

Peer Mediation

What is it?

Peer Mediation is a process whereby people involved in a dispute enter voluntarily into an arrangement to resolve the problem with the help of a mediator. By establishing agreed ground rules for the conduct of the mediation, a neutral mediator enables the participants to identify the issues by talking about the situation from their own point of view, to be heard by the other participant(s), and to say what their preferred outcome would be. Together, the participants then draw up an agreement. The mediator neither gives advice nor imposes a solution; responsibility and control rest with the participants.

What is the evidence of its effectiveness?

As has been reported in the evaluation literature, peer mediation programmes benefit both children as individuals and schools as institutions. They have been shown to improve pupils' self-esteem and relationships, give children a greater sense of responsibility, reduce conflicts, promote academic achievement, develop life-skills, allow teachers to focus on teaching, and create an environment in which pupils can learn and socialise safely and constructively.

How does it work?

Peer mediators undergo a minimum of two days' training to equip them. Once trained, the peer mediators work in pairs, invariably with pupils younger than themselves.

Peer mediation is a very matter-of-fact, logical, linear process, whereby children help each other to deal with their conflicts, playground disputes, and so on. It is a structured process, managed by two mediators, who are children. They introduce the process, establish ground rules, listen to the story from the perspective of each of the disputants and offer to each of them a summary of what he or she has said. They then provide the opportunity for both sides to voice their feelings, help them identify the problems, brainstorm solutions, and, ideally, agree a solution. Mediation is a voluntary process, so if either of those in dispute decides that he or she doesn't want to go ahead at any stage, he or she doesn't have to. In that instance the conflict is usually dealt with according to the school's standard discipline policy.

How can we find out more?

[An example of a Kent School's Peer Mediation Initiative](#) – St Stephen's Junior School, Canterbury