

## Engaging in mediation & the next step.....

Referral to **Common Ground Mediation** is open to everyone and can be done by telephone, letter or e-mail. Once a referral has been made, an assigned mediator will contact you:

- To talk things through and answer any questions you may have regarding the process. They will take time to listen carefully and help you work out which important points you want to discuss at mediation.
- The mediator will then contact everyone else involved to listen to their point of view.
- Once everyone is ready, the mediator will arrange a meeting for everyone to talk about the situation, explore what options are available and look for solutions.

## Let us know what you think.....

We like to listen and learn from the participants who use our service. All suggestions for improvement are welcome.

A copy of our complaint procedure is available on request.

If you would like this leaflet in another format, please contact us.

**“Professional, discreet and supportive service”** Head Teacher

## Tips for reducing conflict.....

If you wish to reduce any conflict or resolve a difficult situation it is worth considering the following, with the aim of keeping communication open:

- Always **plan** before a difficult conversation and think your viewpoint through before approaching others. A big step forward in any conflict is being ready to listen.
- As far as you can when talking: try to be clear, specific about areas of disagreement, respectful, respond appropriately and be ready to consider the other person's thoughts and feelings.
- Take time to **think** through how you are feeling and why you are feeling this way. Find the words to describe these feelings, think about what you would like as an outcome, and be prepared to consider others' ideas for solutions.
- Avoid blaming others and putting up barriers. Try to keep an open mind and look for constructive ways of reducing the conflict or resolving the difficult situation.
- Be realistic and try not to make assumptions or second guess what the other person is thinking.
- Take time to **listen** properly to the other person. One of the key factors in many disputes is a feeling of not being listened to.



## Promoting collaboration among parents, children, schools and educational services

### Common Ground Mediation

PO Box 24093

Edinburgh EH7 9EG

### Telephone:

0131 553 5200 or 07507 511 502

### Email:

[info@commongroundmediation.co.uk](mailto:info@commongroundmediation.co.uk)

### Web:

[www.commongroundmediation.co.uk](http://www.commongroundmediation.co.uk)

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## Independent mediation service

Mediation promotes a collaborative approach to problem solving where an independent and professionally trained mediator helps people talk and listen to each other.

Mediation is a positive option available when there is a disagreement, misunderstanding or conflict, and it offers an opportunity for all involved to communicate effectively, consider possible solutions and find a mutually acceptable way forward.

*“Really impressed with professionalism, speed of response and time taken with us. Thanks so much for everything”* Parent.

*“Very efficient service”* Teacher

## Mediation & additional support needs.....

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended in 2009 and became law 2010) requires education authorities to have in place arrangements for independent mediation to aim to resolve disputes between parents and the authority and/or school regarding a child who has additional support needs. The mediation service must be free of charge for families.

Good open communication between parents/carers, schools and the local authority is key to forming and maintaining positive relationships and partnerships. It is much easier to resolve or avoid potential problems by talking through the issues as early as possible. With this in mind, it is anticipated that these steps would have been taken to discuss the difficulties at a local level before considering independent mediation.

## Mediation strengths & the role of the mediator.....

Dealing with disagreements can sometimes be difficult for people and they may require a more structured mediation process. It is important to be realistic about mediation – there is no guarantee that there will always be a full agreement. However the process is designed to achieve improved understanding between people and enable an open honest communication about the issues involved. Mediation works best when the people involved actively want to find a solution to their disagreement.

**Common Ground Mediation** has a well-established track record and can provide the highest standard of service using their experienced professional mediators who are responsible for facilitating the mediation process.

- Mediation is voluntary, private, confidential and an opportunity for change
- Mediation is an opportunity for the views of the child or young person to be heard
- Mediation helps everyone communicate their issues, concerns, needs and feelings
- Participating in mediation will not affect your legal rights
- The mediator is impartial, does not take sides or judge participants
- The mediator does not impose solutions; participants will be supported to make their own decisions and agreements
- The mediator will make arrangements for visits, planned meetings and with permission, keep everyone informed of progress.

*“The mediator was particularly helpful in her approach towards our daughter, this was a significant and important element of the mediation process and was hugely helpful for our daughter”* Parent

*“Many thanks for your expertise and persistence in getting us to a conclusion.”*  
Head of Education Service

