

# Issue 16

Spring 2019

Queensmill School

## Research and Development Board Newsletter



Welcome to the Spring edition of Queensmill's R&D Board newsletter.

For this edition we'd like to reflect on the importance of the R&D Board in Queensmill School and showcase our most recent celebration evening. Queensmill School has a national reputation for its commitment to developing evidence informed practice in school and contributing to research more widely that seeks to support children and young people with autism to thrive in education. We undertake this commitment through the strategic work of our Research and Development Board, our partnerships with parents, external research collaborators and most importantly by the dedication of our staff to continuously develop their learning and practice through post-graduate study.

### The Importance of Research in Schools

A research-engaged school is one that investigates key issues relating to teaching and learning. In the case of Queensmill School, this also extends to autism-specific research (for example sleep in autism, speech therapy and drama and joint attention, to name a few). Furthermore, a research-engaged school turns data and experience into knowledge and translates that as evidence for everyday practice.

Conducting research in school can have profound impact in a number of ways:

- Confidence in teaching method – finding effective ways to help teachers understand the implications of research/ use research to better inform teaching practice.
- Research helps to build knowledge and more efficient learning.
- Evidence of impact of a particular approach or program.

### Why become a research engaged school?

Becoming a research-engaged school has the potential to contribute towards improvement in school practice and contribute to a school's self evaluation. The research helps to build knowledge of the pupils' needs and in regards to Queensmill School's dedication to research, it contributes towards autism as a whole.

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On the 14th March, Queensmill hosted more than 70 guests to the launch of the publication *School-Based Interventions and Autism: Case studies of staff research at Queensmill School*. The evening was also an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of all our colleagues (internally and externally), pupils and parents who support Queensmill's research and development activities. The publication includes case studies on ten different areas of investigation completed by Queensmill staff over the past four years. The topics in the publication include: elopement; sleep; Post-16; yoga; inclusion in mainstream; selective eating; assistive technology; environmental barriers and joint attention.

The evening began with a presentation of the work of the Research and Development Board. Dr Catherine Carroll provided an overview of the national wider context of research in schools, along with an explanation of how the Board operates. There were two positive messages from this presentation. Firstly, over the past twenty years, school practitioners have played an increasing role in contributing to research agendas nationally, whether that be in autism and/or inclusion more broadly. Secondly, that many practitioners in special and mainstream schools are active in bridging the gap from research to practice and from practice to research.

Catherine was followed by different members of the Board describing some of their research activities including:

- Aymeline Bel (class teacher) on her dissertation research on drama based approaches to teaching.
- Linda Dolben (parent representative) on how she has observed the nature of research change at Queensmill over the past few years and her involvement with the Medical Passport Project at Kings College London University.
- Elise Robinson (drama teacher) on the drama collaboration with Kelly Hunter and the Flute Theatre.
- Caroline Bulmer (Assistant Head teacher) on the importance of senior leadership support to ensure that the Board adopts a strategic and sustained approach to research.
- Andy Nowak (deputy Head) on Queensmill's collaboration in Sierra Leone setting up Browne-Penn school. Offering support with raising awareness, training staff and engaging with local and national government, all with the goal of improving the plight of marginalised, autistic young people.

Queensmill is fortunate to collaborate with a number of external research teams and many of them came to the evening to give a presentation on their work and later meet with guests to discuss their research projects in more depth. During the evening we heard presentations on the research of:

- the Paediatric Autism Communication Trial – Generalised (PACT-G) from Kings College London.
- the E-learning Mentor project from Dr Maria Kambouri at UCL Institute of Education.
- drama project with UCL on use of sensors and drama to understand engagement in young people with autism.

In addition, some of our other external collaborators presented research posters on the work of:

- the different projects at the Lifespan Learning and Sleep Lab from UCL Institute of Education.
- the DE-ENIGMA project at UCL Centre for Autism Education.
- the use of 'Medical Passports' in special schools from Kings College London.

Thank you to all the guests who attended and the presenters for a stimulating evening.

A copy of the Queensmill case study publication can be found on the school website.

