Introduction

The Dispute Avoidance & Resolution Service (DARS) came into effect on 1 September 2005 as part of the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO).

Disagreements may arise between a parent/ guardian and either a School or Education and Library Board in relation to the special educational provision being made for a child or young person. If initial attempts to resolve the disagreements have not been successful, it may be appropriate to make a referral to the DARS.

The aim of the DARS is to provide, within an independent, confidential and informal forum, a further opportunity through which such disagreements may be resolved.

Members of the DARS team will facilitate the possible resolution of disagreements but do not have the authority to resolve a dispute. Ultimately, agreement can only be reached with the approval of interested parties.

The DARS Process

How does it work?

The DARS:

- can only facilitate progress in disputes relating to special educational provision
- may be contacted by a parent /guardian – see reverse side of this page for contact details
- will provide a referral form upon request
- will consider the information provided on a referral form, completed by the parent/ guardian
- will invite the other interested parties to participate
- may wish to meet with parents/guardians to gather background information
- will facilitate a meeting of all interested parties where it is hoped that agreement may be reached

Involvement with the DARS will not affect the right of appeal to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal

Additional

What would happen should one of the parties decide not to participate?

It would not be possible to advance through the DARS process.

Will the DARS help parents/guardians with general school issues?

No. The DARS can only assist with matters relating to special educational provision.

Following initial contact how long will it take before a response is made?

While the aim will be to begin the process as quickly as possible the response time should not exceed five working days.

Summary

The DARS will provide:

- an independent, informal forum
- a neutral venue for meeting
- an impartial facilitator
- a further opportunity for open communication
- a service which is voluntary and confidential
- an opportunity to identify agreed action

Involvement with DARS will not affect the right of appeal to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal.

Further information may be obtained from the Supplement to the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs – 1 September 2005

The Supplement to the Code of Practice and other DARS materials may be viewed on:

www.education-support.org.uk

Contact Details

DARS SELB
3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh
BT61 9AX
Tel. 028 3751 2383 / 028 3751 2224
Fax. 028 3751 2599
Email: DARS.enquiry@selb.org

DARS BELB
40 Academy Street, Belfast
BT1 2NQ
Tel. 028 9056 4030
Fax. 028 9043 9861
Email: DARS.enquiry@belb.co.uk

DARS NEELB
County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road,
Ballymena, BT42 1HN
Tel. 028 2566 2391 / 028 2566 2387
Fax. 028 2564 6071
Email: DARS.enquiry@neelb.org.uk

DARS SEELB
Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast
BT16 2HS
Tel. 028 9056 6954
Fax. 028 9056 6916
Email: DARS.enquiry@seelb.org.uk

DARS WELB
North West Teachers' Centre
24 Temple Road, Strathfoyle, L/Derry
BT47 6TJ
Tel. 028 7186 3520
Fax. 028 7186 1105
Email: DARS.enquiry@welbni.org

March 2006

Designed at Dungannon Teachers' Centre
Tel: 028 8772 4379

Information for Parents

Dispute Avoidance & Resolution Service

Five Board Initiative