Introducing Peer Mediation in your school

Peer Mediation is when a young person is trained as a mediator, usually within an educational setting, and then mediates conflicts that two other young people have, often at school break and lunchtimes. Peer Mediators usually resolve conflict for other children and young people the same age or younger than them.

In a primary school, it is typically either Y5 or Y6 children who are invited to apply to be trained after an initial introduction lesson to the whole year group which explores conflict, and mediation.

Other expressions of peer mediation are Young Mediators or Restorative Champions who work in similar way in the school using Restorative Justice principles.

School communities that have peer mediation schemes report:

* Increased empathy, understanding, pro-social behaviours across the school.
* Increased confidence and academic attainment of peer mediators themselves.
* Staff spending less time dealing with disputes, leaving more time for teaching & learning.

Peer mediation can form an integral part of restorative & relational practice and can complement a number of other whole school initiatives such as work to embed trauma informed practice, and work on UN Rights Respecting Schools.

The pre-requisites for introducing peer mediation

Schools that are successful at implementing Peer Mediation will have the following in place:

* A whole school commitment to relational and restorative approaches
* A whole school commitment to pupil participation and empowerment
* A member of staff who has the commitment and capacity to run the scheme which will involve:
  + - Being fully involved in training the pupils
    - Promoting the scheme among colleagues
    - Being a point of contact for Peer Mediators if they have any concerns
    - Proactively checking Peer Mediator records for any safeguarding concerns
    - Doing regular check ins with peer mediators
    - Evaluating and reviewing the scheme

Successful schools also ensure that Peer Mediation is part of a whole school approach to managing conflict, and seeks to ensure that all staff, children, parents and governors are at least aware, and accepting of the scheme, if not actively supportive of it.

Setting up a peer mediation scheme

* The coordinator will need approx. one hour a week to ensure smooth running of the scheme.
* Staff training can be delivered to lunchtime staff and other staff separately
* Mediation space needs to be a space that is accessible for pupils to come for mediation. It should be quiet enough for peer mediators to hear well, and somewhere not too far from adult help in case this is needed.
* Introduction to the targeted year group is usually in the form of a one hour lesson with each class in the year group.
* Selection can be through election, or done through teacher discretion
* Training of Peer Mediators is 2-3 days, depending on provider. Children need to be released from all other commitments for the duration of the training, and training should take place in a suitable training room with space for a circle of chairs. (Sports halls are not ideal because the acoustics are poor for dialogue work)
* Promotion of the scheme can be led by the peer mediators themselves and may involve taking assemblies or making posters.