

# The Dispute Resolution Process

## Information for educators

**Every child and young person has the right to be in education. The dispute resolution process provides help for schools and boards of trustees, parents, caregivers and whānau to resolve issues involving children and young people with additional learning needs.**

**There might be times when parents, caregivers and whānau of children and young people with additional learning needs at your school feel their child's needs are not being met, or they're worried about something that's happening with their child at school or kura.**

When this happens, it's important they know who to talk to and what support is available to them.

Most schools will have a clear process for managing parents' issues and concerns and will provide information about this process. It might also be helpful to give parents a copy of your school's charter or strategic plan and a copy of your school's policy on meeting learning support needs.

Sometimes parents talking to their child's teacher or the school principal won't resolve the issue. If this happens, parents, caregivers and whānau, or schools themselves, can access the Ministry of Education's Dispute Resolution Process\*.

The Ministry's Dispute Resolution Process supports parents and schools to come together and work through challenging issues for children and young people with additional learning needs. It aims to help everyone resolve concerns early so they don't escalate into disputes. Importantly, it builds on your school's policies and procedures; it doesn't replace them.



### Help available through the Dispute Resolution Process

If parents have spoken to their child's teacher and the principal, but you can't agree on a way forward, there are three further types of support available:

#### Ministry facilitation

You can ask the Ministry for help from someone trained in facilitation. Facilitators help schools and the child's parents, caregivers and whānau talk and work together to find a practical solution. The facilitator won't be there to advocate or enforce; they're there to help facilitate the hard conversations.

#### Ministry review

If this doesn't resolve the issue, schools or parents can ask the Ministry's regional Director of Education to carry out a review to check that everything that should have been done has been done.

#### Independent mediation

Finally, if the Ministry thinks it would be helpful, and everyone agrees, it can arrange for independent mediation. The mediator will hold a meeting to make sure everyone's views are heard and that all options have been looked at. They will be focused on helping everyone find a way forward.

## Accessing this support

The support available under the Dispute Resolution Process is voluntary and can be accessed by parents, caregivers and whānau\*\*, and by your school. We will help you work together to resolve the problem as quickly as possible.

You can access this support by contacting your local Manager Learning Support. There is no charge to schools or parents for this support.

## How this process was developed

The Ministry developed the Dispute Resolution Process in partnership with the New Zealand School Trustees Association, and with advice and guidance from the Government Centre for Dispute Resolution. Input into the process has also been provided by the New Zealand Principals' Federation, Secondary Principals Association of New Zealand and Parent to Parent, as well as by the education sector, disabled persons' organisations, parent support groups and teacher unions. Feedback was also given by a group of young people from People First.

*\* Rollout of the Dispute Resolution Process is being phased, with services initially being offered in three regions: Auckland, Whanganui/Manawatu and Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast.*

*\*\* A separate information sheet is available for parents, caregivers and whānau.*

## Ministry of Education contacts:

### Auckland regional office

Phone: 09 632 9400

Email: [enquiries.auckland@education.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries.auckland@education.govt.nz)

### Whanganui/Manawatu regional office

Phone: 06 349 6300

Email: [enquiries.whanganui@education.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries.whanganui@education.govt.nz)

### Nelson, Marlborough/West Coast regional office

Phone: 03 546 3470

Email: [enquiries.nelson@education.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries.nelson@education.govt.nz)

### National office

Phone: 0800 622 222

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