

# PhD Opportunity

Mapping the influence of teachers' peer relationships on retention in rural schools

**Supervisory team**

Professor Alison Kington and Dr Karen Blackmore

**Director of Studies:**

Professor Alison Kington, The Social Psychology of Education Research Group, School, University of Worcester

**Supervisors:**

Dr Karen Blackmore, The Social Psychology of Education Research Group, University of Worcester

**[The Social Psychology of Education Research Group](#)****The PhD Opportunity:**

Despite of attempts to improve the financial and non-financial attractiveness of teaching over nearly two decades, teacher retention is in crisis with approximately 40% of practitioners choosing to leave teaching within the first five years of practice, resulting in the loss of vital professional experience. However, studies have focused on those teachers who make the decision to leave the profession ignoring the strengths that should be enhanced in order to retain a strong and experienced teaching profession.

This project will build on initial findings from a study conducted by Kington, Blackmore and other members of the Social Psychology of Education Research Group (SPoE) to explore the influence of these peer relationships on primary school teachers, by identifying, analysing and mapping ways in which they draw on the strengths of these professional relationships to sustain their sense of commitment to remain in the profession. Thus, this study will be innovative in examining an important issue from a new direction, acquiring contextualised empirical data from teachers in rural schools in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Further, by employing a methodological stance informed by educational, social (and discursive) psychology, will allow exploration of individual experiences in relation to profession wide contextual and policy-related issues.

## Application Process

To begin the application process please go to [Education MPhil/PhD Webpage](#) and click on 'How to Apply' in the top menu. This PhD could be carried out on a part time or full time basis so please select the relevant application link. On the application form, please make it clear that you are applying for one of our advertised projects so we can direct it straight to the relevant people.

## The Interview

All successful applicants will be offered an interview with the proposed Supervisory Team. You will be contacted by a member of the Research School Team to find a suitable date. Interviews can be conducted in person or over Microsoft Teams.

## Funding your PhD

For more information about Doctoral Loans please visit:

<https://www.worc.ac.uk/study/fees-and-finance/doctoral-loans.aspx>

During your PhD you can access the Research Student Support Scheme to support dissemination costs associated with your research, up to £500 a year.

## Research at the University of Worcester

Research is central to the University's mission to make a difference in everything that we do. We are committed to delivering excellent research which extends the boundaries of human knowledge but which also improves people's lives by enabling better health outcomes, improving food security, developing environmentally sustainable solutions for crop production and socially sustainable solutions to our ageing population, enhancing public knowledge and understanding of the past and present.

The University hence focuses its research around five high-level challenges facing society, locally, nationally and globally:

- [Human Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Sustainable Futures](#)
- [Digital Innovation](#)
- [Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion](#)
- [Professional Education](#)

The success of our research is reflected in our continuous improvement in external research assessment processes. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, REF 2021, the University saw a near 50% increase in the scale of its research and 12% increase in quality, building on its performance in REF 2014 when it was the UK's most improved university in terms of Research Power, a combination of scale and quality.

## Research Degrees at Worcester

Our research students are central to our overall mission for research. They are working at the cutting edge of their disciplines and driving forward the quality of our research whilst enriching our research culture. We are looking to increase our research student numbers as a strategic imperative.

Our commitment to our students is reflected in the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2023 in which we ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> for overall research student satisfaction nationally. Key to our success in this area is the Research School, a focal point for all our research students.

It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

## Research Group

### Social Psychology of Education Research Group

The Social Psychology of Education Research Group was formed to share research and good practice amongst a wide range of academics from across Education and Psychology. We have partners in a number of professional fields and third sector organisations as well as in local government.

Our research focuses on the importance of social and learning relationships across all phases of education, in both formal and informal settings, and how these impact on the effectiveness and retention of practitioners, and the quality of children's learning experiences. We are united by our interest in how social psychology can be applied to teaching, learning, and other experiences in educational contexts, producing research which is cross-disciplinary in its theoretical and methodological approaches, which not only contributes to knowledge generation within the academic community, but also informs policy and practice.

Our research is organised around four interconnecting themes: educational identities; classroom behaviours and interaction; Individual differences and adult-child / peer relationships.

### Widening Participation:

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

**For further information** or an informal discussion on this project, please contact Professor Alison Kington (Director of Studies) via email at [a.kington@worc.ac.uk](mailto:a.kington@worc.ac.uk)