Issue 14

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Queensmill School

Research and Development Board Newsletter

Welcome to the Summer Edition of Queensmill's R&D board newsletter.

As the academic year comes to an end, we wanted to reflect on some of the research highlights of the year at Queensmill and look ahead to some of our plans for the autumn term.

Our internal R&D activities continue to expand and make an important contribution to the education of our students and their families. At the start of the year our very own Early Years middle manager, Aymeline Bel, began her project looking at how the use of drama strategies promotes joint attention skills in pupils on the spectrum. In the summer term, teaching assistant, Artemis Chompi started her dissertation project, assessing how well children and adolescents with Autism understand the emotions expressed by others in comparison to their typical developing peers.

Queensmill greatly values the collaborations we hold with external research partners. You can read more about some of these activities in this newsletter. We would like to thank the members of the Board for their hard work and commitment this year; furthermore, to all the pupils, parents and members of staff for their involvement in the research projects.

OPEN CALL
PARENT REPRESENTATIVE
FOR
R&D BOARD

The research board are looking for parent representatives to join the research and development board for the new academic year. Parent's voice and family perspectives are very important to the board. So, what does this involve?

6 x 1 hour meeting for the whole year (2 every term)

If you'd like to join us or have any questions regarding the post please email:

esher4.205@lgflmail.org

Have a lovely summer break!

Eleonora Sher
R&D Board Co-ordinator

The role of research in schools

Queensmill School has an established tradition and commitment to research and development (R&D), including the leadership of R&D for the West London Teaching Alliance and membership of the Pan London Autism Schools Network-Research (PLASN-R); a collaboration of senior school leaders and university researchers who together generate ideas for the design, implementation and dissemination of research projects.

Research teams benefit from diverse membership, bringing enthusiasm, expertise and fresh insights. Therefore the membership of the Board includes our R&D Coordinator, a class teacher, a teaching assistant, one parent representative, a research assistant and an external R&D university consultant. The board publishes a termly newsletter for parents and staff to keep them up to date with research activities at school and to provide a summary of recent studies published in research journals. In addition, we publish research summaries of the projects conducted at Queensmill.

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 a school can support practice in school as well as contribute to the wider research body of knowledge and understanding. Such activities can help in building confidence in teaching methods and evaluate the impact of a particular approach or programme. At Queensmill, conducting research always helps to increase our knowledge and understand of how to better support our pupils.

To find out more about research and development at Queensmill visit: www.queensmillschool.com/Research-and-Development

Ongoing Yoga sessions at Queensmill School after a successful research project.

Research Summaries

This research project looked at whether PACT-G therapy, a social communication therapy for children with autism, helps improve autism symptoms.

15 Queensmill students and their families took part in the PACT-G project this year. It involved three settings (clinic assessment, home and education) and before, during and after interventions. Assessments took place at 'baseline' to the trial, at the 6 month midpoint and the 11 month endpoint.
During the sessions, the researcher made a detailed assessment of the student's social and communication abilities, their level of language, and their general level of learning ability.

Through the questionnaires and interviews they gathered detailed information about the student's development and current skills at home, the families experiences and understanding of their child's skills and difficulties and what effect these may have had on their lives.

Short videos of the student's and parents playing together were filmed in order to look at the way they communicated and interacted with each other.

The project continues to run till the end of the year, so findings will be published in the new year.

Paediatric Autism Communication Trial - Generalised (PACT-G)

The voice of autistic children has been traditionally excluded from family research in autism. This research gave children with autism the opportunity to share their experience growing up with a typically developing sibling.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to allow the researcher to explore their answers more deeply. Asking a set of 3 - 4 open questions to share and describe their personal feelings and thoughts about the siblings' experience.

Siblings experience

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of leaders in special schools in managing change and securing school improvement.

The researcher interviewed 6 senior members of staff and observed the way in which these leaders worked during senior, middle or team meetings.

This project was a great opportunity to reflect on the role of the leadership team, securing school improvement and supporting the management of change.

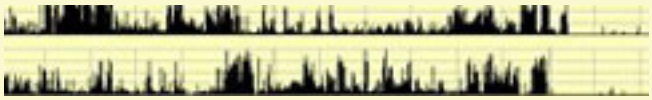
Leadership in SEN

For further details about any of the research projects or information in this newsletter, ideas or contributions for our next issues, please contact Eleonora Sher, R&D Coordinator on esher4.205@lgflmaill.org

Recent studies suggest that many teenagers experience sleep problems. This study gathered information about teens' sleep practises. Looking at what factors might pose a positive or negative influence on sleep. The children involved wore an Actiwatch which measured their sleep/wake patterns through movement using an accelerometer set in the small device; revealing information about the child's sleep duration and sleep quality.

The parents were asked to complete a sleep diary for 7 days and nights, with simple questions around their child's sleep, anxiety, mood and behaviour.

The researcher visited Queensmill School to carry out a visual geometric design test with one missing piece. The child was then given choices to pick from and fill in the missing piece. Furthermore, the child took photos during the week of their bedroom, activities or items that help them sleep, activities or items that keep them awake and any photos that represent what they think of sleep etc.



Sleep in adolescents

The use of technology in schools has evolved over time. The purpose of this research project was to see how some technologies can be used as tools in class and how these tools may be beneficial for students with special educational needs. In this case, students received trained on the use of a Speech Recognition Software, called Dragon Naturally Speaking.

The first aim of the study was to find out whether this software can yield better quality outcomes in the writing skills of children than the traditional handwriting and to what extent. Moreover, they explored whether a child found writing a more interesting task when using Dragon and if there was an improvement in their self-esteem and social skills. Their last aim was to explore the opportunity to use this software as a tool in the class and include it in the learning procedure.

Dragon Naturally Speaking

This project looked at the use of Kinect learning games (Kinems) to enhance speech and language development in autistic children. Based on the students targets and the individual needs of a child, Kinems helps you to select the appropriate games.

There were 4 phases to the project: a formal speech and language assessment to determine individual goals and tailor the intervention; a Kinems games familiarisation phase; an intervention phase (2 x 30 mins sessions per week for 5 months) and a final assessment to obtain quantitative feedback on their progress.

Kinems learning games

Image courtesy of Kinems