

Symposium Set A1, Room: The Bradbury Zone (Classroom Space 1 – presentation & discussion)

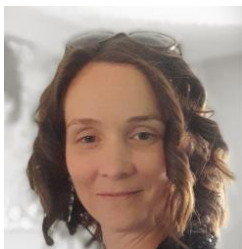
VOICES OF CHILDREN: WHAT DID CHILDREN SAY?

How do children understand and experience participative rights? From abstraction to visibility

Abstract: This session is a partnership presentation between a school-based researcher and an internship student, centred on the research question: *How do young children understand and experience participatory rights?* We will share young children's perceptions of participation and explore what participation means to them within their lived experiences. The presentation will make visible how children engage with their right to be heard, how they are involved in decision-making, and how participation is experienced in their everyday lives within educational settings. We will outline our pedagogical and methodological approach to valuing children's voices, situating this work within the context of our Children's Advisory Board, and critically examine the complexities and ethical sensitivities of participatory research with young children. Participants will be invited to reflect on creating a climate of participation and consider how children's participative rights can be enacted in classrooms through relationships, environments, routines, and everyday moments.

Key words:

- Children's advisory board
- Collaborative research
- Children's participative rights
- Early Childhood Education
- Working with children



CHAired BY: Anna Westall, Policy Team Manager, Children in Wales.

Anna specialises in Early Years and holistic family support, ensuring that the child remains central to all decisions affecting their lives. Anna's current focus is on Early Years Rights, championing the voices of babies and young children, and supporting parents and carers to shape and influence policy development

Facilitators



Jacqui Lewis, University of the West of England.

Jacqui's research interests are rooted in a rights-based approach and advocacy for children and childhoods, and how qualitative methodologies can support a pedagogy of listening. Jacqui is interested in educators' professional identity and formation of equitable relationships to empower reflexivity and growth.



Rachel Birch, Cadoxton Primary School

Rachel is a primary school teacher, with ten years' experience at Cadoxton Primary School teaching from Year 3 to Nursery. Her passion is early years education and has led a nursery of 80 children and their families for the past four years, creating nurturing, engaging environments for young learners. She is committed to professional learning, with experience in Reggio Emilia, Italy and collaboration with nursery settings across Wales and England, shaping my child-centred approach to education.



Eve Parry, Student Intern

Eve interned with us over summer 2025 and will be returning again this year. She is currently doing her master's in Childhood and Youth at the University of Sussex. Her lines of research are linked to children's rights, education policy and neoliberalism.'