

Autism Accreditation Excellence Award

This Award seeks to recognise accredited schools and services which are putting in exceptional levels of extra care and effort. Every year a large number of schools and services register to be granted accreditation status with the Autism Accreditation Service. As part of the decision-making process, the independent panel can issue a formal commendation for ideas and practice which they feel are particularly original or well delivered. Schools and services who have received a commendation will be put forward as nominees for this Award.

Judges will be looking for evidence of originality, creativity and achieving really good outcomes for individuals. They will also be looking for schools and services that are willing to try new things, which may or may not have worked, but which were worth trying.

Nominee's Details

Name of Accredited Service	Queensmill School
Parent Organisation	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Contact name	Jude Ragan
Contact Email	head@queensmill.lbhf.sch.uk
Contact tel number	0203 589 7804

Name and contact details of person submitting entry

If your nomination is shortlisted we will use these contact details to let you know and ask for more information if needed.

Full Name	Jude Ragan
Job Title	Headteacher
Organisation	Queensmill School
Address	1 Askham Road, Shepherd's Bush, London
Postcode	W12 0NW
Email	head@queensmill.lbhf.sch.uk
Tel number	0203 589 7804

Panel and Review Team acknowledgement of Commendable Practice within Autism Accreditation Core Standard 3 - Professional Training & Development & Staff Information Resource, Specialist Standard – 11 - Partnership with Professionals

The innovative way in which the school champions research and development and that this informs and improves practice is a significant strength of the school.

Submission

Summary:

The 250-word summary should include the following, where possible:

- the length of time the service has been running (team awards) / nominee has worked in their role (individual awards)
- how many people work for the service (team awards only)
- how many people the service or individual supports or has impacted
- how autism-specific the service is (n.b. at least 50% of service users or people supported must have autism to qualify for an award)
- sources of funding, if any (e.g. statutory, charity, NGO, fundraising)

Queensmill caters for 149 (as at Feb 2014) children and young people (2 – 19) who have autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs). All pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and attainment on entry is well below average for their age. Some pupils join the school from mainstream placements where their social, emotional and sensory difficulties rather than their learning difficulties have led to a breakdown in placement.

A large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic heritage, which is well above the borough average. 56% of our pupils have English as a second language, compared to 46% across the borough. 43% of our pupils are eligible for free school meals compared to 35% in the borough. The school achieved "Outstanding" in its last two Ofsted inspections in March 2007 and 2010 and has been accredited by the National Autistic Society from.

The school offers an extensive training package to all of its staff (currently 140+) also offers autism training to all staff in the borough, from short awareness-raising courses, to a three year post graduate degree in autism working in association with the IoE.

The school is constantly developing in order to reflect current best practice in meeting the needs of students with autism. It is very proud to have received a commendation for its work in breaking down the barriers between school practice and theoretical research.

Please showcase your commended practice by completing the four boxes below. Use the boxes to give the judges a clear and in-depth understanding of what has been commended and how it has improved the lives for the people with autism that you support.

1. Innovation & Creativity

Queensmill teach a post graduate course in-house. It has also set up a Research and Development Board to monitor and support the use of research within the school to improve the knowledge about children with autism and the strategies that can support them but also to ensure there is a structure and focus for the research. The board membership consists of the Senior OT and R&D lead who also represents SMT, Teacher representative, Parent representative and an external Research Director, herself an experienced researcher to PhD level and a Senior Lecturer at IoE. The school sought information from both students and parents about what research they saw as a priority and it is a strength that they put this group at the heart of any research plan, always striving to improving the lives of our students with autism and their families. The activities and the specific outcomes to date of the RDB are described under impact below.

2. Impact:

Now in its third year of the in-house post grad autism programme at Queensmill, the school sees that one of the many benefits has been the in-house research projects that teachers have undertaken as part of their studies. This helps to redress the disconnect that has previously been evident in autism research and school practice, and energises staff all to continually reflect on our practice and gather evidence to support their views about the best ways of teaching CYP with autism. The school is confident to demonstrate how this strong focus on outcomes-based research benefits the students and ensure the best and most reflective practice for CYP with autism.

The Research and Development Board (R&DB), which was cited as a "pioneer model" in the Times Educational Supplement colour supplement (5th Sept 2014) article entitled: "Taking the guesswork out of education: Can school-based research transform your teaching?" has several primary purposes:

1. to foster in-house research led by our own teaching staff and therapists, leading at times to publication and always to a shared and reflective in-house classroom practice.
2. To form a balanced rationale for the many requests for research projects in our school from the university community.
3. To produce a newsletter for staff and parents with updates of our in-house research, in out-house research projects taking place in our school and in internationally peer-reviewed research that might be of interest to our school community.

Our major academic partner is the London Institute of Education, with whom we teach post graduate autism courses, but we have links with many other research establishments, some of whom enter into research projects with Queensmill only, and some of whom enter into it with the whole of the Pan London Autism Schools' Network Group (initially set up by Queensmill) which can between us offer researchers almost 1000 children and young people with autism and their families. Our PLASN research partners (IoE CRAE, Institute of Psychiatry, Guys, Autistica maintain a list of parents and students who have been involved so that requests can be monitored to ensure individuals are not over researched.

However the greatest benefit to the school is that we put research at the heart of all the work done by the school. In discussion with staff at all levels the need for and desire to participate in or lead

research in order to improve their practice is demonstrated. This area is no longer separate to all the work the school does; it is a major strength of the school, and is at the heart of a self-reflective, thoughtful, excited work-force.

Stacey Shepherd (Queensmill teacher in Secondary department)	How Effective is Video Self Modelling in reducing spitting behaviours of an adolescent with autism.	This research enabled the teacher to consider and trial a range of interventions to manage a behaviour that was impacting on a student's participation in school activities. The strategies to manage this behaviour continue to be used successfully with this student.
James Lockwood (Queensmill teacher at Q4)	Development of inclusive provision within a unit attached to a mainstream secondary school	This research identified training needs for mainstream teachers and highlighted areas for development to enable students from the unit to be included more successfully within mainstream lessons. Training and adaptations are being implemented and reviewed in the unit on an ongoing basis to ensure that the setting continues to meet the needs of students with ASD.
Felicity (Queensmill teacher)	Exploring obsessions versus special interests and the impact on students with Autism	This research helped to inform the teachers' practice with regard to considering the value of special interests to support students' engagement with learning. NB this led to an in-house training session for all staff, and workshop offered to parents entitled: "Special Interests: how they can increase motivation, participation in non- preferred tasks, attention to task, and understanding of concept.
Catherine Carroll	Post-Secondary School Transition for Young	The research identified that, despite a specialist school placement, students follow different

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	Adults with Autism	pathways in terms of education placements, attainment and living arrangements post-16. The survey found sufficient evidence to identify groups by their gender and socio-economic status that are more likely to be at risk of having poor transitions. Findings were shared with all school staff and parents. Considerations from these have been incorporated into transition planning for all students.	Internal research projects Research & development activity
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Research activity	Outcome and impact
Research & Development board newsletter sent to all parents and staff on a termly basis	Feedback from parents and staff is that they feel more informed about Autism research – both what is happening in the school and externally. A range of parents made positive comments about the research newsletter in the parent survey done as part of NAS accreditation
Staff Journal club	To be implemented next term. Aim is to encourage staff to engage with and discuss current research topics relevant to their work.
Parent research literacy skills group	Scheduled for November 2014. Aim is to support parents in understanding research and considering it in a critical and informed way.

External research projects

Principal Investigator(s)	Title and/or summary of research	Outcome
Liz Pellicano (CRAE) Lorcan Kenny (CRAE)	Does yoga help children with Autism get ready to learn? A Feasibility study	Feedback to be presented to parents and staff on 15/10/14 as well as a written summary for the R&D newsletter. This project enabled the researchers to identify what issues there might be in measuring the impact of yoga – for example identifying the best way to measure participants' heart rates that they would tolerate. This will inform a randomised control trial. School staff received training in implementing a yoga programme in the school setting. Students benefited from access to daily yoga sessions as part of their routine.
Liz Pellicano (CRAE) Saira Pereira (CRAE)	Understanding how PLASN Schools address autistic students' sensory sensitivities	Data collection completed. Queensmill OT to support with data analysis.
Professor Mike Crawford, Imperial College London	Trial of Improvisational Music Therapy's Effectiveness for Children with Autism (TIME-A): UK Arm of the Time-A study.	Research to start October 2014
University of Melbourne	Text-based support for students impacted by Autism	Research to start October-November 2014

Examples of national and international research brought to the attention of our families (and in some cases involving them too) by members of the R&DB, and subsequently placed on our web

1. “A Future Made Together: Shaping Autism in the UK”, CRAE (NB some of the interviews with parents that informed this report were carried out at Queensmill School.
2. “For the Hidden Half Million”: The Autistica Research Centre for Ageing with Autism
3. “Elopement and autism” Anderson et al, 2012, resulting in training for all staff, revision of risk assessments, a survey for parents (83% of respondents reports their child attempts to wander or run off either occasionally, frequently or always), and a workshop for parents.

3. Sustainability:

Once started, this is an initiative that Queensmill could never relinquish. We are increasingly becoming known for a school with an outstanding training programme for all of our staff, which we recognise as an essential component in keeping us at the top of our profession and works towards our constant school aim to improve the lives of our children with autism and their families. The staffroom buzzes with interest, hypotheses, possible outcomes, always with a view to improving our offer to our students.

We recognise that this initiative is now seminal to our practice, keeps everyone informed of new autism thinking and initiatives, keeps us grounded in peer-reviewed practice, involves us in building the body of evidence of best autism practice, and involves our families in ways that they find helpful and supportive.

We cannot now give it up – there would be staff outrage!

Data protection

The National Autistic Society would like to keep you informed about our work. We will look after your data as set out in our privacy and data protection policy. To view please go to <http://www.autism.org.uk/privacypolicy>.



Celebrating creativity and innovation
Tuesday 4 March 2014, Harrogate



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