



Active Enquiring Minds

Name _____

This guide can help you improve
your school and achieve a
**Certificate of Student
Enquiry and Research**



This booklet is for young people who who want to investigate an issue about their school. It will show you how to plan and carry out your own research and share what you have found out with other people, it will also show you how you can achieve an Essex Certificate of Student Enquiry and Research.

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Examples of research questions

What sort of lessons help us learn better?

Would more school trips motivate us to learn better?

Is there bullying in our school?

When should we have to do homework?

Do some people get more rewards or merits than others without having to work as hard?

Would more school trips motivate us to learn better?

Why do we need to wear school uniform?

Research is about...

- **Helping us know more about things**
- **Questioning things**
- **Changing things**
- **Helping us solve problems**
- **Finding things out by collecting data (information) using words, numbers and images**

A good researcher is...



Ethical

Your research must not harm the people involved



Sceptical

You need to question everything you find out



Systematic

You need to research in a sensible step by step way

These responsibilities were highlighted by researchers Mary Kellett (Kellett, 2005) and Colin Robson (Robson, 2002).



**So what do you
need to do?**

Tick when completed

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Decide what you want to find out or change (p8) | |
| 2. Decide your research question (p10) | |
| 3. Find out what is already known about the subject (p12) | |
| 4. Try out a range of data collection and analysis methods (p13) | |
| 5. Prepare to carry out ethical research (p14) | |
| 6. Decide how you will collect and analyse your data (p15) | |
| 7. Pilot your research method/s (p16) | |
| 8. Decide what resources you will need (p17) | |
| 9. Organise your time (p18) | |
| 10. Carry out your data collection and analysis (p19) | |
| 11. What did you find out (p20) | |
| 12. Share your research (p21) | |

1. Decide what you want to find out or change

You can use your research to provide information to help other people make decisions or you can work with other people to use your research to try and change something. Changing things can be difficult and other people may not be happy about doing this so you need to think really carefully about this before you start. Remember sometimes really good ideas are not acted upon straight away.



If you want your research to change something in your school you will need to discuss or design your research with the adults and/or children in charge of the area you are interested in.

This will take time and you may find it easier to begin by designing your research to find out information about the area you want to improve first. If this is the case writing your thoughts about the statements on the next three pages may help to get your thinking started:

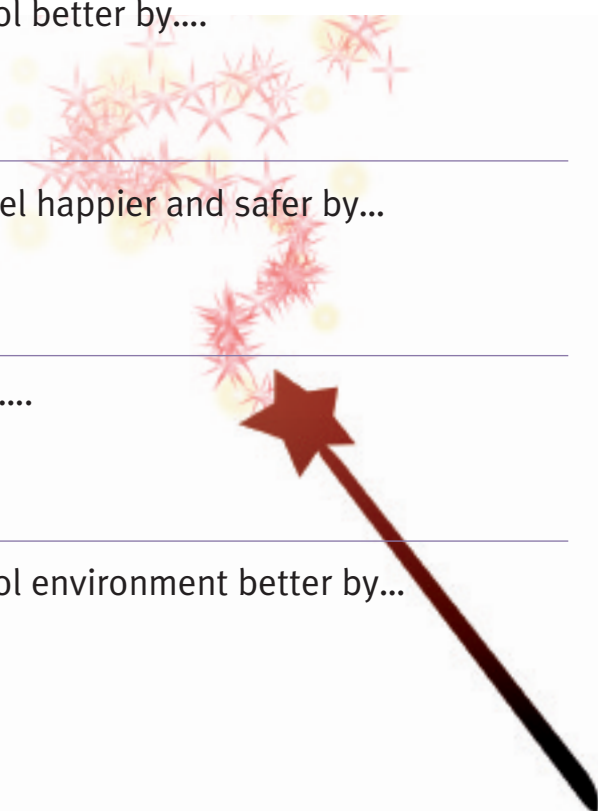
If I could improve an area of school life

I'd make my school better by...

I'd make pupils feel happier and safer by...

I'd learn better by...

I'd make my school environment better by...



2. Decide your research question

Now choose one of your suggestions and write down your answers to the following questions about it.

What most interests you about this topic?

What exactly do you want to find out?

Where could you find this out?

How could you find this out?

Who will I need to speak to, to gather more information regarding my question?

- Students (e.g. which class or year group, boys and/or girls?)
 - Adults (e.g. teaching or midday assistants, Year 9 teachers, the headteacher, school governors, parents, support staff)
-

Record below the time available to complete your research project.

Write out a draft of the question you want to answer in your research.

3. Find out what is already known about the subject

Find out if any researchers outside your school have researched a similar topic to your own. You can do this by:

- going to <http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/research.cfm> for examples of research by secondary-aged researchers such as Paul O'Brien.
- going to <http://www.youparticipate.org.uk/> and clicking on the tabs 'Research by children and young people'.
- check with your teacher if another student has researched your topic at your school.

Don't worry if there are no research reports about the subject you want to find out about. You can be the first to publish something on the subject! If you use someone else's ideas you will need to write their name in your report every time you mention their work e.g.

I found out that using questionnaires and interviewing people was a good way of collecting information by reading the work of other young researchers. (O'Brien, 2005)

As you do your research make a list of any people whose ideas you've used during your research and put this list at the back of your final research report. There is an example of how to do this on p22.

4. Look at a range of data collection methods

Data can be collected using numbers, words and pictures.

In the research support pack there are 4 different ways of collecting and analysing data. Use the instructions in the pack to try out each of the methods. You can ask an adult to help you with this if you need to record the usefulness of each method on the evaluation sheet at the back of the pack. Do this before you decide which method/s you will use in your research.



5. Prepare to carry out ethical research

Remember good researchers are ethical, your research must not harm the people involved. Researchers call the people who they collect data from participants. You will need to plan, carry out and share your research in ways that:

- are honest, (e.g. tell participants what the research is about);
- respect participants freedom (eg ask participants if they want to join in with your research and do not force anyone to take part if they don't want to);
- treat participants fairly;
- are safe, legal and not stressful for participants;
- respect participants' privacy (e.g. keep their views anonymous and always store the data you collect securely.);

The research methods support pack will give you practical ideas about how to make your research ethical.

6. Decide how you will collect and analyse your data

Sometimes researchers do not have the time or resources to collect data from everyone they want to so they choose a smaller sample of people, e.g. Instead of sending a questionnaire to every student in your school you might want to send it to 5 boys and 5 girls in each year. Make sure you are not collecting too much data for the time you have available to do your research.

Write down your research question

Who will you collect data from?

How many people?

How will you analyse your data?
(See p30 in Research Support Pack).

7. Pilot your research method/s

Before starting your main research choose 2 or 3 people similar to your sample group. Ask them if they will try out your chosen research method for you. This is called piloting. You can see how well your method works and practice analysing your data. If you find there are problems you can put them right before doing your research with your main sample group. As a double check you can ask your pilot group the following questions:

- did you understand what you had to do?
- was there anything you felt uncomfortable about?
- do you have any comments that would help make my research method better?

“I liked what you were asking me but I didn’t have enough time to answer all the questions.”



8. Decide what resources you will need

Now that you have chosen your data collection method write down what resources you will need as well as the names of people who could help you.

People (photocopying help, ICT support, asking permission to research in another classroom, asking permission to leave your own classroom, using another room)

ICT (cameras, tape recorders, laptops, software?)

Other equipment (clipboards?)

Materials (paper, post-it notes?)

Space (rooms etc?)

Other: (Please list any other resources you will need that are not on the list above).

9. Planning your time

Check with your teacher the amount of time you will have available to complete each part of your research. Read pages 20 and 21 in this booklet to see what you need to do after you have collected and analysed your data. Now write down the date you expect to start each step.

| | Date |
|--|------|
| Ask for any permissions you need | |
| Ask the people you want to collect data from if they are happy to take part in your research | |
| Pilot your data collection and analysis methods | |
| Collect data | |
| Analyse data | |
| Think about what you found out (see p20) | |
| Share your research (see p21) | |
| Apply for your Essex 'Certificate of Student Enquiry and Research' | |

10. Carry out your data collection

You are now ready to carry out your investigation by working through the steps you have planned.

Remember:

- keep all the data you have collected together.
- Ask your teacher to store this in a safe and secure place for you;

Good luck and enjoy your research



11. What did you find out?

Now that you have completed your data collection and analysis it is important to think about what you have learnt. Use the questions below to help you do this.

Write down what you found out by doing your research.

Write down the implications of this.

If you did your research again how would you improve it?

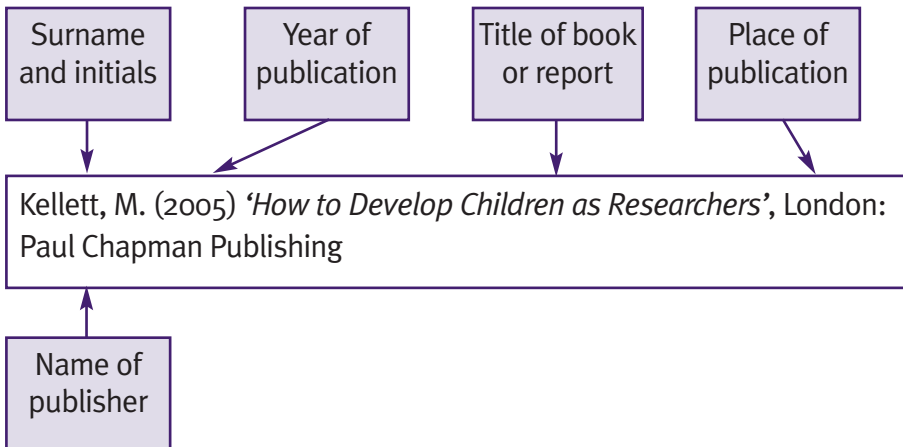
12. Share your research with others

It is important to share how you did your research and what you found out with others. You could choose one or more of the following ways to share your research:

- produce a display;
- make a verbal presentation to:
 - your class;
 - the school council;
 - an assembly;
 - the Headteacher;
 - the Governing Body;
 - a group of parents;
 - other schools;
 - other researchers.
- create a powerpoint presentation;
- write a report ;
- publish your findings on the school website;
- publish your findings on the FLARE website run by Essex Local Authority.

Using other people's ideas

If you use other people's ideas or information in your work it is important and fair to tell other people you have done this. If you look in the back of many non-fiction books you will find a page called *References*. This is an alphabetical list of all the people the author has referred to i.e. used their ideas or information. If you need to make your own list you can set it out in the following way:



References

Kellett, M. (2005) *How to Develop Children as Researchers*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing

O'Brien, P. *How does death affect children?*, downloaded from <http://childrens-research-center.open.ac.uk/research.cfm> on 26/9/08

O'Brien, P. (2005) in Kellett, M. (2005) *How to Develop Children as Researchers*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing

Acknowledging other people's work

Websites

The Childrens Research Centre

<http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/research.cfm>

The HCD Student Partnership <http://youparticipate.org.uk/>

<http://office.microsoft.com/clipart>

Photographs

Our thanks to Notley and Tabor High Schools for allowing us to use photographs of students.

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How to achieve your Essex Certificate of Student Enquiry and Research

CONGRATULATIONS!

If you have worked through this booklet and completed your research you are entitled to receive an Essex Certificate of Student Enquiry and Research.

To receive this ask your teacher to complete the form on the back cover and send it to the address shown.



Apply for your FLARE Certificate of Student Enquiry and Research

Complete this form and give to your teacher

Application for the FLARE Certificate of Student Enquiry and Research for:

_____ (Student's name)

_____ (Student's year group)

_____ (School's name)

Research question _____

Age and gender of sample _____

Data collection method/s used _____

Main finding/s and implication/s (1 or 2 sentences)

Teacher and headteacher to read and sign

I certify the above student has completed a research project as outlined above and I acknowledge the outcomes have been shared within the school.

_____ (Teacher's signature)

Would you like this research considered for publication on the FLARE website? YES/NO

_____ (Headteacher's signature)

Please return to Graham Handscomb, Head of Best Practice and Research,
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