

School Voices Research-Practice Partnership

The purpose

The **purpose** of the **School Voices Research-Practice Partnership (RPP)** is: To support schools in **responding to student diversity to improve learning outcomes for all**, whilst at the same time **promoting inclusion**. This will be achieved by focusing on **students' voices and dialogues** between teachers and children and young people through participatory research approaches.

The Partnership consists of a collaboration between: **University of Southampton** and three **hub schools (St John's Primary and Nursery School, St Mary's CE Primary School, Redbridge Primary School)** that were involved in an earlier [pilot study](#). The hub schools and the University of Southampton support other schools in introducing these ideas through **collaborative action research**, considering the complexities within each school context. For more information – www.schoolvoices.soton.ac.uk

Research basis for the RPP

The work of the School Voices RPP builds on years of research carried out in collaboration with schools and universities, in England and internationally (funded by the European Union), led by [Prof Kiki Messiou](#).

Building on this earlier research, and on the findings of the [pilot study](#), (funded by Research England – Participatory Research Fund - UKRI), the School Voices RPP developed a strategy to enable reaching out to schools in Southampton initially (early years, primary, secondary, and special schools), and expand more widely in the future. The Partnership has been partly funded by UKRI – Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF).

The School Voices RPP has links with universities and schools in other countries through the World Educational Research Association International Research Network [WERA IRN "Student Voice for Promoting Inclusion in Schools"](#) that is co-led by Prof Messiou and Prof Elizabeth Kozleski (Stanford University).

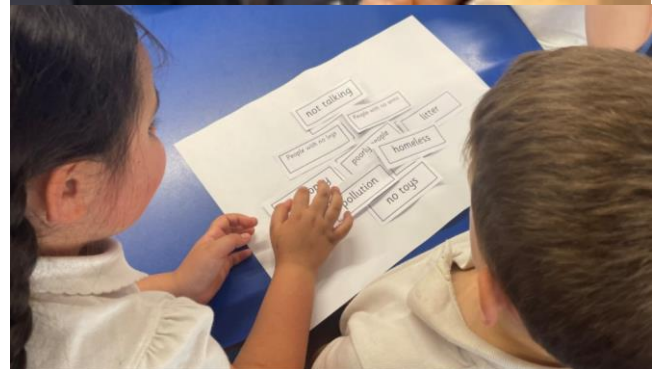
Key features of the approach

Student involvement: Students' voices are the driving force behind the research approaches of this partnership. These are highlighted through **participatory research approaches** such as student voice activities (e.g. Diamond ranking activity, Photo elicitation etc.), developing student researchers and dialogues between students and teachers and other adults in schools, including parents/carers and families.

Schools identify their own area of focus: Teams in schools identify these areas through discussions. These can be led by school leaders or teachers and can also involve students. This is research led by the schools and there is flexibility about how to approach these decisions.



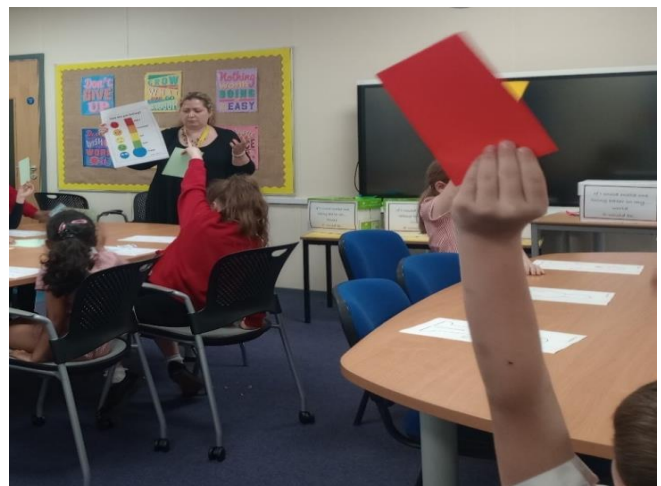
Students voting for the most important issues according to them



Diamond 9 ranking activity



Photo elicitation activity



Students using coloured paper to express emotions

Inclusion: Whilst schools develop their own area of focus, another key feature is the idea of promoting inclusion within school contexts. We view inclusion as an ongoing process of identifying and removing contextual barriers to learning, to reach out to *all* students in schools, particularly those that may be seen as ‘hard to reach’. We also view inclusion as being about valuing diversity. These ideas have to be considered in relation to each school’s chosen focus.

Collaboration: This is an essential feature that occurs at different levels: student-teacher collaboration, teacher-teacher collaboration, home-school collaboration, school to school collaboration and university-school collaboration.

Evidence of success

We have evidence from various schools about the success of using the partnership’s approaches.

Read our [Accounts of Practice](#) and watch our [videos](#) from a number of schools that have been involved in the partnership, to see the impact on individual students, how teachers benefited through teacher professional development processes and how schools refined their thinking and practices.



Training session for student researchers



Student researchers carrying out lesson observations



Student researchers sharing their observations with teachers



Colleagues from various schools presenting their work during the network meeting at the university

Requirements for the success of the approaches

School leaders' interest and ongoing support and commitment: School leaders need to show their support and ongoing commitment to these ideas, in order for the approaches to be successful. They must enable teachers to have time to introduce such approaches within their busy work schedules and help in addressing various logistical issues at the school level, such as allowing teachers to attend meetings with other schools.

Believing in students' voices: Adults in schools need to believe that students have valuable contributions to make about learning processes in schools. Introducing the approaches of the RPP in various school contexts has been significant in challenging assumptions of some adults in schools, who were not convinced originally about the contributions that students could make about learning and teaching processes.

Support from the university and the hub schools: University staff and hub schools/leads are supporting and monitoring the processes in each of the schools by visiting each school occasionally and addressing any questions they may have and act as **critical friends**.

For more information, please contact Prof. Kiki Messiou: k.messiou@soton.ac.uk



Student researchers watching a video of the reading lesson



Pupil researchers and teachers in conversation



Pupil researchers looking at photos of learning in the classroom



Network meetings amongst colleagues from various schools

Our website – www.schoolvoices.soton.ac.uk