

Children as Designers: Reimagining School Spaces

What is Participatory Action Research?

A research approach where researchers and participants work together to explore lived experiences. Repeated cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting deepen understanding and provide a powerful tool for amplifying pupil voice and supporting children in contributing to school improvement and strategic planning.

What will pupils learn?

While investigating school spaces, pupils will grow in confidence, self-expression, active listening, and collaborative working. This project encourages pupils to become thoughtful spatial thinkers and empowered voices in their school community.

How does this benefit your school?

- **Amplifies pupil voice:** Encourages students to express their ideas, opinions, and experiences, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging.
- **Promotes a sense of belonging:** Builds stronger connections between students and their school by involving them in meaningful decisions about their environment.
- **Supports sustainable school improvement:** Provides actionable, student-driven insights to create spaces that enhance engagement, well-being, and a positive school culture.



School Spaces Project

Working together as researchers to explore, reimagine and design better spaces for learning and well-being through four workshops

01

Space Explorers

Using stories, walks, and creative mapping to discover how we experience our school spaces

04

Space Architects

Creating our ideal school by bringing together all our ideas and visions for the future

02

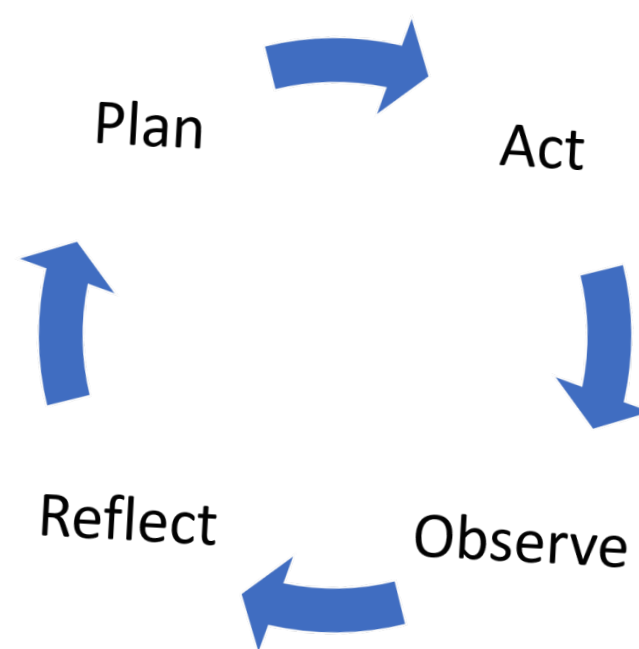
Space Detectives

Observing and documenting how different spaces work and feel through journaling and investigation

Space Designers

Reimagining our school spaces through creative writing and collaborative dreaming

03



Doctoral Researcher

Priyanka Soni, MSc, MSt, PGCE, QTS



Priyanka brings extensive educational experience to her ESRC-funded doctoral research. After completing Teach First, she worked across various roles in schools - from classroom teacher to head of department and head of house - teaching English across all age groups and holding both academic and pastoral leadership positions. With Master's degrees in English (MSt) and Education (MSc) from Oxford, complemented by training as a wellbeing coach, Priyanka brings a unique blend of literary, pedagogical, and holistic perspectives to education research.