

# Foreword

The book arises from a long collaboration between Peter Kutnick and Peter Blatchford who first started working together in the mid 1990s. They both had a background in developmental social psychology. Peter Kutnick's previous research was on children's social and moral development within classroom contexts. Peter Blatchford's previous research was on peer relations between pupils at recess/break-time in schools and classroom factors, including teacher's expectancies and classroom interactions, affecting pupils' educational progress. They were both fascinated by the classroom as a social context for educational and social development. In their early meetings they began to develop a simple type of method—the classroom mapping method—as a way of describing the organization of the classroom. This method informed two projects, funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The first took place between 1997 and 1999 and used the mapping methodology to describe in a systematic way the grouping practices in primary schools in England. The second project followed immediately after (1999 to 2001) and provided a complementary description of grouping practices at secondary school level. Results from these two studies are summarized in Baines et al. (2003) and the work was consolidated in a special edition of the *International Journal of Educational Research*—on group work—which they co-edited in 2003. It was on the basis of these two projects that they then collaborated with Maurice Galton—one of the most prominent classroom researchers in the UK, and the director of the well known ORACLE studies (e.g., Galton et al. 1980)—on a successful bid to the ESRC's Teaching and Learning Research Project (TLRP). This body handled the largest Government investment in educational research ever seen in the UK, and the SPRinG project, as it came to be called, was one of the largest empirical research projects they funded and probably the largest single project on group work that has been conducted worldwide. It ran from 2001 to 2004 and there were a number of allied and extension projects thereafter. The SPRinG project therefore brought together three academics with a long standing interest in the classroom and grouping practices and their key aspiration with the SPRinG project, put boldly, was to put collaborative group work on the map, in the UK at least. It is this project which is the central source of data in this book.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Galton directed the KS3 stage of the project in Cambridge, i.e., over the first three years of secondary school. This book concentrates just on primary schools but readers can find out about Maurice's work in Galton, Steward, Hargreaves, Pell and Page (2009).



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Effective Group Work in Primary School Classrooms

The SPRinG Approach

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