

Bacon's College

Mediation Service Evaluation Report

- Research carried out by Bacon's College Peer Mediators and Southwark Mediation
- Report and evaluation procedure produced by PeerLink (with mediator training evaluation and staff evaluation by Southwark Mediation)

PeerLink is a Leap Confronting Conflict programme, supported by the Big Lottery Fund

Introduction

Bacon's College has a well established, successful and award-winning mediation scheme. It's Peer mediators are trained and supported by local service Southwark Mediation with support from Norma Gould, College Counsellor and various college staff.

This report is based on monitoring forms and follow-up interviews from thirteen mediation sessions and 28 mediatees (2 sessions involved 3 mediatees). The interviews were conducted by mediators/coordinators not involved in the original sessions. The report provides feedback about the quality of service mediators they are offering and helps identify any training needs, but also helps research the effectiveness of peer mediation in solving conflict in schools. In addition to this, evidence was collected by the college from young people on the mediation team and key teachers in the school, and these findings are included at the end of this report and conclusion.

Gender

Of the 13 mediation sessions:

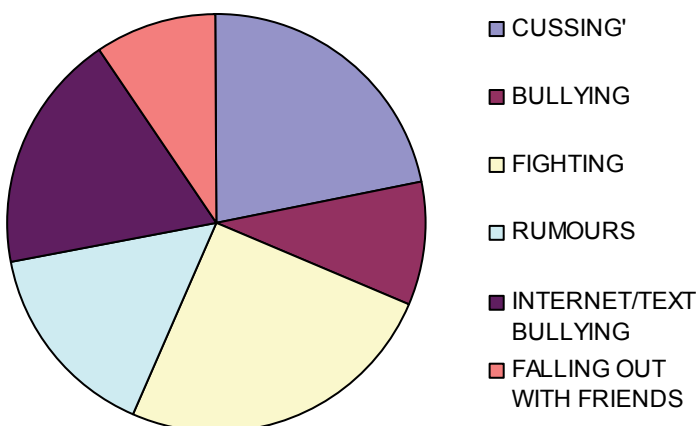
- **8** sessions involved girls in dispute with each other
- **3** sessions involved boys in dispute with each other
- **2** sessions involved a boy in dispute with a girl.

Causes of conflict

The main reasons for referral generally correspond with those from other schools (fighting, rumours, 'cussing'). And again what's noticeable is how text/internet bullying has become a common contributory factor in recent years:

The main reasons for the need for mediation were as follows:

- **'Cussing'** (a contributory factor in 7 cases)
- **Bullying** (a contributory factor in 3 cases)
- **Fighting** (a contributory factor in 8 cases)
- **Rumours** (a contributory factor in 5 cases)
- **Internet/Text bullying** (a contributory factor in 6 cases)
- **Falling out with friends** (a contributory factor in 3 cases)



Year

The sample suggests that Students in various school years use the service. Disputes between people in the same year are most common. Breakdown as follows:

Yr7 students: 4 cases
Yr8 students: 1 case
Yr9 students: 3 cases
Yr10 students: 2 cases
Yr11 students: 0 cases
Yr12 students: 1 case

The two remaining disputes involved one Yr9 and one Yr10 student

Mediation Referrals

Referred by staff: **12**
Self referral: **1**

In 12 of the 13 cases students were referred to mediation by staff, suggesting teachers are generally very supportive of peer mediation within the school. This is backed up by their feedback later on in this report.

**The following information was gathered during follow up interviews with 28 disputants involved in the 13 mediation sessions. (11 of the sessions involved two disputants and 2 sessions had 3 people in dispute)*

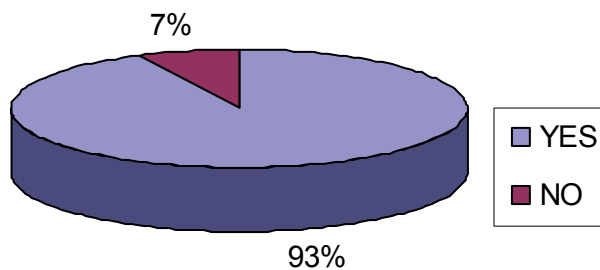
Quality of service offered by the peer mediators

Did you feel that the mediators worked well together?	YES – 100% NO - 0%	100% of respondents thought the Mediators worked well together, and in the the vast majority of cases mediatees were made to feel welcome and comfortable and were asked questions relevant to their dispute.
Did you feel welcome and comfortable in talking to the mediators?	YES – 93% NO - 7%	This suggests that the mediators are trained and supported to a very high standard by Southwark Mediation and within the school.
Were the questions that the mediators asked relevant to the mediation?	YES – 96% NO - 4%	

The impact of peer mediation on those experiencing conflict in the school

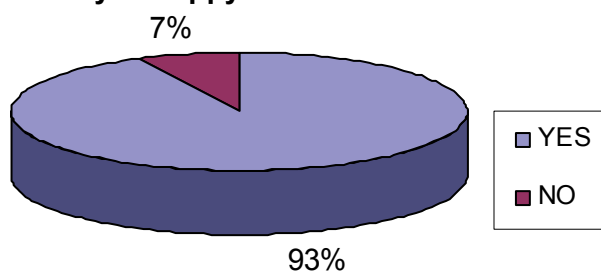
Did using mediation resolve your problems?

26 of the 28 mediatees interviewed said that mediation resolved their problems.



Were you happy with the outcome?

26 out of 28 mediatees interviewed were happy with the outcome. Some reasons they gave:



“It cleared the air and helped us work together”

“Because the arguments stopped”

“We are friends again. Not arguing”

The two people who were unhappy with the outcome were asked why this was the case. There comments are as follows:

“Maybe get welfare to get students out of class & not the mediators—keeping it more private so others don’t know you’ve gone to mediation”

“it didn’t help”

What do you think would have happened if you hadn't gone to mediation?

This is a very interesting question as it's asking students for their honest reflection on what they think would have happened had they not gone to mediation. Here are all responses given, directly quoted:

"we would not be talking" "Would have got worse"

"would have got angry, and punched someone" "No talking" "arguing"

"It would have got much worse" "things would have turned out worse"

"would got worse" "it would have caused a bigger problem" "argument"

"things would have got worse and there would be more fights" "Don't know"

"I would have kicked off with him" "probably another fight would have happened"

"probably would have had a fight and got into trouble" "Not talking"

"tensions would have built and another fight would have happened and I'd have felt uncomfortable walking around school"

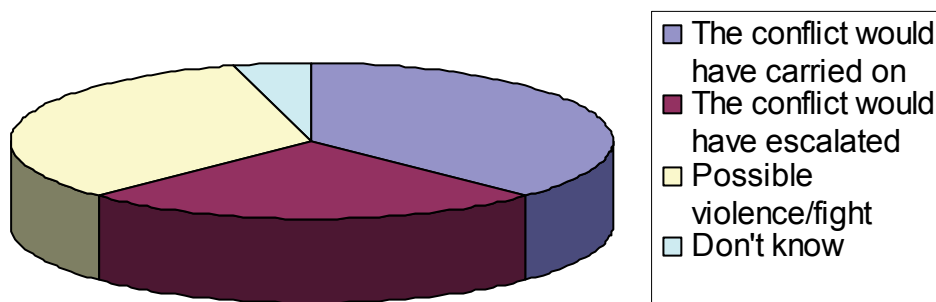
"more arguments, fights & long separation amongst friends" "would have had a fight"

"would have got into trouble" "escalated to bigger problems"

"There would have been more arguments" "it would have carried on"

"It would have carried on and the problem wouldn't have gone away and tensions would have been really high"

The responses above can be placed in the broad categories displayed in the chart below. This proves how effective mediation can be in resolving various types of school conflict and in preventing more serious cases of fighting and violence in future.



At least eight respondents mention that possible fights and physical violence have been prevented by attending peer mediation. This would suggest that a strong possibility of suspension/exclusion was avoided for these pupils and their co-disputants.

Is there anything else that you want to tell me about that mediation?

10 of the 28 people interviewed answered this question. Here are their responses, all positive apart from one who was concerned about having their lessons disturbed (this is one of the two people who were unhappy with the mediation outcome).

“People should go to mediation because it helped”

“I thought the mediators were really nice and really understanding”

“talking to the other boy was good, the mediators were understanding and helped”

“really friendly - I liked them” (referring to the mediators)

“It’s good cos it brings people together to talk”

“Good”

“They done well and helped us sit and talk to each other”

“No but they help a lot”

“the mediators were really nice to me”

“problem with it disturbing your lessons”

How do you think the mediation service at this school can be improved?

There were only 9 suggestions for improvements to the service, suggesting 19 mediatees could see no way in which the service could be improved. There were a few suggestions about room size and raising awareness. These and the remaining suggestions can be read below:

MEDIATION SPACE:

“If the rooms were bigger”

“can be done in bigger rooms”

MORE ADVERTISING/PUBLICITY FOR THE SERVICE:

“more advertising needed for the service”

“promotion needs improving”

“Have a public timetable. So people know where the mediators are and at what time”

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

“instead of 1 mediator, could be 2” (there was only one mediator in the session this person was involved in but it’s usual to have 2 mediators)

“talk to the people separately”

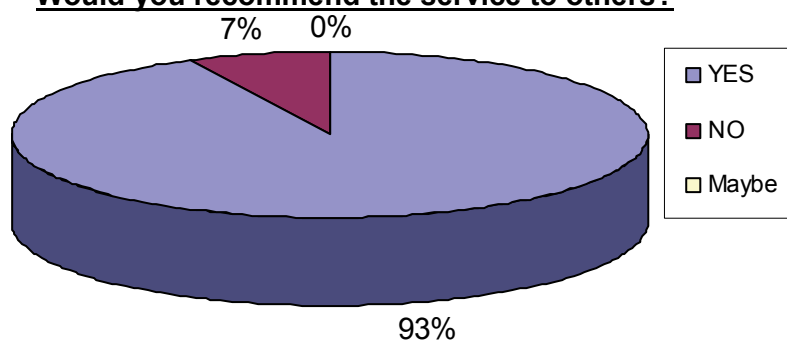
“carry out mediation sessions after school”

“give students a days notice that its going to take place - don’t just pull them out of lesson when they don’t know it’s going to happen”

“talking to the other boy was good, the mediators were understanding and helped”

Further Feedback

Would you recommend the service to others?



26 of the 28 respondents would recommend the service to others. This corresponds with the proportion who said mediation had solved their problems. This is very encouraging for the scheme as one of the best ways to advertise the service is through word of mouth.

A sample of reasons given for recommending the service:

“Because it was really useful and without it I would have felt quite uncomfortable around her” (the co-disputant)

“Because it will help other people sort their problems”

“It’s good and it’s helped with troubles”

“because they help people talk through it and make it better”

Benefits to Mediators

The mediators receive many benefits too, from greater confidence to improved listening skills and the ability to solve conflict in everyday life. Feedback from young mediators and mediatees suggest that Southwark Mediation Centre provide a very high quality of training and Bacon's College is one of the most supportive schools we've come across. Southwark Mediation carried out evaluation with mediators upon completion of their training. Here's a selection of feedback from those evaluation forms to give an idea of the skills these young people gained:

What have you learnt?

"I think I have learnt how to communicate and work with others better, I think I have also improved my confidence"

"Skills like listening, talking (not shouting) and communicating really"

"I have learnt more about myself and I have learnt different techniques in how to speak to people and to take the sting out of a situation"

*"communication skills and skills in how to work with others as well as confidence"
"how to handle situations, how to help others solve their problems"*

"Patience. That people know what they want, you don't have to tell them"

Where will you use these skills:

"There are problems everywhere in the world and to have skills helping others solving problems is a very good skill"

". . . Absolutely everywhere you go. It comes across so positively in your social and home life, I feel that if I was faced with a confrontation I would handle it differently."

"In everyday life. If there are problems or dispute between friends or family I will always be on hand to try to sort it out"

"at home I am always angry, it has helped me to calm down a little bit"

"If I get in an argument myself or if my family argues & just how to talk my way out of situations"

"in school and in my youth club"

Additional comments:

"when we had to speak in front of the group it was nerve racking but it really built my confidence"

"it was a great opportunity and everything I have learnt has come in useful already"

Benefits to the school

Southwark Mediation carried out evaluation questionnaires with eleven staff members at Bacon's College to determine how useful mediation has been for them in dealing with school conflict. They were also asked for suggestions of how the service could be improved.

What difference has the service made to your role in college?

"It has made life so much easier as Welfare Officer on a day to day basis – falling out between pupils especially girls – tagged as bullying – parents on bandwagon – I have been able to refer and have also had assistance from Mel & Dave (Southwark Mediation) which has avoided escalation outside of college."

"As Director of progress – mediation has had a substantial impact. Mediation addresses certain behavioural issues which get in the way of learning. I believe that the incident of large scale fights has decreased. Mediation has assisted in many long term disputes and taken away a whole dimension of corrosive behaviour."

"I feel that mediation has heightened connections with pupils/staff. I also feel that classroom friction has lessened."

"Mediation makes life easier – less work. Seeing less pupils as mediation is taking the heat out of conflicts at an earlier stage."

"As head of year 8 I often see a lot of bickering, I now have the ability to refer it to mediation and it frees up a lot of my time, its also a help in mediating between parents."

"I felt that they (the mediators) were treated as adults and they took everything on-board and approached it as adults."

"Yes in tutor role, option of mediation was productive in resolving the issues between students."

"Mediation has assisted my role in the college as mediation is done by experts and other things which may be an issue can be addressed there. I feel that it is very time saving. The arrival of the school counsellor and mediation team has been the best thing to happen to the college in a long while. Wonderful."

"I am head of the special needs department and I am also an English teacher, I have used mediation for group/ individual sessions and they have come up with a behavioural contract and monitoring system that really worked well."

"I have made an induction video and booklet for the New Year 7's which has mediation mentioned right at the start. Mediation is part of the ethos in the school. Mediators will be presenting mediation at parents meetings. I couldn't live without the mediators."

What difference has the service made to your college?

“It helps avoid escalation and has even helped manage disputes outside of school.”

“Significant. Quality of relationships is central to the ethos of the school. Mediation has provided a civilized option for dispute resolution, making it a condition of re-admission following exclusion. It also helps conflicts not to resurface.”

“I feel that the ethos has changed within school by the use of mediation by pupils.”

“It has helped to get the 6th formers more involved in everyday college life and has given the pupils skills to deal with conflict in a positive manner. Also the 6th formers have developed into positive role models”

“Now the whole school is aware of mediation and is very much integrated and visible. Now mediation is accepted as part of the school.”

“Firstly I think it is a great place for students to go to deal with issues they are facing. Secondly 6th formers are respected it takes the pressure off the teachers and 6th formers are seen as part of the solution.”

“Due to the college ethos mediation has been embraced and has fitted in with college life.”

“Instead of issues escalating, as soon as a dispute is identified it is easy to refer and avoids losing time in lesson. Disputes are identified and are dealt with quickly which avoids escalation.”

“Mediation has had a positive influence in the school. I have seen mediation help the 6th former mediators personally develop. I think mediation works well.”

“In September I will be head of key stage 3, then hopefully I can look at which years use mediation less and then mediation can be implemented throughout the school. In four years time it will hopefully be that all years will have grown with mediation.”

If you've referred cases to mediation, what was the outcome?

"On the whole very very good."

"Mostly successful, about 80%"

"positive outcome"

"Although don't always get direct feedback have seen a de-escalation in conflict."

"Often resolved – Good outcome"

"I have seen a productive outcome by seeing how other students have behaved."

"Positive outcomes are evident generally, however lower groups may be less entrenched, upper year groups may tend to hold on more. The group and individual mediations are positive and I feel that mediation should be offered to all students."

"it worked really well"

"Stereotypes and attitudes can be challenged e.g. Race, Gender"

Any thoughts/suggestions on how the service could be improved?

"A weakness of the service is that the 6th formers have limited accessibility to timetables and planners also there are gaps in support especially the unavailability of peer's around exams. In terms of feedback could staff see who has had mediation, outcome and update of case & situation? Parents should be included"

"Could possibly be publicised a bit more or in hindsight leave it as it is!!! Leaflets? Phone number? Although need to be careful not to spread the service too thin, worry about too many minor complaints being made."

"Not sure parents fully understand and therefore don't always support the process – provide a greater awareness so that the defensiveness can be removed."

"Raise the profile of the service, share information on how to send referrals."

"I have concerns over disputes spreading into the community and ending up compromising work done in the school. Could mediators from other schools help in wider work?"

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“It would be useful to talk to pupils about the service as well. Also past users/mediators (whether it’s had a lasting impact on them as people)”

“I have had feedback that clients only say what the mediators want to hear and the problem continues, is there a way of monitoring to ensure that the problems do not re- occur - Maybe they could have some follow up meetings.”

“If 6th formers are missing lessons at ‘A’ Levels they need to balance times. Some mediations last all day – need to ensure pupils are not using the process as an excuse to miss school.”

“ feel most of the work should be done around lunch time and out of schools hours.”

“Pupils can sometimes use mediation as an excuse for not attending lessons on time; however, some see it as their badge of honour. I think the mediators should walk the students back to lessons.”

“Student mediators are excellent. Brilliant but have struggled a bit around exam time. Nevertheless cover has been provided. I am looking at proactive work with the mediators and college staff so that more cover for the mediation service is available after year 13’s school year ends.”

“Even though I understand it is a confidential process, I would like as a tutor of some students who have been through the process some feedback on what was agreed regarding the way forward. This will allow us all to work together on the things that need following up.”

Any other comments?

“Mel and Dave (Southwark Mediation) are fantastic they have shown real leadership. Mediation is a necessary part of how a modern school should function.”

“There is a mutual respect from staff and mediators in the roles that they do.”

“I think it is fantastic, it is amazing. The use of mediation can be life changing and it is just as good for the proactive approach for older students.”

Conclusion

USERS: Students from a broad range of school years use the service and as is usually the case more females use the service than males, though over a third of users from the small sample we've seen were male which is a reasonable proportion. The reasons for mediation referrals are similar in Bacon's College to other school evaluations we've carried out.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICE: 93% of users said that mediation solved their problems and that they were happy with the outcome. The same proportion felt comfortable talking to the mediators and would recommend the service to others, all of which suggests that the mediators are of a very high standard and are very well trained and supported by Southwark Mediation and Bacon's College.

26 of the 28 users stated that the conflict would have either continued, escalated or resulted in fighting if they hadn't gone to mediation. Of these at least 8 users suggested that possible physical violence/fighting had been prevented (as well as resulting in disciplinary action such as suspension/exclusion).

BENEFITS TO MEDIATORS: The evaluation carried out by Southwark Mediation highlights the benefits for students trained in peer mediation. Mediators have gained communication skills, greater confidence and conflict resolution skills. These skills are for life and are applicable not just in the formal mediation setting but in everyday situations with friends, family, team-mates etc.

BENEFITS TO THE SCHOOL: Interviews with teachers reveal their attitude to Bacon's mediation scheme to be overwhelmingly positive, with only a few suggestions for improvements (see learning points below). They say that it's improved overall relationships between pupils and staff, improved behavioural issues which get in the way of learning and results in a lot less work for staff. The school in fact embraces the ethos of peer mediation like few others we've visited. The success of the mediation scheme depends very much on this ongoing support from the school and it's relationship with Southwark Mediation.

SOUTHWARK MEDIATION: Southwark Mediation's work in Bacon's College is only part of the work they do in developing the ethos of mediation and conflict resolution in the community. Although this report concerns only the work within the college teachers have suggested that the mediation work helps resolve conflict outside the school and with parents, which makes their work all the more important.

LEARNING POINTS:

- A few students and teachers mentioned how the service should be publicised more effectively to create greater awareness within the school. In addition there was a useful suggestion by a student about having a timetable to show mediators availability. Raising awareness amongst parents was another suggestion, but according to one teacher's feedback young people are due to present about mediation at an upcoming parent meeting.
- Some students and teachers suggested that mediation sessions should take place outside class time, though finding a suitable time is always an issue so there is no easy solution. One student also suggested that people should be given more notice about when the session is to take place and how they should be approached outside class as this leads to embarrassment (and a potential resistance to the mediation process).
- Two students suggested that mediation sessions should take place in a bigger room.