

# Recreation Road Infant School

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NFER Research-Engaged School

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## Section 1: Values, Leadership and Culture:

Our school puts values-led education at the heart of its ethos and within this is very firmly a statement on professionally developing staff. This has been achieved through staff taking part in research-based projects to enhance teaching and learning and leadership. Our CPD programme enables a dialogic approach where issues are discussed and researched thoroughly and staff have opportunities to read around an area as well as undertake action research projects. Our performance management targets include one on undertaking action research to support the improvement and development of the school. This approach was identified as being a great contributor to our school's success by Ofsted (May 09) which gave an overall Outstanding judgement: "Improvement planning is underpinned by a determination to research and implement the very best educational practice" and "Exemplary leadership from the headteacher has established a crystal clear vision and ethos, firmly underpinned by strong principals and extensive academic research and first-hand experiences"

Time is given to staff to undertake research and they are well supported through purchase of resources and support and active interest from leadership team and Governors.

Outcomes from research are shared with Governors in order to promote good practice and contribute to the school evaluation cycle. Links are made on our website to other sites that contain some of the research undertaken

([www.mantleoftheexpert.com](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com) and [www.d4lc.org.uk](http://www.d4lc.org.uk))



Throughout our school all learners are encouraged to be reflective about their own learning and pupils are supported through this through development of language to describe learning- Learner Values. Our enquiry-based curriculum acknowledges the importance of developing enquiry skills to further understanding and again resources have been created by staff to aid areas such as questioning: Questions, Questions, Questions ([www.mantleoftheexpert.com](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com))

Staff develop enquiry questions alongside the pupils and use mantle of the expert and process drama to investigate thinking further. Our curriculum development has come very much from research and on-going enquiry. Staff have undertaken action research to deepen their own knowledge of issues as well as providing information and expertise to share with other colleagues: all the while improving the quality of teaching and learning within the school. Recent projects have included Research around a maths resource Numicon, 3-G assessment models in practice (based on work of Professor Mary James Inst of Ed), school based work on Forest Schools, International research on Sustainable schools and work supported through National Drama

Time is allocated for dialogic work and for action research both being built into the CPD programme of the school and by providing release time. Support is given through continuing dialogue about such projects, by praise and recognition of work and by promoting opportunities for accreditation. Research work is shared with other establishments and with a wider both local, national and international audience. Enthusiasm for projects and outcomes is clear as are curriculum developments stemming from research undertaken. Displays promote written papers or links to such work.

## Section 2 – Support Systems

We regularly have CPD days based around our research areas eg Drama for Learning and Creativity, Assessment for Learning, Enquiry-Based Curriculum. These are complemented by weekly CPD sessions to explore ideas more thoroughly and to allow staff to trial areas of development and then to report back to the whole school team about their effectiveness. We hold Teaching and Learning Reviews which allow year group teams to present their findings and to share good practice as well as engage with discussion around action planning and next steps. We have also been actively involved in two Primary Learning networks which allow colleagues to work together across different schools. Conferences are attended regularly and staff have also been involved in delivering workshop sessions at several conferences both locally and nationwide. Our development path is currently taking us into a more international route too through work supported by

NCSL International Leadership Learning Programme. Staff have access to IT support and a growing library of resources such as camcorders, digital cameras and dictaphones.

To support our work we have worked with organisations such as NCSL, D4LC/National Drama, Brighton University, Warwick University and London Institute as well as lead practitioners from both Norfolk and Essex. We are currently involved in two regional projects looking at using IDP materials and developing high quality CPD. Whilst in school staff work often in small teams so that they can support each other.

In order to develop a more thorough understanding of current research staff use a range of websites eg [www.mantleoftheexpert.com](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com), National Drama and Teachernet to access research from a wide range of practitioners. Staff have linked with Teacher Learning academy and also read articles and books from a range of academics and practitioners. This is shared as part of our staff newsletter.

### Section 3 Research Activity

Research both informs and is driven by our school improvement and development plan. Projects are established with clear timescales and outcomes and with a core thread of our school aims and values linking projects. Our CPD programme is firmly linked to both our School Improvement and Development Plan and Performance Management this allows a whole school perspective to take place even within smaller scale projects. Our action research approach allows a range of both small and larger scale projects to take place. We have been involved in larger scale Post Graduate Research undertaken by students at UEA where we have had to ensure ethical practice had been agreed and respected.

See example of Research Project (3.3)

### Section 4 Impact

All of our research projects findings are shared within school and Governing Body meetings and inform decisions about funding, resource allocation and curriculum development. Staff share findings both informally through staff meetings as well as publishing articles some of which have been published. Delivery at conferences also provides an opportunity to share findings.

Our work with D4LC, several pieces of action research as well as an accredited research project supported through University of Brighton has allowed us to contribute to external related partnerships. This was also the case with our contribution to NCSL ILLP Report on

Sustainable Schools. This report will be published nationally as well as featuring on NCSL website.

## Section 5 Sustainability

Eight members of our staff (75%) have been involved in research. This will increase to 12 as all staff undertake action research as part of their performance management.

On the whole research has been mainly undertaken by teaching staff but with support staff working as part of teams to develop practice. Parents have been involved in UEA research projects on areas such as role-play and emotional literacy.

Staff participate in research due to the excitement and enthusiasm of people undertaking projects themselves. Our whole school ethos is about developing as learners and using action research to support development and so it is becoming the norm. Staff are given “ownership” over projects and status as well as enjoyment follows. Staff have opportunities to discuss what research may look like and have access to TDA website and professional journals such as PDT. The benefits to pupils are also celebrated and identified which is a huge motivational tool. Where possible staff are guided to opportunities to gain accreditation for their work.

We have a strong commitment to continue to improve teaching and learning as well as leadership and to do this through embedding research based methodology into school. Staff are able to plan future developments and projects along with possible accreditation models. CPD funding is planned to allow for research development at all levels and governors are keen to involve themselves in projects. Where possible additional funding is sought and projects suggested by Local Authority or other partners are considered in light of whole school development.

Our CPD programme aims to provide more opportunities to both work with external partners such as UEA, NCSL, TDA and to explore models of research that involve pupils and support staff. Staff who are looking into MA accreditation will be used to support this drive through sharing their knowledge and experience of research methodology.

Research – links: [www.mantleoftheexpert.com](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com) look in research to find Michael Bunting- Leadership Challenges Posed by Introducing Mantle of the Expert and in articles-The Sea Company and 3-G Assessment Report by Jenny Lewis.

[www.d4lc.org.uk](http://www.d4lc.org.uk) look at evaluation for research project by University of Brighton that the school contributed to.

### **Section 3.3 Example of Research Project 2008**

#### **Research Question: Does drama improve levels of pupil engagement, empathy and creativity in learning?**

This research project was undertaken as part of our involvement with national Drama and D4LC in Norfolk. It was accredited and supported by University of Brighton.

The research took the form of:

A Learning Log and reflections

Evidence collection from a focus pupil group-this was to include lesson descriptions, observations, photos, samples of children's writing, pupil voice, parents and carers views and comments (Year 1 pupils)

Extensive reading

The research project was a result of our schools' involvement with D4LC and the development of both drama and enquiry-based learning as part of our School Improvement and Development Plan. Staff had been inspired by attending various conferences and being part of a PLN. They wanted to refine their thinking about the impact of drama on children's learning continuing earlier research undertaken as part of the first D4LC cohort in 2005.

The focus group was identified through looking at "stuck" children in Year 1.

The research took place over a period of two terms.

#### **The Impact of the Research:**

Children were shown to show high levels of engagement and within their writing achieved higher levels with children being so motivated that they overcame their difficulties with "secretarial skills" to write extensively and with purpose. Children gained confidence in their problem solving skills and were more able to express their thoughts and emotions through both writing and drama activities. Growing levels of creativity were observed along with a greater degree of "ownership" and investment in activities.

On a personal level the practitioner learnt by being focussed on learning and reflecting on the learning. In conclusion the practitioner wrote:

"In summarizing the main differences that this D4LC research has made for me, I quote from one of the children: *It makes me think differently.*"

Beyond our own school the research has been shared as part of National Drama work and delivered as part of sessions at conferences.

The project was also instrumental in our work as co-development group with QCA (now QCDA) as part of the Rose Curriculum Review. Drama now features within Sir Jim Rose's curriculum as a separate area to develop within primary education.

