

Permeable Walls

Parent/Carer Information Sheet

Permeable Walls involves teachers from different subjects working together to help Year 7 students investigate questions – including Big Questions – from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

The project is part of a research and curriculum innovation initiative, called Epistemic Insight, which is being led by the Learning about Science and Religion (LASAR) team at Canterbury Christ Church University. This information sheet gives some context on the Epistemic Insight initiative and explains what the Permeable Walls project will involve for your child's school, including information about the research that we will carry out as part of the project.

What is epistemic insight?

Epistemic insight – or 'knowledge about knowledge' – refers to students' capacities to think about how knowledge is formed and tested in different subjects. The Epistemic Insight initiative supports teachers and pre-service teachers to develop strategies that are aimed at developing students' understanding of different ways of knowing and how they interact.

At LASAR, we are particularly interested in enabling students to explore Big Questions using more than one discipline. One way that we characterise Big Questions is questions about human personhood and the nature of reality. For example, 'can a robot be a good friend?' or 'why does the universe exist?'. These are questions on which science and religion often both have something to say – indeed, another way that we characterise Big Questions is questions that bridge science, religion and the wider humanities. Students typically enjoy thinking about these kinds of questions, but often they are often not addressed in schools because they bridge subject boundaries and do not have simple or agreed answers.

The learning resources we produce as part of the Epistemic Insight initiative are made publicly available on our educational websites, and the findings from the research we carry out is published and informs dialogues with policy makers and curriculum designers, nationally and internationally. For more information about the LASAR research centre, please see www.canterbury.ac.uk/lasar

About Permeable Walls

LASAR researchers will work with teachers to implement teaching strategies that are designed to help students to frame and investigate questions that bridge two or more subjects. For example, getting students to consider the question 'why did the Titanic sink?' from both a scientific and an historical perspective could enable them to better understand how knowledge is formed and tested in each of these subjects.

Why has your school been invited to take part?

Your school is taking part because a teacher at your school contacted the research team or one of the research team contacted an interested teacher. All of the teachers who will be involved as well as the Head Teacher have approved the project.

How will your child be involved in our research?

As part of our evaluation of the project, students will be asked to complete a maximum of two surveys to provide us with 'before and after' data. These will both be completed at the school under supervision.

Is taking part voluntary?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary.

This information letter is about a survey which will be administered to participating students under the supervision of teachers. Gathering a picture of students' familiarity with the ideas we are exploring is a key aspect of the research design.

There is an 'opt out' form (attached below) for you to use if you do not want your child to take part in this survey. The form is 'opt out' rather than 'opt in' because this educational study is in the public interest, no real names will be used in the reports and because the findings will help teachers to teach more effectively. For the survey to be effective, it is important that we capture a complete picture of the ideas and understanding of all the students in a typical class.

Opting out from the research does not affect whether your child attends the events. Students can choose to opt out of the survey when it is presented to them by not choosing to not answer any or all of the questions on the questionnaire or by choosing not submit their survey. Students' decisions to submit or not submit their surveys will not affect their school grades.

For some research, some students are invited to take part in a research interview. In this case, there is an 'opt in' consent form for both parents/carers and the students who are invited to participate. We will contact you with a separate consent form if your child has been invited to take part in an interview study.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. Participants' names will not appear in any research, and after completion of the study all personal information attached to responses will be removed. No real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as well as the University's own data protection requirements. The data before analysis can only be accessed by the LASAR research team.

How will participants' responses be used?

The findings of the research will be used internally within Canterbury Christ Church University to inform and develop this project and related activities. In addition, the data will be analysed and the results will be discussed in the form of papers and presentations which we plan to submit to conferences and to journals. No identifiers linking the teacher or the school to the study will be included in any sort of report or academic paper that might be published based on the data.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking part?

By participating you will be contributing directly to educational research and helping us to test the hypothesis that epistemic insight improves attitudes to learning. Research that invites personal responses to questions about how humans think and behave is stimulating for participants, teachers and students, and will inform resources for schools. There are no disadvantages to taking part in the study, other than the time commitment required to carry out the stages of the research outlined above.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

Any questions?

If you would like more information about our research and/or research ethics please contact the Principal Investigator, Professor Berry Billingsley on berry.billingsley@canterbury.ac.uk or the LASAR team at lasar@canterbury.ac.uk, Canterbury Christ Church University, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU 01227 767700.

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Survey Opt-Out Form for Parent/Carer

	Please initial
I have read the Information Sheet relating to this project.	
I would like to use this opportunity to opt my child out of the research data collection.	

Name of parent/carers:	
Child's Name:	
Signed by parent/carers:	
Signed by child (optional):	
Date:	

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CLASS TEACHER