

**13th EBL NBO Officers' Seminar**

**Youth, Schools & Mindsport Education**

Prof Samantha Punch, Marcus Scotney & Dr Marina Milosheva

BAMSA  
University of Stirling, UK

European Bridge League

2026 - Utrecht

Bridge: A MindSport For All  
Connects People, Challenges Minds

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**Bridging Minds**  
Dynamics & Interactions  
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- Research outputs & reports
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[www.bridgemindsport.org](http://www.bridgemindsport.org)

Teaching Resources for Schools and Youth Bridge

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## Bridging Schools Project

**Exploring the benefits  
and barriers of youth  
and school bridge**

Scotland, England,  
Norway & USA

Young people (11-30 years),  
parents, bridge/schoolteachers








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## Childrens' views

Each time you play, you're really challenging yourself to try to solve difficult problems

The fact it's a global game is really cool. Like you can meet people from most countries

For me, it's given me a lot of confidence.



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### Partnership

It's a deep strategic game where you get to try and solve a problem with another person. So you also have to manage the emotional ups and downs of trying to do that.



It's helped me to become like a more patient person

Teamwork, being able to bond with a partner, being able to forgive each other


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### Positives

- Play with friends & family
- Become smarter
- Collaborate in a team
- Get better at bridge
- Learn a new game
- Have fun
- Teach others how to play
- Winning!

### Negatives

- Requires concentration
- There is pressure to perform
- It takes a long time to learn and become good
- There are a lot of rules in bridge
- Need to have patience and wait for others to play their hand
- Losing!



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### Young people's suggestions

Being allowed to make mistakes and try things out

Bridge should not feel like another class

Spend more time playing and less time talking

I feel like a lot of us are **overwhelmed** by the different amounts of plays there are



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### The views of school staff

Need to promote bridge so students, parents, teachers know what it is	Need chaperones for trips	Not able to grow club membership beyond core numbers (5-10 students)
Many of the children in the after-school bridge clubs also attend chess clubs: try not to double schedule clubs	Very supportive, see the value in it: critical thinking, strategy	Bridge helps with school tasks requiring teamwork (presentations, other sports) and planning skills (e.g. going to college)

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## THE SOCIOLOGY OF BRIDGE: SPORT RECOGNITION FOR MIND SPORTS

The game of contract bridge, as we know it today, originated in the 20th century – but what lies ahead for bridge as a mind sport? Professor Samantha Punch, the academic behind "Bridge: A MindSport For All", provides the answer

Bridge is a trick-taking card game played in partnership that has captured the hearts of hundreds of millions of players worldwide. Top players describe it as a "passion" and an "addictive rush." It involves a very low level of chance and offers a new puzzle to solve every 75 minutes (the time spent per deal in tournament games). Yet bridge and other mind sports like chess have not gained widespread recognition as sports, and as such, do not stand on an equal footing with traditional sports.

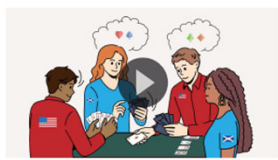
What can be done to further popularise and reinvigorate the once-favourite pastime of households in the 1930s and transform bridge into a global phenomenon? That is what the *Bridge: A MindSport For All* organisation, based at the University of Stirling, explores through its diverse portfolio of research projects.



**"Bridge: A MindSport For All"**  
Bridge: A MindSport For All (BAMSA) was established in 2016 to explore a new and innovative field of study called "the sociology of bridge." Sociology investigates the constituent parts of societies, such as institutions and communities, and the relationships between them. While this discipline has been previously applied to the study of

sports and leisure, it has not been extended to the study of the bridge as a mind sport. For this reason, Prof Samantha Punch at the University of Stirling spearheaded the movement to understand different aspects of bridge, including [cultural studies](#), [partnership](#), [professionalisation](#), [identity](#) and [gender](#).

The BAMSA campaign involved the endorsement of international bridge organisations such as the [World Bridge Federation](#), the [American Contract Bridge League Educational Foundation](#), and the [European Bridge League](#). It led to the formation of a network of research associates, bridge stakeholders, and policymakers from all over the world. To date, BAMSA's work has resulted in the development of [high-quality research projects](#), driven by one key goal: to ensure that everyone can benefit from learning and playing bridge and that this fascinating game will continue to thrive.



The partnership mindsport. Developing transferable skills

### The benefits of bridge

BAMSA's research has uncovered many important facets of bridge, and evidenced the benefits of mind sports. At a fundamental level, bridge is a form of serious leisure that evokes a sense of [pursuit, competition, and flow](#). In examining the game in more detail, Prof Punch and Dr Snellgrove found that bridge fosters a host of life skills in players. Their [recent study](#) indicates that interpersonal and life skills are developed and sharpened through strategic interaction at the bridge table. Players develop key abilities such as anticipating their opponent's moves while strategically planning their own moves, responding to the dynamic nature of the game and adapting their strategies accordingly, maintaining composure and recovering from mistakes, and effectively communicating with their bridge partners to develop routines and shared understandings.

These soft skills are invaluable not only in the context of bridge playing but also in everyday life. Indeed, in a [2023 study](#) that compared 7,000 bridge players with 10,000 non-bridge players, BAMSA found that bridge players are more likely than non-bridge players to be optimistic about their future and to be satisfied with the way their lives have turned out. The bridge players also noted that bridge improves their concentration, memory, sociability and wellbeing.

BAMSA's latest research on the [physicality of bridge](#) challenges the notion that bridge and mind sports are not sports. This BAMSA evidence paints a compelling picture: through their participation in mind sports, bridge players hone their resilience, quick decision-making, and emotional intelligence. Players excel not only at bridge but also in their professional and social lives.



to bridge a sport. Unveiling the rigor behind the game

### Upholding in a new generation of mind sports players

To raise the profile of mind sports and introduce bridge to a new generation of players, BAMSA recently launched its "Bridge, Youth, and MindSport Education" project. This study explores the factors that help and hinder young people's bridge learning in primary and secondary schools in Europe and North America.

The incorporation of bridge into the school curriculum is promising. The explosion of young people's sports participation – in the form of esports – has already changed our understanding of "sport," and bridge is set to usher in a similar sports renaissance. That is because bridge combines two tried-and-tested elements crucial to the proliferation of popular sports: a strategic element and a social element. Like chess, bridge is intensely intellectual, like esports, bridge is highly social.

The collaborative efforts of schools, bridge organisations, policymakers, and the [International Mind Sports Association](#) will be fundamental to developing an international mind sports and bridge agenda for youth.

An important part of this agenda will be applying the benefits of bridge and mind sports education to enhance the school curriculum. Youth bridge can offer solutions to many of the current challenges faced by schools related to numeracy, inclusion, social connection, mental health, and wellbeing.

[Click here](#) to view more.

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Bridge: A MindSport For All  
Forming Partners, Changing Minds

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## What kind of evidence-based resources might be useful?

- Poster
- Leaflet
- One page summary
- Video / Animation
- Policy briefing
- What else?



## What is Bridge?

Bridge is a fun card game that combines teamwork, strategy and skill!  
You play with four people in two teams, using a standard deck of 52 playing cards.  
**A partnership mindsport:** Thinking ahead, working with a partner, making smart decisions.

## How do you play?

### Bidding

You describe your cards to your partner to set the target and decide which cards will be the most powerful. You balance risk and reward to achieve the best possible result.

### Playing the cards

Each player chooses a card to play and the highest card wins. You compare with players holding the same cards as you, using your skills to beat them.

## Why play Bridge? Fun – Free – Fantastic!

- Build friendships with partners
- Reason through 'card puzzles'
- Improve your memory
- Develop concentration
- Generate exciting new strategies
- Enjoy new activity!

## What if I've never played a card game before?

No worries! You don't need any experience to start learning bridge. The basics are easy to pick up, and there are lots of ways to practise with friends or online.

## How can I start?

- Watch our Easy Tutorials to see Bridge in action [bridgemindsport.org/school-and-youth-bridge/](http://bridgemindsport.org/school-and-youth-bridge/)
- Try the Tricky Bridge App [trickybridge.com/](http://trickybridge.com/)
- Contact us for a free Bridge Taster Session: [bamsa@stir.ac.uk](mailto:bamsa@stir.ac.uk)



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### Why we like bridge?



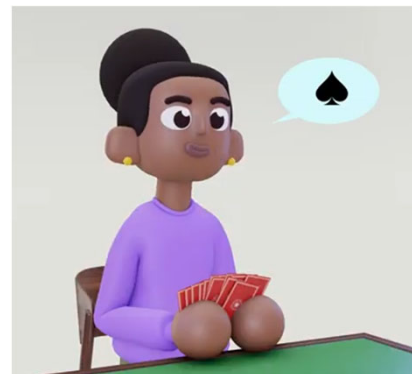
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### Recommendations based on early findings

- Build an **evidence base** of the educational benefits of bridge (BAMSA is on the case!)
- Align bridge with **educational frameworks** and forge school partnerships
- Build **structured pathways** from school clubs to national representation
- Train and recruit school/youth **volunteers** in a sustainable manner
- Connect experienced players with youth through **mentorship programmes**



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### Further (challenging) Recommendations

- Create standardised, **age-appropriate teaching materials**
- Set up **transition support programmes** between educational stages
- Establish thriving **university bridge societies** and competitions
- Engage diverse communities through **intergenerational** initiatives
- Develop **youth-friendly digital platforms** and gaming interfaces



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### Link bridge to educational priorities:

- Health and well-being
- Numeracy
- Literacy

### Bridge for school teachers:

- Teacher training as professional development
- Game-based learning (animations)

### Train trainee school teachers:

- Bridge demonstrations for future teachers at the University



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### Mapping Play as Pedagogy: Student Teachers' Encounters with Le Petit Bridge

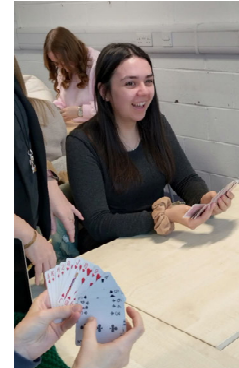
*Masters Dissertation - Marcus Scotney, PhD Researcher*

How student teachers encounter and interpret Le Petit Bridge

How play-based tools are used in teacher education

#### Relevance to the Bridge Community

- How future teachers make sense of bridge as a learning tool
- How bridge might be introduced through teacher education
- Supports the development of resources for trainee teachers



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### A Stakeholder Approach to the Pedagogical Possibilities of the Mindsport Bridge

3-year PhD Project

Investigating how bridge could be integrated within the school curriculum

- Its educational potential for critical thinking, numeracy, problem-solving and emotional well-being
- How bridge partnership skills support social and collaborative learning

#### Relevance to the Bridge Community

- Strengthen the evidence-base by providing research-led insights into how bridge is experienced in educational settings
- Co-development of practical resources and guidance with the WBF and EBL for schools and clubs worldwide

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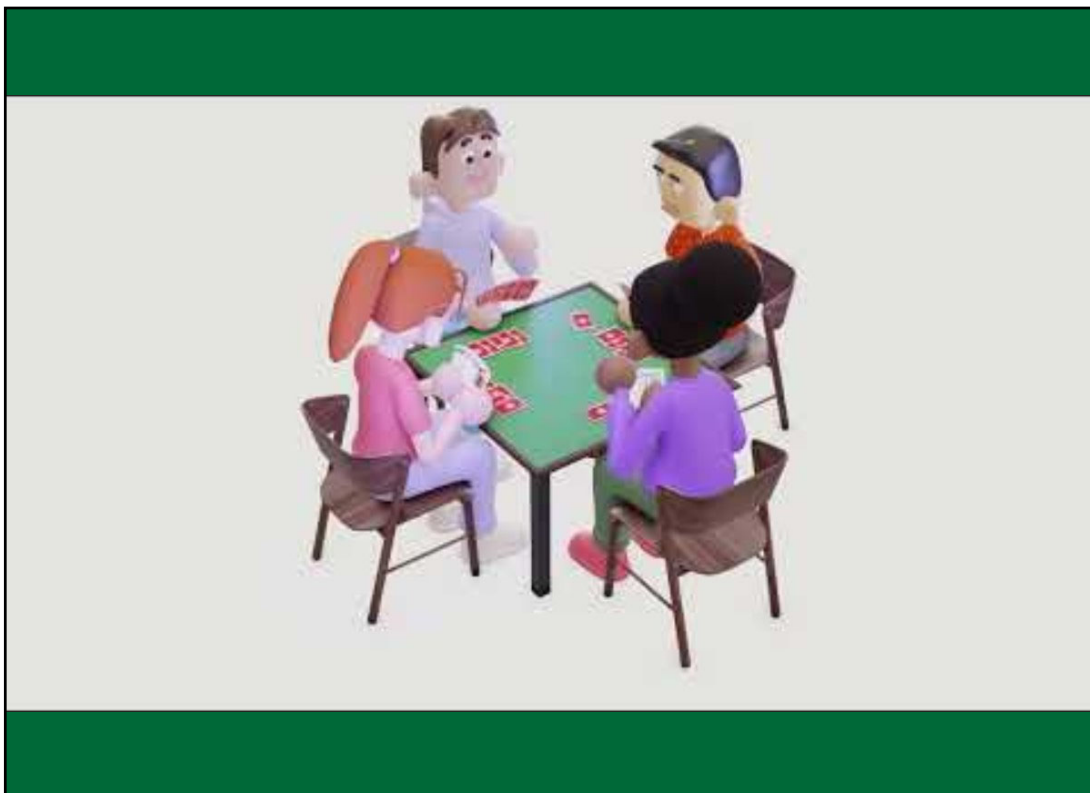
## BAMSA Learning & Teaching hub

- Aim: Support for all aspects of **teaching children and youth**
- Ten animated tutorials for 8-12 year olds
- Teaching tips for volunteers & lesson plans for school teachers
- Promotional (evidence-based) materials in due course
- Feedback please

To access these resources, please visit:

<https://bridgemindsport.org/school-and-youth-bridge/>

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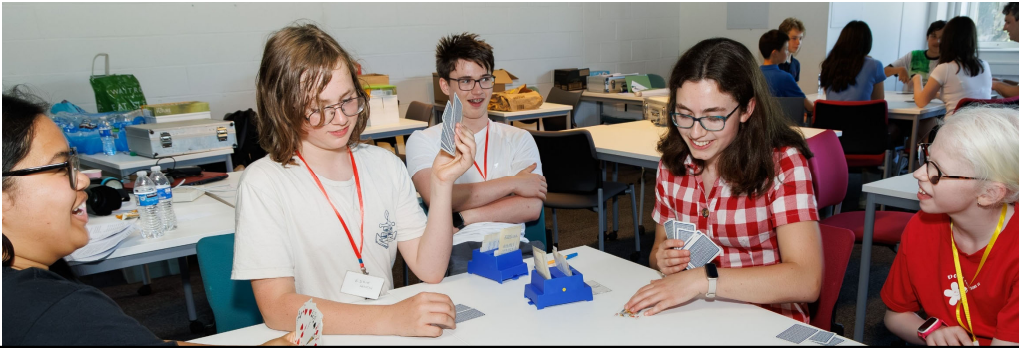


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### International Youth Bridge Survey

- Open to ages 8-31, all countries and skill levels
- To inform youth bridge development
- We need your help to get over 1000 responses!

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/stirling/youth-bridge>



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### Reports on Youth Bridge

Milosheva, M. and Punch, S. (2025) [The Landscape of Youth Bridge in Scotland: Requirements, barriers, and success strategies of school bridge implementation](#), BAMSA Report: Stirling University

Milosheva, M. and Punch, S. (2025) [Insights and Outcomes from the inaugural Scottish Youth Bridge Summer Camp](#): A Scottish Bridge Union and BAMSA Collaboration, BAMSA Report: University of Stirling.

Milosheva, M. and Punch, S. (2025) ['The Bridge Revolution: Mindsports Reshape Scotland's Educational Landscape'](#), Open Access Government.

Milosheva, M., Punch, S. and Harding, M. (2024) [Norwegian Pupils' Attitudes towards Bridge and Mindsport Education](#), BAMSA Report: University of Stirling.

Milosheva, M. and Punch, S. (2024) [Youth Bridge in the UK: A scoping study of young people's experiences of learning bridge and bridge teachers' approaches to teaching bridge](#), BAMSA Report: University of Stirling.

Rushworth, M. (2024) [Denmark Good Practice Guide: Teaching bridge to youth in schools and clubs](#), BAMSA Report: University of Stirling.

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## Thank you!

<https://bridgemindsport.org/home/research/bridging-schools/>

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