

# YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (YPAR)



How do KS2 children conceptualise just educational futures through intergenerational, child-led inquiry?



## What is YPAR?

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is a strand of research which strives to democratise research by redefining *who* has the authority and expertise to produce knowledge and influence change. Through engaging, exploratory, and creative workshops, pupils will be trained in core research skills in order to lead their own community-centred research project geared towards creating positive change.

## Project Overview

The research will take place during in-school or or after-school weekly sessions across two school terms (January - July 2026). Each one-hour session will be facilitated by an adult-researcher (Oxford doctoral student) with a group of ~15 voluntary Y5/Y6 pupils who will be regarded as equal co-researchers. Once trained in core research skills (Term 1), pupils will engage with members of the wider community through their self-designed study to learn about their community's experiences of and hopes for education/ schooling (Term 2). Through this intergenerational approach, we hope pupils will come to a conceptualisation of what "just educational futures" look like, i.e. what they think just/ fair/ good/ brilliant education looks like and what change is, therefore, needed.

## What will pupils learn/ gain?

YPAR provides children with opportunities to engage with their communities, gather and analyse data about their contexts, and determine actions that reflect the change they hope to create in the world. Ultimately, the project aims to empower children with the understanding that **their knowledge is valuable**, they have **agency**, they are **members of a community** and have the **skills to lead research & be changemakers**.

## Curriculum Outline

Pupils AKA co-researchers will explore each stage of the research process below across 2-3 sessions, over the course of 2 school terms.

### 1. Community building as a research team.

Through practices of play and arts-based activities, these sessions are designed for the researchers (both adult and child) to begin building trusting relationships necessary for collaborative learning and research.



### 2. Learning concepts central to YPAR.

Building a shared understanding of concepts like research, fairness, power and knowledge through age-appropriate activities, e.g. "Draw a Researcher".



**3. Developing a research question, method and study design.** Adult researcher will train co-researchers to design their own research study, including their research question(s) and learning a variety research methods adapted for children to lead independently.



**4. Data Collection.** Co-researchers will follow their study design to collect data from the wider community (may require going off-site).



**5. Data analysis.** Co-researchers will learn about how to organise & analyse data using child-friendly analysis tools. They will present some preliminary findings and receive feedback on their analysis.



**6. Findings & outputs.** Co-researchers will learn about different types of research outputs and consider how they want to present their data back to the larger community. Students will then present their findings via their chosen research output.



**7. Taking action.** Co-researchers will develop a plan for taking action, e.g. a presentation, campaign, music concert, online photography exhibition etc. And then, take the action!



Ishani Parekh is a PhD student at the University of Oxford. Ishani trained as an English teacher and it is in the classroom that her heart and purpose still lie. She has worked as an educator in various capacities over the last decade, from leading theatre workshops with children across the UK, to youth empowerment & teacher training programmes in the Middle East and, most recently, teaching at Harvard University. Her work focuses on building equitable school systems that nurture the flourishing of every child. Note: the project will have clearance from the University of Oxford's research ethics committee.