

School Disputes:

Most parents want the same thing: for their child to be safe, supported, and able to learn. But sometimes conversations with a school reach a point where everyone feels unheard, and the situation seems stuck.

This guide is for families navigating a difficult situation with their child's school, and who want to understand their options before things escalate further.

Common situations where mediation helps:

- A complaint about how your child has been treated has not been resolved to your satisfaction.
- Conversations with teachers or leadership have become tense or have broken down.
- There is a disagreement about a support plan, enrolment decision, or disciplinary matter.
- You feel your concerns are not being taken seriously, or you are unsure how to raise them effectively.
- The school feels the family's concerns are escalating beyond what internal processes can manage.

Your options:

Before mediation, it is worth understanding the steps available to you.

Internal school processes: Most schools have a formal complaints process. Ask for it in writing.

Diocese or system escalation: Catholic schools have a Diocesan office. Independent and government schools have their own escalation pathways.

Mediation: A neutral, confidential process that can happen alongside or instead of formal complaints.

Formal complaints bodies: The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and the NSW Ombudsman handle certain complaints if internal processes fail.

What's the process?

Mediation brings the family and school representatives together with a neutral mediator. It is not a formal hearing. There is no panel, no judgment, and no predetermined outcome.

Each side has time to speak without interruption. The mediator helps both parties understand each other's perspective and work towards an agreement that is practical and realistic.

What mediation can and cannot do:

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| Give both sides a genuine opportunity to be heard | ✗ Force the school to do something they refuse to do |
| Help find practical solutions that work for your child | ✗ Replace a formal investigation into serious misconduct |
| Preserve the relationship between family and school | |
| Reach agreements that are written down and followed up | |

Ready to take the next step?

Call or email Taz for a free 15-minute conversation. No preparation needed.

0403 937 390

macquariemediation@gmail.com