

Introduction

The Peaceful Schools Project has been delivered successfully in many primary schools in north Powys, north Ceredigion and south Gwynedd.

It arose as a response to the culture of violence and hostility that seems to be endemic in our society. Our vision is to create an atmosphere in schools where pupils treat each other with respect, work together and learn skills to solve problems in a constructive way. In this way we will influence change from the bottom up.

Much of the work is done during 'circle time' using a mix of discussion, pair work, games, stories, role play and drama. We use quiet time and introduce breathing exercises which provide pupils with skills on how to handle their own stress.

The Peaceful Schools Project is an initiative of the Mid Wales Area Quaker meeting and is founded on the Quaker principles of equality, peace, truth and justice. However, the programme is secular in nature with no religious content.

We offer 2 programmes: Peace Education and Peer Mediation Training

Peace Education

This is a 6 hour programme, which is delivered in 1 hour sessions over 6 weeks or as an intensive programme in 1 week. The sessions follow the areas of the PSHE curriculum and the Curriculum for Wales and include:

- Exploring peace within ourselves
- Safe ways of expressing anger and other difficult emotions
- Encouraging empathy and good listening skills
- Conflict resolution and peer mediation
- Exploring the themes of migration, asylum and human rights

Peer Mediation Training

The Peer Mediation programme was created from our experience of developing the Peace Education programme and is a 9-hour programme for older children, delivered in 1½ hour sessions over 6 days. Detailed training is provided on how to deal with and resolve confidently, the bickering, conflict and bullying that occurs within schools. The programme is progressive in that the pupils take ownership of and responsibility for mediation within the school community.

Both programmes have been well received by the schools and Estyn's inspectorate.

Volunteers

The programmes are supported by volunteers who have a wide range of professional skills and experience.

Some come from an educational background such as primary, secondary, adult education or Sunday schools. Others have been involved in children's professional services, working with schools, after-school groups or community groups. However, the primary qualification is an empathy with children and a belief in the value of our programmes.

Becoming a Volunteer

All prospective volunteers must:

- Complete a short informal application form
- Supply 2 references
- Be willing to undergo a police records check (paid for by the project). This is a legal requirement for all staff and volunteers.

In return, volunteers all receive informal training, ongoing support and can claim for travel costs.

