



Research Newsletter

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Issue 4

Compiled By Jenny Davis

For further information about research projects and Research Board Meetings please contact:
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“Engaging with research ...has substantial benefits for both teacher practice and pupil outcomes”

(Chris Brown, UCL Institute of Education *Research & Evidence*, 2015)

Research Aims At Springhallow Include:

Ensuring a meaningful and valuable educational experience for our students.

Building positive pathways into adult life for our students

Supporting families and collaborate with them in the care of students

Promoting student well-being particularly with regard to mental health

Projects

We are really pleased to report back on the continuing projects here at school. We want the work that we do to be informed by the latest research. Springhallow strives to seek out best practice and to share that with other educators and parents.

- Collaborating with Researchers from UCL into Movement and communication

UCL PhD student Pengyie, is working in school to carry out meaningful investigations into movement that we hope will benefit our students and their families.

- SCERTS Appreciative Enquiry Model employed for staff development - Teachers are investigating:
 - Adapting phonics and reading programmes to support progress in reading for our students
 - Using Physical Education and Music to support well being
 - Tracking progress for EYFS students using our new assessment tools
 - Reflective practice – creating learning structures to support students to reflect on learning
 - Finding ways to support mental health and well-being following lockdown
 - Supporting staff teams to create autism friendly environments
- Research into how SCERTS is being implemented in schools
Centre for Research into Autism and Education (CRAE)

Research Board

A research-engaged school is one that investigates key issues relating to teaching and learning.

The role of our Research Board is to decide what the key issues are for Springhallow School.

Our Research Board has members from Senior Leadership, Teaching and Therapy Staff, Parents, Governors and very importantly, Pupils.

If you are interested in contributing to the work of the Research Board please contact Jenny Davis (Research Co-Ordinator)

Research Relevance and Project Findings

During the Covid 19 Pandemic we engaged with research about best practice to meet the challenges we faced. Important recommendations have been raised.

Families from Springhallow School participated in a project at UCL and Kings College please see the outcomes below:

Impact of Covid-19 on the experiences of parents and family carers of autistic children and young people in the UK.

UCL Research Briefing ID: 4992C01D-4415-480D-8088-341CF13EE1EB Pavlopoulou G, Wood R and Papadopoulos C, 2020

KEY Statistical Findings:

- 86% of family carers think that the needs of autistic people and their families have not been adequately addressed during Covid-19
- 46% of family carers stated that they consider their autistic children or themselves to be at higher risk for Covid-19 than the general population.
- 70% of family carers report that their daily routines have changed. Importantly, many participants did not want to return to the pre-Covid world.
- 58% of family carers still had access to at least one type of specialist support. However, this was not always timely nor sufficient.

Key recommendations to improve the lives of families with autistic CYP in the future:

1. Parents and carers do not feel that the government supported them during lockdown. Future policy development related to public health crises must ensure it has **input from a diversity of voices** and that the needs and rights of disabled people and their families are always taken into account.
2. Service providers need to devise innovative respite options. Our data suggest that limited support is currently provided in relation to the coronavirus pandemic. A particularly big impact of Covid-19 has been the removal of respite. **Employers need to also respond in more appreciative ways to the needs of working family carers.**
3. Services should work collaboratively to share ideas. Our data show that services can still adapt and support carers, so planning and consideration into service delivery methods that can remotely support disabled people and their families need further planning. Furthermore, the government needs to request that NHS Trusts support autistic people. **Each Trust should have autistic leads who can help coordinate** and support such processes.
4. Autistic people and their families must be included in the planning process for any necessary changes. Enforced changes to daily routines have often been stressful for autistic CYP and their families, particularly if they have not received support. Moving forward, **transitions and changes (which will continue to occur) need to be as clearly communicated in advance as possible so planning can more effectively take place.**
5. Support services and education providers need to try to incorporate these findings to improve educational and social services in the future. For many families, after some time passed to **allow for transitions and new routines to settle in, the changes had a positive impact on their wellbeing.**
6. We need to leverage society's realisation of what life is often like for autistic people and the wider autism community going forward. Many **families reported reduced anxiety and stress due to having to face less evident stigma and discrimination during lockdown.**
7. **Future research should involve autistic people of all ages and communication styles.** More research is needed to find out what can we learn from this to ensure that in the future we do not revert back to the usual difficulties for families with autistic CYP due to lack of understanding and support.