



Exploring the impact of research in a residential school for children with severe and complex needs

In recent years there has been a drive to make education more evidence based and for schools to become research engaged organisations. Education has been observed to 'lack a strong infrastructure for connecting research with educational practice and policy' (Hinton & Fischer, 2008 p157).

Creating such a culture can only be achieved where teachers are 'participating in learning communities where there is a common currency of ideas and practice about research (Sanders & Tomlinson, 2004). Creating such a culture is not without its challenges. Ensuring that research is a meaningful and relevant process to teachers and one with which they feel confident to engage necessitates the development of tools which make this process accessible.

Through the creation of Sunfield Research Institute we have been able to develop a culture where research is at the heart of the organisational approach and leads the way for all aspects of care and education. Creating such an approach has been dependent upon making research accessible to staff, ensuring they have the support and means to be engaged in the process, valuing their contributions and focusing on projects which have outcomes that are meaningful and relevant to our population of students, their families and our practitioners.

This evaluation aims to explore the extent to which this has been achieved by:

- a) Gathering information via questionnaire and interview from all members of staff who have participated in research over the last five years.
- b) Arranging focus groups with staff who have not been engaged in research to explore any potential barriers to their involvement

This information will help the Research Institute to consider the impact of research and its value to the organisation. It will also give direction for future research including training and support which may be necessary to ensure all staff are reflective in their practice and seek new and innovative ways of supporting the diverse needs of our student population.