

<b>Institution:</b> University of Sunderland		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 23 Education		
<b>Title of case study:</b> No Outsiders: Improving equality and diversity education across the UK		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006-2009		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Elizabeth Atkinson Renee DePalma	Reader Research Fellow	1993-2009 2006-2009
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The No Outsiders programme developed from research at Sunderland is the first comprehensive framework to enable educators to teach about equality. Schools, local authorities and education organisations across the UK have adopted the programme, which gives teachers a simple, effective structure for teaching diversity to different age groups. Public responses to No Outsiders forced greater scrutiny in the media and in Parliament of statutory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) requirements, highlighting ambiguities in Government guidance and leading to official clarification of parents' opt-out rights and ownership of curriculum design. This new clarity benefits all primary and secondary schools in England, their teachers, head teachers, pupils and their families.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Between 2006-2009, Sunderland's Elizabeth Atkinson and Renee DePalma designed and led the ESRC-funded collaborative Participatory Action Research project '<i>No Outsiders: sexualities equality in primary schools</i>'. The research was carried out with Co-Is at UCL and Exeter, and 26 teacher-researchers based in primary schools across England.</p> <p><i>No Outsiders</i> grew directly out of the project leaders' earlier work in which four key themes were identified as the basis for further investigation: the invisibility of LGBT parents in schools; lack of representation within the curriculum of the everyday lives of children in families with same-sex parents or other relatives; teachers' tendency to take a reactive approach to addressing sexualities equality; and the underestimation of the significance of homophobic bullying in primary schools.</p> <p>The ground-breaking project foreshadowed the Equalities Act 2010 and was already thinking beyond Stonewall's 2007 work on confronting homophobic bullying. It called for LGBT+ people to be equally represented in the curriculum and for LGBT+ parents to be recognised as members of the school community. The project adopted a Practice as Research (PAR) methodology, creating 'a community of practice within which teachers could develop effective approaches to addressing sexualities equality' [R1] to ensure that theory came to shape practice in sustainable ways.</p> <p>Atkinson drew on Somekh's (2005) model of a global action research community in designing <i>No Outsiders</i>, thereby supporting the collaborative interrogation of hetero-gender normativity and the exploration of how this could be surpassed through innovative classroom curriculum development. This approach ensured that both theoretical and practical resources were generated and that they connected widely with teachers and academics.</p> <p><i>No Outsiders'</i> outputs reflect the project's commitment to supporting sustainable changes in practice and to developing theoretical ideas that explain sexualities inequality in primary education and explain why sexualities equality matters in practice. 15 peer-reviewed journal articles [including R2, R3 and R5], and an edited book [R1, inc. R4] act as companions to a practical book for educators [R6]. This book both reflects on the project and provides educators with resources such as teaching plans, tools for developing inclusivity policies, and recommendations of children's picture books as resources for introducing particular themes.</p>		
<b>3. References to the research</b> (indicative maximum of six references)		

- R1.** [DePalma, R., & Atkinson, E. \(Eds.\). \(2009\). \*Interrogating heteronormativity in primary schools: The work of the No Outsiders project\*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.](#)  
**Quality indicators:** 133 citations.
- R2.** [DePalma, R., Atkinson, E \(2009b\) "No Outsiders': moving beyond a discourse of tolerance to challenge heteronormativity in primary schools', \*British Educational Research Journal\*, 35\(6\), pp. 837-855. DOI: 10.1080/01411920802688705](#) **Quality indicators:** Peer-reviewed article in Q1-ranked journal. 125 citations
- R3.** [DePalma, R., Atkinson, E \(2009c\) "'Permission to Talk About It': Narratives of Sexual Equality in the Primary Classroom', \*Qualitative Inquiry\* 15, pp. 876-892.](#) **Quality indicators:** Peer-reviewed article in Q1-ranked journal. 33 citations
- R4.** [Atkinson, E., Moffat, A. \(2009d\) 'Bodies and minds: essentialism, activism and strategic disruptions in the primary school and beyond', in DePalma, R., Atkinson, E. \(eds.\) \*Interrogating heteronormativity in primary schools: the work of the no outsiders project\*. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books, pp.95-110.](#)
- R5.** [Atkinson, E., DePalma, R. \(2009\) 'Un-believing the matrix: queering consensual heteronormativity'. \*Gender and Education\*. 21\(1\), pp.17-29](#) **Quality indicators:** Peer-reviewed article in Q1-ranked journal. 111 citations
- R6.** [No Outsiders project team \(2009\) \*Undoing Homophobia in Primary Schools\*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books](#)

The project earned the British Educational Research Association/Sage Publishers *Research into Practice* Award for schools and early years settings in September 2008 and was recognised at an international level through its inclusion in The Global Human Rights Education Network (HREA) Compendium of good practices in human rights education.

#### Funding

ESRC. 'No Outsiders'. RES-062-23-0095. PI: Atkinson. 2006-2009. £575,435.

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The PAR approach adopted by the *No Outsiders* project enabled participants to develop legacy programmes. One of these, the *No Outsiders* programme, was initiated by one of the project's teacher-researchers, Andrew Moffat MBE, in 2014. (Note: the *No Outsiders* 'project' refers to the research described above. The *No Outsiders* 'programme', acting as pathway to impact, refers to the legacy programme led by Moffat).

The programme provides a framework, resources and professional training for teaching children about equality, a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010. At its centre is the resource book '*No Outsiders in Our School: Teaching the Equality Act in Primary Schools*'. Like **R6**, it is reflective and practical, sharing Moffat's experiences alongside resources that schools might use to confidently embed an equalities ethos. Moffat describes the relationship between the project and this legacy programme, saying "*The 'No Outsiders' project paved the way for this resource. Most of the ideas in this resource originated within those two years*" **[S1]**. A key recommended resource is a pack of books and supporting lesson and assembly plans, enabling teachers to address equalities using age-appropriate texts. The programme continues and expands the success of the research project by integrating LGBT education into education about equalities in general, **creating a single framework for teaching children about all protected characteristics**.

#### Impact on schools, teachers and children

##### **Educators and organisation across the UK engage with the No Outsiders programme.**

197 schools are known to have completed *No Outsiders* training **[S2]**, and 446 book packs have been sold to schools, and local authorities **[S3]**. It is recommended by local authorities, education bodies and youth organisations including Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Newcastle, Cheshire West, Shropshire, Hertfordshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Leicester and Leicestershire Councils, the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Diocese of Exeter, the Diocese of Hallam, and the Boys' Brigade. Schools in almost every county in England are known to engage with the programme **[S4]**. It addresses a recognised gap in provision. Hampshire County Council recommends *No Outsiders* to its schools, explaining "*Schools*

and colleges in the county have expressed a clear need for guidance about how they can best support individuals with protected characteristics – particularly LGBT+ individuals – and address negative attitudes in the rest of the community” [S4]. One headteacher praises the programme for providing a comprehensive resource, saying that prior to the *No Outsiders* programme, “**there was no specific resource to support teaching about equality in primary schools,**” and that “*it has made a significant and positive impact on how [the school] meets the public sector Equality Duty in that it now uses a set of resources that comprehensively address all protected characteristics using age-appropriate materials*” [S5]. Since 2020 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has used *No Outsiders* as an exemplar for guiding schools on implementing an LGBTI-inclusive curriculum [S4].

The programme **improves educators’ and school leaders’ understanding of equality.** Hampshire County Council say that “*No Outsiders helps [educators] to contextualise and better understand the equalities agenda. As well as providing them with the knowledge and confidence to teach about equality, it encourages individuals to revisit their own views, and the stereotypes and preconceptions that they might unknowingly use*” [S4]. As a result, **educators are more confident in teaching children about equality.** Leicester City Council, which piloted and has since rolled out the programme in schools and children’s centres across the city, say that “*it gives staff the knowledge and confidence to create inclusive and positive teaching about equality*” [S4]. They confirm that the programme helps schools to meet their regulatory duties: “**[It] provides a straightforward way of demonstrating to others, including Ofsted, that [the school] teaches British Values and the Equality Act**” [S4]. Ofsted say that *No Outsiders* “*actively promotes fundamental British values and teaches children how to make a positive contribution to international communities... As a result...all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed*” [S6].

**No Outsiders has improved children’s wellbeing.** One Headteacher reported that adopting the programme “*has been enormously positive and [we] have seen such impact upon the children’s empathy and understanding*” [S4]. Another said that “*children have gained self-esteem; we no longer hear anti-equality slurs and the initiative ... has allowed children to believe in themselves as being important and valuable members of our school*” [S5]. Data from a pilot in Leicestershire showed improvement in pupils’ sense of safety and happiness in school, and in awareness of what bullying is and what to do about it. [S4].

#### Impact on communities and public debate

**No Outsiders has enhanced community cohesion by bringing together disconnected groups,** and by **providing the resources to engage parents and the wider community in positive conversations about equality.** At a school in Leicestershire, the programme’s recommended book *Where the Flowers Grow*, which addresses age, underpinned a school-community engagement project about the first world war, where elderly community members and pupils worked together for the first time. The headteacher says “*This project, stimulated by [No Outsiders] has brought generations together*” [S5].

The programme has also received criticism from school communities. The same-sex relationships element of *No Outsiders* was the subject of protests, initially in Birmingham before spreading across the country, exposing the tension between the Equality Act (and its protected characteristics) and the religious beliefs and cultural values of some community members. Hampshire County Council say that the programme “*directly addresses the importance of engaging with parents, and we believe that as a result, schools that have participated in our training will have smoother experiences in engaging the whole school community going forward*” [S4]. Likewise, Leicester City Council commends the programme for enabling Headteachers to address concerns they have received by situating sexuality and gender reassignment in a broader context, and to help parents understand that the initiative is about equality and diversity in all its forms [S4].

The protests **triggered a nationwide public debate** about LGBT teaching, and conflicts between teaching and children's spiritual beliefs. Over 70 schools using the *No Outsiders* programme were targeted by protestors [S7], culminating in a High Court injunction banning demonstrations at Anderton Park Primary School. The programme and protests were discussed in 600 news articles and op-eds – over half of which were by the Guardian/Observer, The Times/Sunday Times, and Independent.co.uk (**collective reach: 55 million readers**) – and the thousands of below-the-line comments and Tweets they prompted. It was featured in 27 television and radio broadcasts, including Newsnight (8/7/19) a dedicated Panorama episode (29/7/19) and Victoria Derbyshire (2/9/19). Derbyshire invited Simon Kidwell, another project participant and head of a school using the programme, to give an example lesson demonstrating how the programme teaches children about same-sex relationships [S7].

#### Impact on national political debate

The public spotlight focussed on *No Outsiders* forced a national political debate about teaching equality, particularly sexuality and gender reassignment, and how this should intersect with the proposed statutory Relationships and Sex Education.

**It stimulated public and political discussion about Government's support for schools.** 78 civic leaders wrote to the Secretary of State for Education stating that the nature and extent of organised opposition to *No Outsiders* reflected the lack of Government support for schools fulfilling their legal duties under the Equality Act [S8]. In a speech to launch Ofsted's Annual Report 2018/19, Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Ofsted, commended the efforts made by affected schools and expressed support for those on the frontline. According to her statement, although it is known that inequality is allowed to prosper in classrooms, "*few people are willing to tread in these sensitive areas*" [S6].

This criticism **highlighted ambiguity in Government RSE guidance**, prompting MPs to pressure the Government through letters, questions and debates in both Houses. In a debate over RSE proposals Liam Byrne MP pressed the Minister for School Standards for more prescriptive guidance, saying that the mediation needed in affected schools cannot be replicated in all other schools [S8]. Responding to "*unacceptable pressures on and indeed threats towards Headteachers*" at schools using *No Outsiders*, 50 MPs wrote to the Secretary of State for Education, pressuring him to provide absolute clarity over what is and is not compulsory. They criticised his statement that he "*strongly encourages*" discussion about "*all sorts of different families*," saying it contradicts the legal requirement for schools to teach about relationships [S9]. Emma Hardy MP asked how the Minister is countering the misinformation about relationships education that led to the protests, resulting in calls for clarification that LGBT-inclusive sex and relationship education is mandated by Government [S8]. A simultaneous Lords debate also exposed this ambiguity, arguing that the "*disgraceful reaction to ... No Outsiders ... [is] the result of the Government leaving schools, teachers, Headteachers and parents ill-prepared for the of the new subjects*" [S8]. The debates **prompted the Minister for School Standards to clarify parts of the regulations** to state that parents may withdraw their child from the sex education element, but that relationships teaching was compulsory [S8]. In his letter to the National Association of Headteachers he confirmed that "*What is taught, and how, is ultimately a decision for the school.*" [S9].

All English schools are now required to teach Relationships Education (Primary) or Relationships and Sex Education (Secondary), and in this way **all schools, their pupils and their families benefit from the political clarity driven by *No Outsiders*.**

#### Widespread commendation

The importance of the programme has been **recognised by the education sector**. Moffat was shortlisted for the Varkey Foundation's 2019 Global Teacher Prize, a \$1million award for outstanding contributions to the profession. They say "***No Outsiders equips educators with the knowledge and confidence to seed and nurture this at an early stage of children's education. In encouraging schools to see parents as essential stakeholders in***



*the programme, the principles of Andrew's No Outsiders programme permeate beyond the classroom and into the community" [S10].*

**Leading children's authors are delighted to see their books included in the programme. Pippa Goodhart** says "*Expert guidance from the No Outsider programme [gives teachers a] helpful and reassuring steer... I am delighted that it was selected as one of the recommended texts*" [S10]. **Rob Biddulph** says "*Children must be supported as early as possible to learn about themselves and how they might differ from others ... Not all children grow up in multicultural societies, and ... the books and the programme address that, and act as constructive resources that push children to be themselves, and to recognise that being different is normal, and something we must respect*" [S10]. **Nick Butterworth** says it is "*very gratifying to know that the No Outsiders programme uses these books to support children to learn about kindness and inclusivity*" [S10].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1.** Moffat, A (2017) *No Outsiders in Our School: Teaching the Equality Act in Primary Schools*. Abingdon: Routledge
- S2.** Number of schools/teachers trained
- S3.** Book sales data provided by Letterbox Library
- S4.** Testimonials from Local Authorities, and evidence of engagement by education organisations, schools, Local Authorities and youth groups
- S5.** Testimonials: Schools
- S6.** Ofsted reports and speeches
- S7.** Details of media coverage
- S8.** Hansard entries: [Commons 20/3/19](#), [Commons 16/7/19](#) [Lords 16/7/19](#)
- S9.** Letters between MPs, Damien Hinds, Nick Gibbs, NAHT and Civil Leaders
- S10.** Testimonials: Varkey Foundation, Pippa Goodhart, Rob Biddulph and Nick Butterworth