



Queensmill School

Research & Development Newsletter

Welcome & Update from the R&D board

Welcome to the 2015 summer term edition of the Queensmill Research and Development (R&D) newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to keep staff and parents up to date with R&D activities in school and with Autism research in general. This year, each newsletter has focussed on a particular theme. In the autumn term we summarised research findings on sleep issues and the last edition was on special interests. In this edition we continue with the subject of special interests with a summary of the responses of parents and staff to the special interest survey.

This year the R&D Board has also initiated two new activities. These were a termly Journal Club for staff and a research focussed group for parents. The subject of each meeting has tied in with the theme of the newsletter that term to give an opportunity for participants to explore the subject in more depth. The feedback received from parents and staff who have attended both groups has been very positive.



As well as managing the external research projects, the R&D Board has also been active conducting school based research and professional development activities. Along with the special Interests project, a survey was conducted with staff on the new school building, an article was sent for publication on the work of

our inclusion units and more recently teachers examined how SCERTS might be more embedded across the school. None of this work would be possible without the commitment and collaboration of staff and parents. All members of the R&D Board would like to take this opportunity to thank staff and parents for their continued support of R&D activities.

It was heartening to have the research and development work in school recognised by the National Autistic Society (NAS) as a result of their validation visit this year and to be nominated for a NAS award. However, going into next year, we are mindful that addressing the impact of our

Parents Views on the Newsletter

Dear Parents,

We would love to hear your views about the newsletter, parent research group, R&D page on the school website and any related R&D issues. If you have time to send a couple of lines please do email Catherine (our R&D consultant) on c.carroll@ioe.ac.uk.

Successful Funding Bid

The Research & Development Board are very pleased to announce that we have been successful in an application for a research grant from the Baily Thomas Charitable Fund who aid research into those affected by learning disability. The money we receive will go towards trialling a new programme to support families with their child's sleep difficulties. This project will begin next academic year and will involve a parent workshop, assessment of the child's sleep habits, sleep plan and some home visits. Due to the time intensive nature of the project, it will only be possible to include a small number of families. Those families involved will need to fulfil a specified criteria relating to the impact of their child's sleep problems and will need to commit to trying out the strategies and resources recommended as part of the plan. Please email Caroline on cbulmer.205@lgflmail.org if you would like more information about this project and we will get in touch as soon as we can provide this.

Enjoy the newsletter & Have a great summer from the R&D board!

Current Research and Development Projects at Queensmill

E-mentoring

This project, which started in January led by researchers at UCL Institute of Education, supports teachers to trial new technologies with their students. Three of our teachers have been involved with this project and have identified a piece of technology to trial, for example an iPad app to support with sequencing or transitions. These teachers are now starting to mentor other staff members by sharing what has gone well, offering advice and ideas for introducing new technology in the classroom. This project has introduced both staff and students to a range of new technology products that can be beneficial for individuals with Autism and support their independence and learning. These include:

> **Dragon Naturally Speaking Software:** This voice recognition dictation software types words into a document that are spoken into the microphone and provides an alternative way for students to complete and record their work. The product is suitable for students with Autism who have clear speech and at least basic reading skills. It is of particular benefit to those who have difficulties with handwriting and fine motor control. For more information, visit: www.nuance.co.uk/dragon

> **Kinems:** This programme provides interactive learning games for students with difficulties such as Autism using a camera that picks up hand movements and body gestures. It is reported to support the development of children's hand-eye coordination, sequencing and problem solving skills as well as their attention and short-term memory. For more information, visit: www.kinems.com

> **Choiceworks:** This app provides visual schedules, emotions visuals and strategies for managing emotions as well as behaviour support, choose boards and waiting visuals. For example, individualised visuals can be designed for a child to support them with waiting for a preferred activity which can include a countdown timer and ideas of what they can do whilst waiting. For details, visit: www.beevisual.com

> **Bob books:** An early reading app for children.

For details visit: www.bobbooks.com/reading-magic-1



Parents - if you are interested in trying any new technologies with your child, it is advised that you discuss this with school staff first. Many of the technologies discussed would not be suitable for all young people with Autism and these can often be very expensive. The school has access to a range of technologies which can be trialled in the school setting initially prior to being purchased for home.

Captioning

The students at Q4 have been continuing to trial real-time captioning technology this term as part of a University of Melbourne research project in association with Ai-Media. The technology provides summarised text of what the teacher is saying and this is being used to support students to access some of their mainstream inclusion lessons. The transcript of the lesson can be read as the teacher speaks and can also be checked back by students if they missed anything and to review the topics covered after the lesson. This project will finish in July and a summary of research findings will be shared in the newsletter as soon as this is available.

Prospective memory

Prospective memory is the ability to carry out a planned action at the appropriate moment in response to a specific cue or event. Impairments in prospective memory can reduce an individual's ability to live independently. Researchers from the University of Kent believe that difficulties with this type of memory may contribute to problems that children with Autism have with planning and organisation. This research project which is currently taking place across different schools including some students from Rhinos class at Fulham Primary Queensmill Unit, aims to gain a better understanding of this ability in children with Autism. The researchers hope that their results will be translated to provide valuable information to teachers about, for example, how to structure the classroom environment so as to provide relevant support and cues to prospective memory to support students' independence.

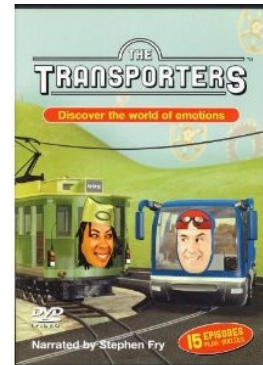


Autism Research Digest: Special Interests

Advertisement for an Autism and Emotions study

The Institute of Child Health, UCL and the Autism Research Centre, University of Cambridge invites your child to partake in a research project. The purpose of this project is to examine the effectiveness of a socio-emotional intervention designed to teach children with Autism Spectrum Condition about emotion recognition through an entertaining animation series 'The Transporters'. To take part in the project you will need to have access to a DVD player attached to a TV or personal computer. Your child would need to commit to watching 1-3 episodes of 'The Transporters' per day over 10 weeks. You and your child's travel expenses will be covered for your visits to our research centre and your child will receive a copy of 'The Transporters' to own. The study will involve 2 assessment meetings. In these meetings you will fill out some questionnaires, and a few cognitive and social assessments and computer tasks will be administered to your child. We will ask you come into our research centre in Central London for these assessments. The whole assessment will last about 2 hours. We are looking for children aged 4-8 years to take part in this research project.

To register your interest in taking part and to find out more details about the project, contact Helen O'Reilly, on 07902409446 or heo24@medschl.cam.ac.uk.



The National Autism Project is a new initiative supported by The Shirley Foundation. Its aim is to provide authoritative recommendations on autism research and practice which have demonstrable effectiveness in benefiting autistic people and their communities. It will raise awareness at government level of how increased UK investment in such research and practice will benefit not only those with ASD but society as a whole through the contributions from autistic people to the UK economy and through best use of resources. By these means the National Autism Project intends to increase substantially the proportion of national resource devoted to research and intervention in the field of ASD.

To find out more about the National Autism Project, visit: nationalautismproject.org.uk

Special Interests Research at Queensmill: What did we find out?

Questionnaires were sent out to staff and all parents in March to gain information about students' special interests. Thank you for filling these in, the information provided was extremely helpful to us. The findings are summarised below:

Comparisons between parents and staff:

- Parents identified children as having more 'main' special interests than staff with the level of agreement between parents and staff on each category being very low.
- In many categories the identification of a main interest was also different, particularly in the categories of food and drink, creative arts, strong attachment to an item, animals and sports.
- Parents experienced more difficulties and greater interference with special interests to everyday life, as well as greater resistance when the special interest was withdrawn.

Findings from the staff only survey showed:

- Staff reported boys had more special interests than girls.
- Secondary school pupils had more special interests than primary school pupils.
- Boys were more likely to experience greater levels of interference and resistance than girls.
- Secondary pupils were more likely to experience difficulties with interference than primary pupils.

Next steps: We are now completing observations in class to look at the impact of special interests on engagement in learning. We will share the results of this stage of the project once it is completed.