

Interactive comment on “School students from all backgrounds can do physics research: On the accessibility and equity of the PRiSE approach to independent research projects” by Martin O. Archer

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This is a valuable and well-written submission. It tackles an important issue and makes good links with the existing literature; the analysis is excellent and the findings add considerably to what is already known in the published literature. There is a degree of self-congratulation in the comparisons with other programmes – but the comparisons are very interesting!

1. I have one major comment. It is a huge pity that “for ethical reasons we did not collect

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any protected characteristics (such as gender or race) or sensitive information (such as socio-economic background) from the students involved” (lines 67-68). Such data are not infrequently collected by educational researchers (indeed, they are collected by the DfE and available in the NPD) and I note the paragraph on gender that spans pages 7 and 8 (some might object to identifying gender in this way, though I am less of a purist). As the author is well aware, this means that all the conclusions made can only be made at school rather than individual student level. This, I am afraid, is not a trivial point. It is perfectly possible that the students who participate in these projects are far from representative of their schools. I think this should be made much clearer in the submission – in my view even the “School students from all backgrounds can do physics research” in the title is misleading and needs changed.

2. I suspect the “issue” with IRIS is not in “their targeting” (line 155) but which schools respond to its offer.

3. I think it would be worth discussing briefly whether maximising retention of schools across years is always a good.

4. Was there any ethical clearance for the research element of the work?

5. With reference to the qualitative data, there is a clear account of thematic analysis but then no evidence that this was actually undertaken. What these were identified? Can we have some quotations related to such themes?

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