

# ON THE BELL

THE JOURNAL OF THE EMERGENCY SERVICES

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Featuring 'In Attendance' - The Magazine of the British Firefighter

# Maximising outcomes..... collaboration in action research and project-based learning



Education is much more than the cramming of facts and figures to secure exam results. The transformative role of education at the heart of communities forms a central platform from which we can work together for our children; it is indeed part and parcel of our own futures. It is through education the OECD, the World Bank and Higher Education as a whole has for some time, sought a formula to 'reconcile social cohesion with economic success'. In short, there is a simultaneous and interconnected need to educate our citizens, and generate a capable workforce.

Seeking such a formula is more difficult than may first appear however. Communities can be vastly different and share diverse values. In a fast changing world the meaning of 'community' is ever developing. With over 300 definitions of citizenship, its very purpose remains highly contentious. In the evolving landscape of education and employment, fuelled by advances in technology and the redefining of communities now 'virtually' connected, schools must work hard to link the best practices of the past with innovation and future thinking. What is clear in a fast changing world however, is the need to collaborate. We need to share our knowledge, skills and understanding in bringing the best possible outcomes for our children and our communities.

In this context, I maintain that education as a whole and the Police are significant allies. Ultimately, we both share the same goals i.e. the safety and positive engagement of our fellow citizens. How do we in practice share our knowledge, skills and understanding as collaborative partners in seeking local formulas to reconcile social cohesion with economic success? In this article, I explore the role of project-based learning and action research to connect the teachers of tomorrow i.e.

student teachers on the new 'Schools Direct' pathway, and the Police Officers of tomorrow i.e. Police cadets. Learning each other's language and each other's skills alongside experienced serving teachers and officers, provides exciting opportunities to link the best practices of the past with those we forge together for the future. It is here the Chief Constable Jon Murphy's call to 'just talk' has deep significance. Talking in that space where we perceive of our own strengths and those of others, understanding the synergy between our roles in service to each other and our communities (such as within the PREVENT and Lifelong learning agendas), we may realise the most potent ingredient within any social formula i.e. the sharing of our experience and the knowledge informed by it.

At St Vincent's we are developing an 'education and enterprise' village to facilitate a space where we can work together with our collaborative partners to challenge the 85% unemployment rates amongst visually impaired (VI) pupils. Designing learning experiences into which our pupils can simultaneously develop their strengths, focus upon employable skills and enhance socialising opportunities lies at the heart of our 'enriched' curriculum and the rationale behind engaging with what is best defined as 'project-based' learning. As each child is different, it calls for a wide variety of projects designed around the needs of the child and the employment focussed upon. It is within this ever changing mix of projects our village has invited student teacher volunteers to participate in things they find interesting, and into which they can add value. Furthermore, as partners with 'Schools Direct', the new pathway into obtaining qualified teacher status (QTS), the village facilitates Initial Teacher Training (ITT) for those signed up to the course. This presents the physical ability

to collaborate on projects which connect future teachers and future Police officers alongside each other. This is all well and good, but we need to research projects carefully. Taking the hard evidence research data from any such projects gives scope to inform how we can do things in new and

better ways within those other 'villages' outside of St Vincent's. Encouraging new and enthusiastic teachers and officers to engage with this research and apply it to the local communities in which they will eventually serve is a powerful tool for real change. This lies at the core of what is best defined as Action Research; the research of what we do by each other and for each other. It is research 'done with' not 'done to' and provides a fuller picture of the real potential in citizenship and values education.

A good example of the type of project the village would like to share with student teachers and cadets as a medium for teaching and learning is Mahmood's Rap. Mahmood has great skills of communication, evidenced in the fact he arranged all the different groups, media and recordings including CAPITA staff, to help in his project based learning idea. Mahmood happens to be visually impaired and hearing impaired. Writing the Rap to support the schools solar panel bid ([www.solarschools.org.uk/stvincents](http://www.solarschools.org.uk/stvincents)) he has just won a national Solar Star Pupil award. His project serves as to illustrate multiple outcomes within a socially cohesive formula, and some great CV material. Have a look at his work on U-tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoVtZ02iS7I&feature=youtu.be>

In September, a large scale project gets underway to showcase the outcomes from talking, working and researching together. In partnership with Liverpool Hope University and the Reader Organisation, twenty-four photographs will launch a range of literacy projects to develop text attached to each photograph. The text serves as to evoke the same feelings portrayed in the pictures or to make sense of them in some way. Collaboratively, we are developing values based lesson plans to go behind the text and the pictures. Collectively the photographs, text and lesson plans will be made into a book and gifted as a learning resource to every student teacher and each primary school in the City. What values based messages do we wish to share or reinforce with our communities through those lesson plans and within primary school classrooms? Furthermore, how do we use observations and research into those lessons to share with Schools Direct students?

**St Vincent's village invites your input:**  
[www.helpingliverpooltosee.co.uk](http://www.helpingliverpooltosee.co.uk)

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**Dr J Patterson**  
**Principal St Vincent's**



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