is the development of BPS for learners and equips them with life skills.



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The Mental Wellness Programme

The processes, set-pieces and overall methodology of the BPS programme complement the individually focused work of the Mental Health Programme. Participants in both programmes can use the techniques from both to help them deal with stress and improve their ability to cope with mental health challenges.

School Discipline

Many schools all over the world have adopted Restorative Justice approaches and practices as their Disciplinary Code, and any system that is not focused on Punitive (especially Corporal Punishment) methods can quite easily integrate BPS approaches into its methodologies.



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School Leadership

School Leaders that practice the methods and skills of BPS will benefit from personal insights and a more peaceful school where they have improved communication in all areas.

School Governance

BPS is particularly good for creative problem-solving, strategic planning and for asking the open questions that are so necessary in governance.

Care for the Environment

Peace between people can only truly be achieved when we are at peace with the world around us. If we protect and do not exploit the planet and its resources, then we probably have a similar attitude to our fellow humans (and vice versa).



BUILDING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

LINKS WITH OUR OTHER WORK

If you are part of the Catholic school network in South Africa, this programme was mandated for use in your school in 2019 at the 3rd National Catholic Schools Congress and is part of the NCBE strategic plan.

Do we have to do it?

As all of the CIE's work is invitational, whether your school is Catholic or not, you are not compelled to participate in it.

However, it is a very useful programme, and we strongly suggest that you use it to help you begin your journey to safety and peace for all people at your school.



BUILDING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

VALIDITY + SUITABILITY

The Building Peaceful Schools Programme has been **externally evaluated** on numerous occasions, and there are peer-reviewed journal articles published about it.

Is it good enough for my school?

It is designed for use in South African schools, but has been used in Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Eswatini.

It is **based on international practices** around Restorative Justice, which are used in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and elsewhere.



BUILDING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



VALIDITY + SUITABILITY

External evaluations show that, by practising the various activities, teachers at schools can **improve empathy, manage conflict, build trust, improve communication, and practise presence or mindfulness.**

Does it do what it's supposed to do?

All of these things help to make schools safer and more peaceful for all the people in them, by making the way they work **fairer and more inclusive.**

The data from the School Climate Survey for Learners shows that **levels of care improve, and levels of harm decrease,** in schools where the Building Peaceful Schools programme has been running consistently for longer than 2 years.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“Punishment Works! How can you claim that it doesn’t work?”

The World Health Organisation and numerous other international experts state categorically that the use of corporal punishment with children triggers harmful psychological and physiological responses, leading them to experience pain, sadness, fear, anger, shame and guilt.

Ask yourself these questions:

“How does it feel when I am punished for doing something?”

“What happens when I am afraid or apprehensive in the classroom or at school?”

From an academic point of view, it is absolutely clear that the constant threat of physical punishment does not lead to peace, but perpetuates a cycle of violence.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“Won’t I lose control of the learners if I do this?”

Many participants (particularly teachers and school leaders) are afraid of ‘losing control’ when practising the BPS methods.

Ask yourself this question:

***“How does it feel
when I am told
to do something
without being asked
for my input?”***

Systems based on control are also ones that inhibit critical thinking and creativity.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“How long does this take?”

Change takes time.

This programme is about making
a habit of acting
in a way that
restores relationships.

The general rule is that schools
(which are large complex systems)
require about 2 or 3 years for
restorative approaches to get through
to all levels within them.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“How does this programme fit with my culture?”

This question, usually phrased as the statement *‘this is not my culture’* is used very frequently in the schools as a method of deflecting what the programme seeks to achieve.

“Neither African Religion nor Christianity nor Islam is innocent of engaging, aggravating, or promoting conflicts and wars. But their teachings can challenge people to make and practice peace at all levels: peace among people, peace between people and nature, and peace between people and God.”

We urge you to read a wonderful article written by **John S. Mbiti**, an African philosopher and theologian, about how the African way of being is one rooted in peace (in all religious and cultural traditions of the continent).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“How can my school waste time on these methods?”

‘I don’t have time for this!’ is the most common form of resistance to the methods of the programme. Responding to a crisis when it happens (as opposed to escalating it to a quasi-legal setting) takes substantially less time.

Ask yourself these questions:

“How many Disciplinary Hearings have happened recently at my school?”

“How long do these processes take?”

“How do people feel about these processes?”

“What would I rather do?”

“How does my choice of action build peace and a sense of fairness at my school?”

IMPACT

What effect does BPS have?

If schools participate in the workshops or meetings as described, then teachers develop the knowledge, skills and mind-set to build relationships, manage conflict and use restorative approaches in their interactions with each other and with the learners in their classes. Teachers also encourage learners to regulate their own behaviour, and manage their own conflicts in a similar way.

Learners are then aware of the procedures to follow, and both learners and teachers implement restorative approaches to build good relationships.

How does it affect learners?



BUILDING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

IMPACT

What about the rest of the school?

The school community then takes ownership of the restorative approaches, including them in policies and plans for the school and committing to implementing them in their core functioning. Thus, there is a personal commitment to building peace in the school, as well as an institutional commitment to do the same.

What about interpersonal relationships?

With sustained BPS work, Interpersonal relationships improve (for example through increased co-operation and a reduction in negative interactions) and there is less interpersonal conflict.

IMPACT

What does BPS show? When combined with implementation of the NCBE's Child Safeguarding Policy, schools that have been in the BPS programme for more than 2 years :

Have improved relationships between all members of the school community, and report less interpersonal conflict **1**

2 Report positive effects on managing conflict between teachers

Have improved relationships between school leaders and staff members **3**

4 Report that the BPS programme meets the professional needs of teachers, and contributes to change in the school ethos and climate of care, particularly as it shifts discipline from a retributive to a restorative approach.

PARTICIPATION

Who can participate in it?

Any school in South Africa (or Africa in general) can participate in the Building Peaceful Schools Programme.

Where do I sign my school up for it?

You can contact the CIE and ask for the Building Peaceful Schools Programme to be conducted in your school. There is a cost involved for the facilitation and other processes, and we will send you a quote on it.



BUILDING PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROGRAMME