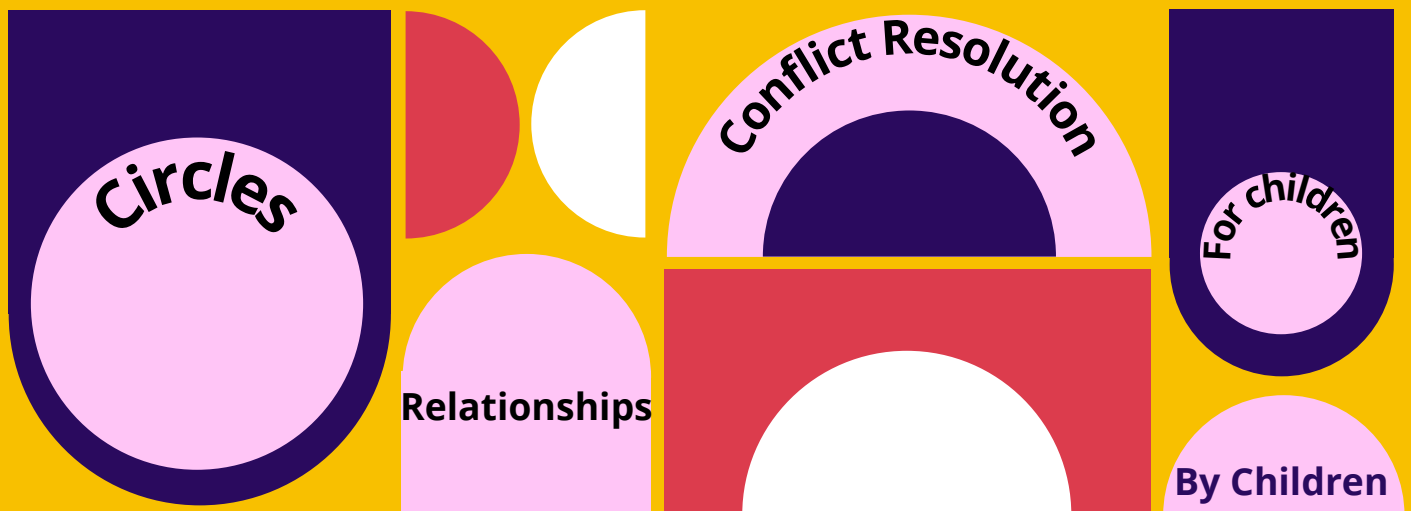


BUILDING  
PEACEFUL  
SCHOOLS

# Peer Mediation

Setting up a scheme in your primary school:  
Are you ready?



# Welcome



This booklet is for senior leaders interested in setting up a Peer Mediation scheme in their school. Peer Mediation enables children to mediate conflicts that occur on the playground between other children.

Here we take you through the stages of planning that are needed to build a dynamic, pro-active and successful mediation scheme.

## About Peacemakers

Peacemakers is an educational charity based in Birmingham, working with schools and community organisations across the West Midlands for more than 30 years.

We offer training for children and adults to develop the skills of peace, including emotional literacy, conflict resolution, mediation and restorative practices. Building, strengthening and repairing relationships lies at the heart of what we do.

Peer Mediation has been a core part of our work since we were established. We have a team of experienced trainers able to deliver high quality training that responds to the needs of the children in your school.

Peacemakers is a member of the [Peer Mediation Network](#), and we adhere to their best practice guidelines. Our training is accredited by the [College of Mediators](#).



Click on the image to find out more about peer mediation and our accreditation.

“

*A UK survey of schools showed teaching staff felt peer mediation was the most effective peer-led strategy to reduce bullying.*

*All students can develop resilience as active participants in a mediation.*

*Peer Mediation Network*

”

## Contact Details

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# Introduction



## What is Peer Mediation?

Peer Mediation is a process where two trained mediators help two other children engaged in a dispute to find their way to an agreeable solution.

It is different from Buddying or Mentoring schemes and often operates alongside such initiatives in schools. Mediators are trained to recognise bullying, which they cannot mediate and need to refer to the Mediation Lead.

Many schools countrywide have welcomed Peer Mediation as a key strand in their school support networks, and those that have moved closely towards restorative approaches, recognise their Peer Mediation teams as quite central to this.

“

*Children have a much deeper understanding of helping peers solve their own problems and to be active listeners.*

*Teacher, Dudley*

”

## Principles and Values

Mediators are trained to work with these key principles in mind:



**Impartiality:** Mediators don't judge, blame or take sides.



**Voluntary:** Choosing to be a mediator and participating in mediation is voluntary.



**Confidentiality:** Mediators don't gossip about issues that come to mediation and know when to refer issues to an adult in school.



**Mediators help disputants to solve their problems:** They don't tell people what to do.

A successful scheme is underpinned by these principles, which children learn in their training. It also embraces the values of **equality of opportunity** for children to become mediators, **safe participation** in the process of training and setting up the scheme, where young people are involved in decision-making and **independence** of young people, meaning schools place trust in their mediators to help resolve conflicts with limited adult intervention.

These values are explained further in the [Peer Mediation Network Best Practice Guidelines](#). The content of our Peer Mediation publications and training reflect these guidelines.

# Mediation Training



## **Our pedagogy**

Our peer mediation training is dynamic, engaging, fun and hard work! The children absorb a huge amount of information over the course of 3 days, as well as developing a range of skills. Training takes place with the children seated in a circle. Within this space we model the key mediation principles and values.

## **The Role of the Mediation Lead**

We recommend that schools have a member of staff in charge of the mediation scheme. They will be the Mediation Lead. Their role will be to support the mediators, providing regular check ins to see how things are going, creating the rota and being the main point of contact. We ask that the Peer Mediation Lead participates in the 3 days of training. If there is another adult you feel would benefit from being involved then they too are welcome. We ask the adults to join in all the activities with the mediators and to support them when they are practising their skills. On the third day, we assess the skills of the mediators and ask them to help us with that process.

## **Building the team and why it's important**

It is vital that the mediation team is well bonded, as a strong team underpins all aspects of the training and of the scheme itself. A significant amount of time on the first day of training is designated to building the team. Training in a circle is very effective as it is fully participatory and lends itself well to taking part in a wide range of team games, discussions, demonstrations and ice breaker activities.



## **Why 3 days?**

The PMN Best Practice Guidelines advise that 5 days training gives the best foundation for mediators.

However, we know the pressure this amount of training would place on schools, so offer 3 full days and ask that relevant preparation takes place before we arrive.

Some Mediation Leads decide to train the next cohort themselves. We offer training to support this. If you run the training yourself, you may be tempted to condense it

to 1 or 2 days. In our experience, saving time by reducing the length of the training, doesn't save you time in the longer term. Children will be less prepared and will need more support from you later, and if time is not invested to build the team on Day 1, training itself could be problematic.

## **Course content**

When you book Peer Mediation training, you will be provided with a Staff Handbook for the Mediation Lead, that will include guidance on setting up the scheme, describe the course content and provide advice on how to sustain the scheme to maximise success.

# Preparation



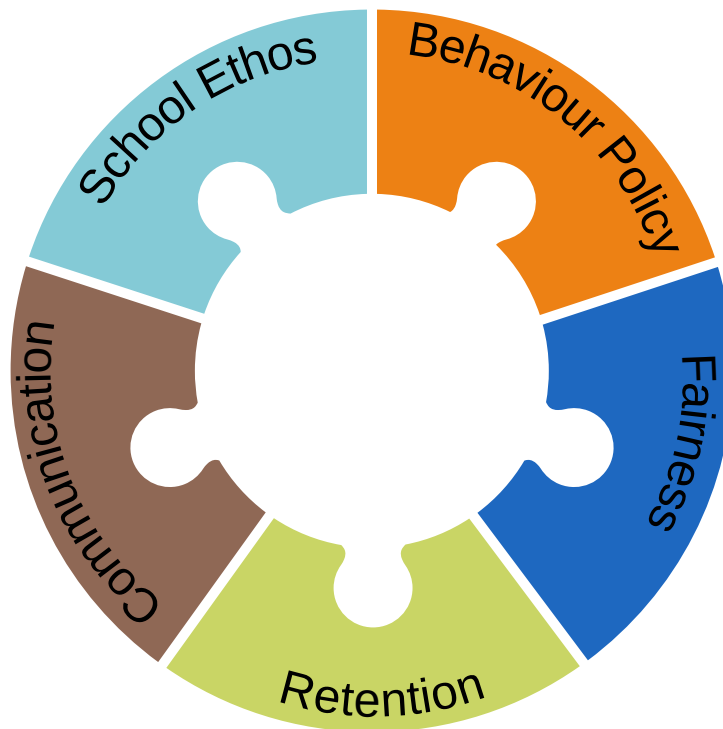
Having a well-run Peer Mediation scheme in school brings rewards for pupils and staff.



Click on the article for more...

“ Peer Mediation has a very high rate of success according to the students who utilise it, with 94% of disputants saying it helped them. 95% say that they think mediation makes their school a better place. Staff report that it helps them do their job, reducing the number of incidents that require their involvement. ”

Giving yourself time to think it through before launching will save you time in the long-run. Think about the benefits, but also be aware of the pitfalls.



## Foundations of Peer Mediation

These 5 foundations of a strong Peer Mediation scheme along with 3 full days of training are vital to its success:

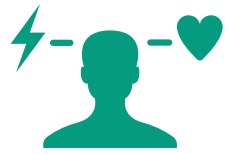
- **School Ethos:** Clear endorsement from SLT that ripples down through the school.
- **Fairness:** Embedded within a sound selection process and throughout the whole scheme.
- **Retention:** Achieved by having a strong team with supportive leads who guide the way.
- **Communication:** With the whole school community to raise awareness and support of the scheme.
- **Behaviour Policy:** Reflects a clear process of voluntary referral, accessible across the school.



## School Ethos

Will Peer Mediation be part of a whole school programme complementing, for example, a values-led approach, restorative practices, children's rights and participation?

**The pitfalls:** *When the values of mediation are counter-cultural to the values of the school, there is a risk of confusion when staff and children receive mixed messages.*



## Behaviour Policy

How will mediation be embedded within the school behaviour policy? How will mediation add value to your behaviour policy? Will recognition be given to children who have taken the step of trying mediation, regardless of the outcome?

**The pitfalls:** *When mediation is not seen as part of the wider school's policy on behaviour, it risks becoming tokenistic and losing its value. Children will not choose mediation if it's simply an extra step before 'punishment'.*

## Fairness

How will you make sure the selection process for mediators is as fair as possible? What assumptions are staff, pupils and parents making about who will be mediators? What adaptations might need to be made for children with special needs or EAL? How can you mitigate for bias during the selection process? Does the mediation team represent the make-up of the school? Could discussion around the process form part of the wider curriculum in discussions around governance and democracy? How will those not chosen be followed up?

**The pitfalls:** *If the selection process is not thought-through, clear and transparent, there is a risk that people will feel the process is unjust. If children and parents only see the class favourites or 'heroes' represented in the mediation team, they may decide not to participate or to undermine the process.*

## Retention

How can the benefits of mediation be communicated to everyone involved? How can the team be celebrated? What support is in place for the mediators and the Mediation Lead? What will happen if a mediator changes their mind about being one? Would asking children to write a letter of resignation help assess the reasons for their change of heart?

**The pitfalls:** *It can be really hard when you have invested in training, and then children change their mind about the job. This often happens when children have not been fully prepared about what they are taking on, or if they lack confidence. There is a worry that 'if one goes, others will follow'. Disputants will not have a good experience of mediation if the mediator doesn't want to be there. Again, the voluntary nature of the role is a core principle.*

## Communication

How will you tell Governors, staff, pupils and parents about mediation? What tools, information and video clips will you share? What information do children need to be able to make an informed decision about whether to volunteer? Who will support children who have the potential but lack confidence and self-esteem? How will mediation be represented on the school website and in the school prospectus?

**The pitfalls:** *When the processes and training involved are not fully shared with the whole school, there is a risk of misunderstanding about what mediation is about. Some see mediation as a 'soft' approach to behavioural issues, when in fact it can take a lot of courage to choose mediation.*

## Getting ready for mediation training

Once staff have been consulted about how Peer Mediation can benefit your school, a Peer Mediation Lead has been appointed and you feel ready to start the process, use these steps to prepare for training. You will need half a term to work through these, before training takes place. All resources you will need for preparation and for the training itself, can be found in the Staff Handbook which you will receive once training has been booked.

*If you don't feel ready yet to embark on setting up a scheme in your school, please feel free to get in touch with any questions you may have.*

### **Step 1 - Agree a programme for the year**



Decide which year group(s) you are going to select mediators from and agree a rolling programme with SLT that becomes part of the school routine. For example, you may decide to train Y5 pupils early in Summer term to start mediating straight away, and to continue for the following Autumn and Spring terms when they are in Y6. A new cohort can then be trained the following summer and be mentored by the current mediators. Remember that mediators can only mediate children the same age or younger than themselves.

### **Step 2 - Book your training**



Training takes place over 3 full days. These could be 1 day a week for 3 weeks, or 2 days one week and 1 day the next. Give Peacemakers a call to book in your dates and ask if any bursaries are available to reduce the costs. The training will take place in a circle and the children will break off into small groups for skills practice. A room large enough for this will be needed, with a flipchart stand. Ideally the same room is used for each day of the training and children are excused from assemblies or intervention groups. We also offer an introductory workshop to Peer Mediation for the Mediation Lead, [click here](#) for details.

### **Step 3 - Introduce the idea to the children**



We recommend running two classroom sessions explaining what being a Peer Mediator involves and exploring the skills required. We will send two sample preparatory lessons with the Staff Handbook. These sessions are ideally run in a circle or can be in a normal classroom setting.

During these sessions, children should be consulted about the selection process. Will you select via application or vote?

### **Step 4 - Select your mediators**



Peacemakers can train up to 24 mediators. If children do not wish to be considered for a role as a Peer Mediator, they should be allowed to make this clear before choosing commences. To adhere to the PMN best practice guidelines, ensure the process is inclusive and considers those who have difficulties with reading and writing. Be mindful if the process involves the rejection of any pupils. Sample voting and election forms are in the Staff Handbook.

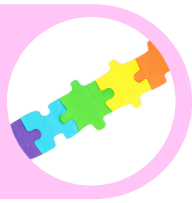
### **Step 5 - Meet with the Lunchtime Supervisors and a member of SLT**



For good team building it is a good idea for key members of staff to have an opportunity to meet the trainee mediators. This can be done informally recognising it may not be possible for all lunchtime staff to add additional hours to their working day. It could be a few minutes after lunch, or through a letter or newsletter that the mediators could put together. At this stage, agree where your mediation space will be and make sure this works for the team. Use this time to collectively agree how mediators will be visible on the playground [badges, lanyards, caps for example]. A small budget will need to be allocated.

*Talk to us about opportunities to introduce Peer Mediation at a staff meeting - we have a range of options on offer.*

# Linking it together



Peer Mediation complements work you will be doing in PSHE and initiatives such as the Rights Respecting Schools Award. Here we offer a summary of where mediation training connects with these.

## PSHE Programme of Study [KS2]

### **CORE THEME 1: Health and Wellbeing**

H18. about everyday things that affect feelings and the importance of expressing feelings

H19. a varied vocabulary to use when talking about feelings; about how to express feelings in different ways;

H20. strategies to respond to feelings, including intense or conflicting feelings; how to manage and respond to feelings appropriately and proportionately in different situations

H24. problem-solving strategies for dealing with emotions, challenges and change, including the transition to new schools

### **CORE THEME 2: Relationships**

R13. the importance of seeking support if feeling lonely or excluded.

R17. that friendships have ups and downs; strategies to resolve disputes and reconcile differences positively and safely

R18. to recognise if a friendship (online or offline) is making them feel unsafe or uncomfortable; how to manage this and ask for support if necessary

R20. strategies to respond to hurtful behaviour experienced or witnessed, offline and online (including teasing, name-calling, bullying, trolling, harassment or the deliberate excluding of others); how to report concerns and get support

R27. about keeping something confidential or secret, when this should (e.g. a birthday surprise that others will find out about) or should not be agreed to, and when it is right to break a confidence or share a secret

R30. that personal behaviour can affect other people; to recognise and model respectful behaviour online

R33. to listen and respond respectfully to a wide range of people, including those whose traditions, beliefs and lifestyle are different to their own

### **CORE THEME 3: Living in the wider world**

L30. about some of the skills that will help them in their future careers e.g. teamwork, communication and negotiation

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child







## Have you seen what else Peacemakers has to offer to complement Peer Mediation in your school?



**Recommended: Introduction to leading Peer Mediation:** Staff training/ questions and answers for Peer Mediation Leads online or face-to-face.



**Peacemaker Courses:** Peacemaker courses can bring enhanced focus to a school's PSHE and SMSC curriculum. The courses teach children skills for life, develop wellbeing and strengthen relationships in the classroom. One trainer works with a class for an afternoon a week. Courses are usually 8 weeks. Choose from Becoming Peacebuilders, Y6 ~ Up You Go!, Peace Explorers~Out and About or RESTORE.



**Learning for Peace:** A training package for staff and children to help enrich Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development in your school. By familiarising children of every year group with circles and emotional literacy, it goes hand in hand with a Peer Mediation programme, by instilling a culture of positive peace and peace building in your school.



**Restorative Approach:** A whole school training package that offers an alternative way for schools to think about addressing discipline and behavioural issues and offers a consistent framework for responding to these issues. We train both the adults and the children in ways to use dialogue to respond to disagreements and incidents. Peer Mediation shares values with restorative approaches by working *with* people to resolve conflict.



**Junior Peacemaker days:** A fun and dynamic day for a whole year group, exploring global issues and empowering children to take action. These days provide a great introduction to our Peacemakers way of working and give children autonomy, which is an important element of Peer Mediation.

