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Tales of Toilets - Research Report.

2023-2024



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01

Introduction

Research aims and approach to research in one Yorkshire primary school.

Research aims

The research adopted a young people as researchers methodology to look at ways we could co-construct toilet policies and practice that works for all pupils. We wanted to work with the children to identify how the toilets were currently experienced by pupils in their school and to work with staff to look at how we could make positive changes.

Primary school details

This was the first time the toilet talk project had undertaken toilet research in a primary school. We wanted to highlight how children in all schools are best placed to investigate this topic. We knew the children would be able to share ideas and experiences that adults would not and this approach could provide powerful insights.

School connection

This school has children aged 3-11 years and a school council that were excited about asking questions about the world around them alongside a university researcher. Many of the young researchers would be the first generation in their family to go to university and creating a research relationship with York St John became an important part of our work.

Children and young people as researchers

The young researchers made decisions at every step of the research journey. They discussed what they wanted to find out from their peers based on their own experiences. They decided upon the method they wanted to use and collected data from their peers. Collectively we picked the important elements from the findings that we wanted to share and then created a short informative film to be shared within school and at YSJ.

Tales of Toilets.

Too many poos, not enough
loos.

When it's raining outside
somewhere to hide.

Too many faces, not enough
spaces.

The tissues are like rocks, so
don't clog.

Talking about toilets is important
to do, please flush when you go
to the loo.



03

The Project

How the young researchers became part to the project, what they hoped to discover and how they gathered research data.

Recruitment.

School council members had been chosen by the school lead and were all given information about the project. Those who were interested, volunteered their time to join the sessions for a period of 8 weeks during school time.

The toilet research buddies!

There were 6 young researchers and one adult researcher who made up the research team. We explored different research methods, possible research questions and the importance of individual rights within research. We decided to call ourselves the toilet research buddies!

Our insights.

As a group, the young researchers gathered their own ideas and experiences of school toilets. These ideas then helped us to create statements that they could use to gather other pupils opinions within school. For example, they had seen the toilets lots of times when they hadn't been flushed, and they wanted to know if other pupils had experienced the same.

Conducting research in school.

We created a paper questionnaire with 13 statements on about school toilets. The youth researchers gave consent information to other pupils about taking part and what would happen to the answers they gave. The pupils who wanted to take part did so one lunch-time in school.

Looking at the findings.

As a team we looked through the responses and decided what we would like to share. Together we counted up the answers and worked out which of the 13 statements we would like to share with wider school staff and pupils. These answers would then be included in an informative video to share within school and at YSJ.

04

Insights

The findings that the young researchers gathered from peers and how these insights encouraged the development of a film about school toilets.

People don't always flush!

17 out of 23 respondents strongly disagree that people don't flush the toilet enough.

Peeking is a problem!

21 out of 23 respondents feel uncomfortable when people peek over or under the toilet cubicles.

Wipe the seats!

19 pupils strongly agreed that people don't always wipe the seats.

Respect the space.

15 pupils wish that all pupils would take care of the toilets.

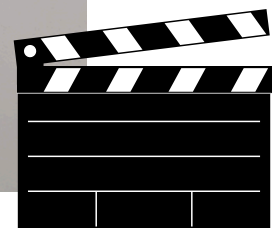
Washing hands is important!

15 respondents don't think that people always wash their hands.

Use of toilets.

Over half of the respondents said they sometimes go to the toilet when they don't really need it.

The toilet research buddies used these insights to make a video sharing some top tips and suggestions for everyone to use the toilets safely and comfortably.



05

Sharing the research

Youth researchers reflect upon their experience of sharing the research within school and becoming youth researchers.

Sharing in assembly.

The adult researcher filmed the youth researchers, who were able to hide their identity with famous faces masks, each taking a statement and sharing it on the video. The school lead then gave us a time to share the video and the wider experience of engaging with research within a school assembly.

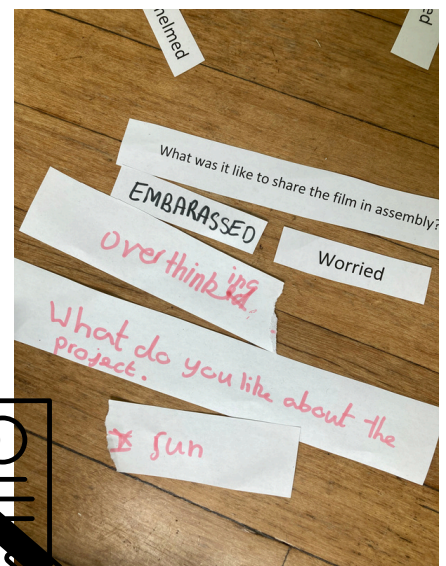
What was this experience like?

The pupils in school enjoyed watching this video and the staff congratulated the young researchers on their work and findings. There was laughter during the video, and questions from pupils after the video, showing that pupils engaged with the content. The young researchers commented that next time they might do something different as sharing a 'funny' video in assembly had made some of them feel worried and embarrassed.

Youth researchers reflections.

The photo below shows one young researchers responses during a discussion about sharing the video. The choice of a visual output had been a collective one but it felt different sharing the video amongst a wider group of pupils.

This raised interesting questions in the research, not only about the topic of toilets but also about how we communicate findings to peers within UK school settings.



06

Conclusions

What we have learnt from the project and what we hope will happen next.

Presenting at York St John University.

The young researchers shared their findings at a young researchers conference at York St John University. They shared the research with Professors, academics and other young researchers.

Moving forward.

The school lead expressed how important it felt to keep this research relationship going within their school. They identified how they felt that the young researchers confidence had increased and wanted to explore how they could include more research projects that would have a positive impact into their school.

Recommendations from this project.

- This project identifies how collaborating with children and young people as researchers can uncover insights into pupils experiences within school settings. More projects that work with democratic and co-research approaches would enable settings to better shape the school experience and environment for all pupils. The young researchers collaborated on a letter called 'Dear Headteacher' outlining the impact the project could have for all pupils (see below).
- Creating a co-research space with children was the foundation of this work and the facilitating work done by the adult researcher enabled the young researchers to take part in the bits that really interested them. Encourage adult researchers to reflect upon their values and intention for the projects, to identify roles and explore how this will be managed.
- Engaging teachers as part of the research team and not just overseeing things could help to propel the 'change' intention of the project. Adult researchers would need to establish a way to include teachers voices without minimising the young researchers.



Dear Headteacher

We feel like we have been heard because the toilets have got a little bit better, but we also feel like some people didn't get the message because they didn't understand the research experience.

Is there a way to invite different people for the whole project? It shouldn't matter if they are on the school council, everyone should get a say. To make people understand it better and let people join in with us to get experience and most important to have fun!!!!

Every week we spend time doing research and think more people should be able to have a go. Since more teachers have been saying that we need to have readings or present our work in assembly's but some people aren't too confident and if we have more experience with research assistants then we would feel more confident. When we presented to our classes everyone was confused so spending more time doing research would help people to understand. MOST IMPORTANT LET US HAVE FUN AND BE CONFIDENT!!!

We would like you to consider this and think about more activities we can do with universities.

Your sincerely,
The toilet research buddies !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

