

update



Leading Learning through
Action-led Research and Innovation

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE LAUREL TRUST

ISSUE 2 • AUTUMN 2020

Something to smile about



Success in spite of Covid 19. It has sometimes been hard to find things to smile about in recent months but as a charity we have survived and are still here working closely with our schools. The good news is we hope to open a new round of funding for schools in the Spring of 2021. Keep an eye on the website!

On the positive side too, we have six wonderful projects running currently. These include: 'Creative Play with a Pinch of SALT', 'Assessing Learner Progress without Data' and 'How Teachers can Develop Learning Environments to support the Creative Writing Process for all Pupils' and so much more!

Our nine successful projects which completed this year will be disseminating their research in the Autumn and Spring Terms with a chance for you to network with the Lead Schools and see their exciting results - and possibly to form links with them if you are working on a similar theme.



MEET THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Bill Goddard is a graduate of Keele and Sussex Universities. He is a retired secondary school teacher and University Head of Department who was actively involved in professional development programmes for teachers for 19 years.

After 15 years teaching in schools, including 11 years as a Head of Department, he moved into Teacher Training and then into Professional Development. This embraced Masters and Doctoral programmes based in-house and off-site in Local Authorities (LAs), schools, and European Universities. He was involved in a range of LA partnerships and consultative committees across the South East of England and a member of committees at the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and Training and Development Agency (TDA), particularly concerned with the evaluation of annual bids for higher degree grant funding for University departments. He was an adviser for the Council for Academic Awards (CNA) and has conducted many university course validations and reviews as well as being a university external examiner.

Bill was active in European funded projects for many years and is still active within a European teacher network of which he was Vice-President for 13 years. He has recently been a network ambassador to the UNESCO Global Action Project in Education for Sustainable Development. He has chaired many university, regional, and international committees throughout his career. Bill is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

REACHING FOR THE STARS

A commentary drawing together the key themes of the 2018-2020 Research Projects appears on pages 4-6. In addition an individual summary of each project will be published and sent to you during this term. The commentary was written by David Bateson OBE. David is the Chair of the National SEND Forum.

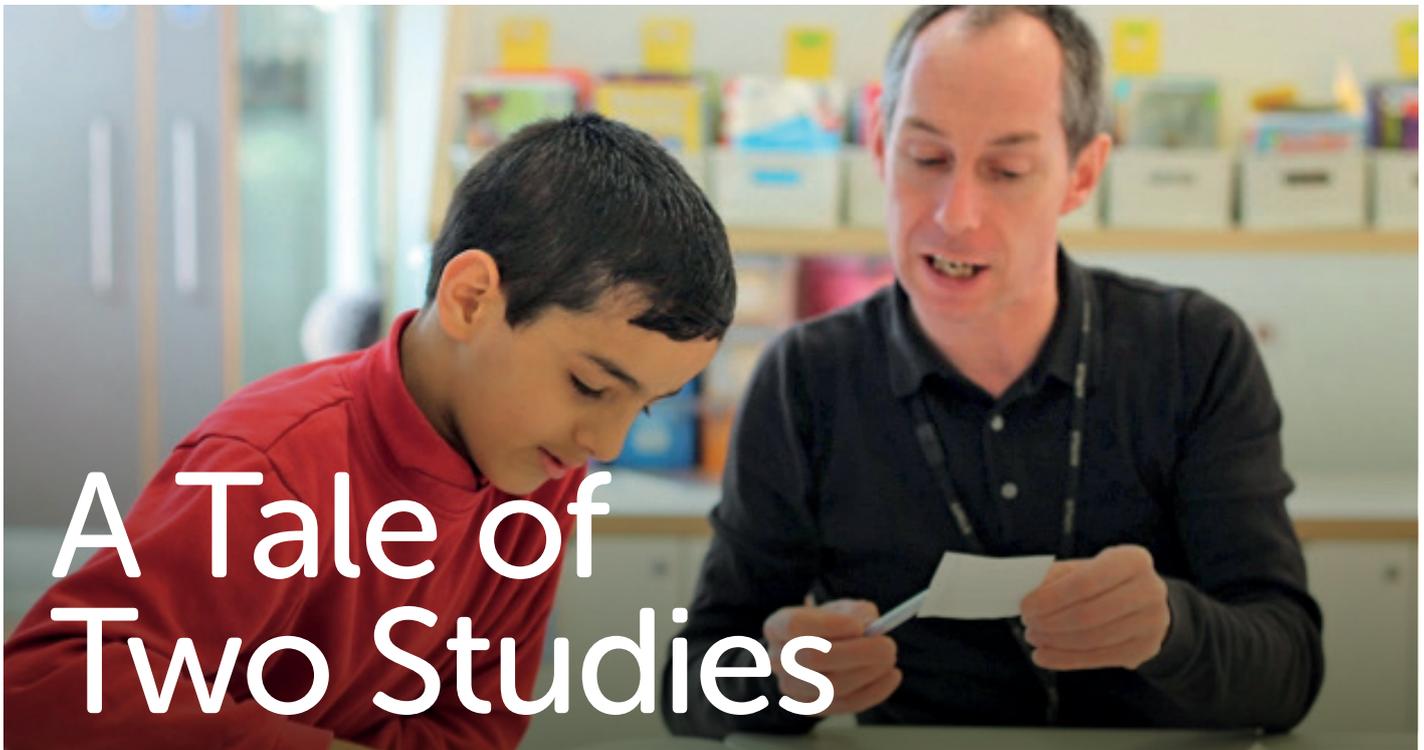
All the summaries will also be posted on our website.

The research covers a wide range of projects relating to vulnerable children and children with special educational needs living in areas of deprivation and disadvantage.

A number of the projects also look at involving parents and the community and some highlight beneficial partnerships with the NHS.



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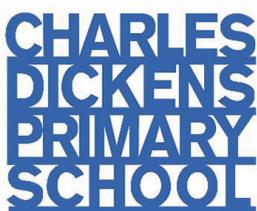


A Tale of Two Studies

The Laurel Trust has worked with a number of London schools in the last two years. The case studies below illustrate two successful projects sponsored by us. Both have benefitted from strong partnerships with the London South Teaching School Alliance (TSA) and University College London Institute of Education (IOE). London South Teaching School Alliance works to support schools with high quality teacher training, professional development and school improvement support. The goal of the London South TSA is to improve learning and wellbeing for all pupils, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged. We are home to Charles Dickens Research School, and focus on research approaches to teacher professional development.



Case Study 1 Autism: Researching Practice



This project based at Charles Dickens Primary was a participatory research project in partnership with UCL Centre for Inclusive Education and the Laurel Trust, which aimed to:

- improve the experience and/or outcomes of one or more autistic pupils in participants' schools
- increase teacher understanding and awareness of the issues faced by these pupils.

Pairs of senior leaders and teachers in 12 schools were empowered to

develop a deep understanding of the needs of pupils with autism in their schools and to design interventions to change practice and improve pupil learning. Participants were supported to work their way through a research cycle which explored what worked for their pupils, families and teachers, in their own contexts.

All schools reported impact. They had been able to observe some important impact on target pupils' learning behaviours, in particular on their social skills and speech development, independent learning, and behaviour and emotional self-regulation. By the end of the programme, all participants responding to the audit agreed that they now had the knowledge and skills to: teach children with high-functioning and low functioning autism; help pupils with autism to develop their social skills; help these

pupils to regulate their emotions; and help them to develop relationships with other people.

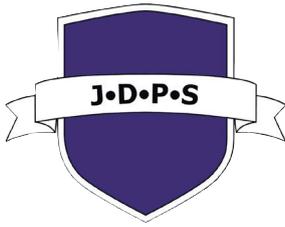
Participants were able to identify a range of ways in which the project had had a wider school impact and were able to offer an extensive list of advice for other schools wishing to make similar changes in their own schools.

“All schools reported impact. They had been able to observe some important impact on focus pupils' learning behaviours, in particular on their social skills and speech development...”

A full research report is available and a good practice guide for teachers. *continues over*

Case Study 2

Lesson study for struggling learners in mathematics



This partnership project between special and mainstream schools based at John Donne Primary, and which is still in progress, aimed to engage teachers with recent evidence about supporting children with SEND and to support a group of mainstream and special schools through Japanese lesson study.

The learning of pupils with SEND in mathematics is a concern in many primary schools. In lesson study, teachers collaboratively plan and teach a series of lessons, discussing the learning they will then take into their own classrooms and the changes to practice they plan to implement.

The project aimed to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of what works for pupils with SEND in mathematics and to develop a bank of effective strategies that can be shared across alliance schools and beyond to benefit as many schools as possible.

Participants observed learning in a special school, identified focus SEND pupils in their own classrooms, decided what difference they would like to make to these pupils' learning and then planned to try new strategies. Each teacher group explored research literature on what is known about better meeting the needs of SEND pupils in mathematics.

Unfortunately, COVID-related school closures made the gathering of pupil impact data impossible, but the impact evaluation did show a big increase in teachers' confidence in supporting progression in maths for SEND pupils. Teachers said that they were now able to plan for a broader range of pupils and be more inclusive, were better able to adapt resources for SEND pupils and plan a sequence of lessons, and had a better idea of why SEND pupils disengage. In addition, sixteen of the eighteen participants who took part said they would be likely to carry on using lesson study in their own school.

“The learning of pupils with SEND in mathematics is a concern in many primary schools.”



Philosophy corner

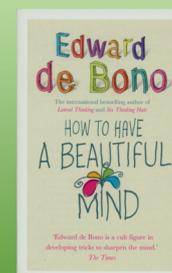
DR MARCELO STARICOFF
Trustee | The Laurel Trust

The Philosophy Corner is a regular column in our Newsletters designed to promote a love of creative, critical and philosophical thinking at school and at home.

Each Newsletter will feature a set of themed philosophical questions to inspire children and adults with an enthusiasm for wonder and for becoming experts in the art of dialogue, discussion and debate. Each Philosophy Corner will also include a suggestion for further reading and exploration of philosophical thought from a very early age.

The theme in this issue is Thriving in Times of Uncertainty:

- What qualities do we all need to thrive when we are uncertain and when we are faced with unexpected difficulty?
- What are the best qualities to develop when we are trying to solve a problem as part of a multi-skilled team and how can we use these traits in the classroom?
- Can you research how to use De Bono's Thinking Hats?



READING SUGGESTION:
How to Have a Beautiful Mind by Edward De Bono - it is brilliant! Enjoy!



REACH FOR THE STARS

**LAUREL 2020
RESEARCH THEMES COMMENTARY**

England has an atomized school system with high levels of autonomy and accountability. The system is arguably so diverse that it is not so much a system as a random mix of public, private, faith, phase, academy, maintained, non-maintained, special and mainstream schools. Like a sky of scattered stars, large and small, some are single, some in small groups, some in constellations, some bright, some hard to see. It is a system reliant on school leadership willing to work in partnership to drive change and improvement, searching out what works well and how to share it for best effect.

This leadership quest is especially vital for pupils' life chances in a country with a long tail of under-achievement and increasing special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This set of research papers reflects the school-led system's concern for the individuals they serve. Children and young people who largely live in areas of deprivation and whose socio-economic conditions, personal circumstances and learning characteristics place barriers between them and their opportunities and outcomes.

Each of these pieces of action research from nursery, primary and special settings tacitly acknowledges that schools on their own don't know enough and don't have enough. Encouragingly, however, this does not

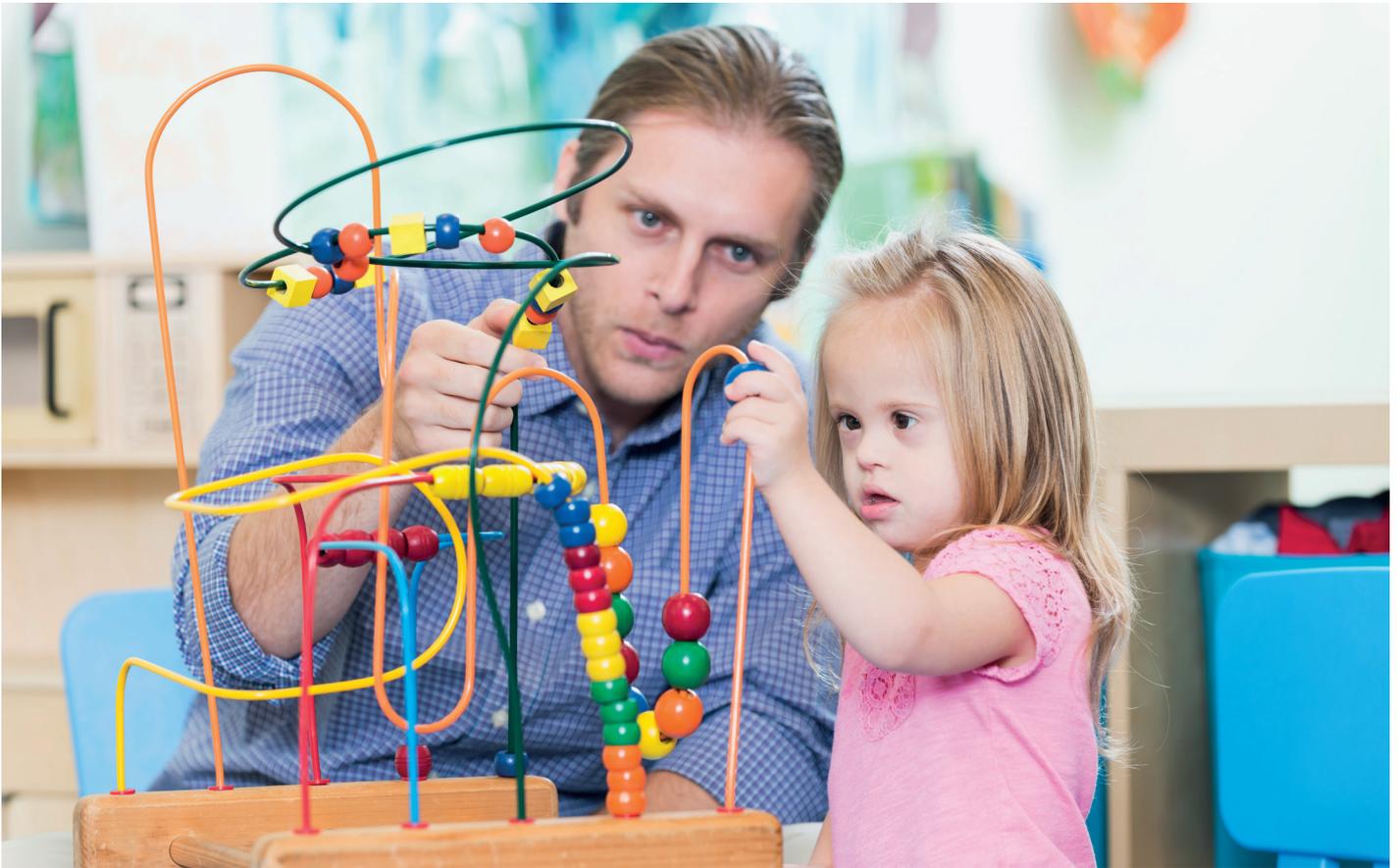
prevent their indomitable will to work with others to improve provision and outcomes for the good of vulnerable children and their families: to become more than the sum of their parts and to realize a partnership dividend. Teachers show they are keen to learn and co-operate as do parents, carers and other agencies, particularly health professionals, whose expertise is often central to pupil wellbeing and progress. This collaborative action and reflection on the part of everyone is essential to agreed and consistent changes to practice. The scale of the challenge is vast.

The areas of deprivation in these studies have enduring and endemic social exclusion problems of poverty, unemployment, crime, housing, family breakdown and engagement with universal services. Health and

educational and outcomes are poor. There is often low aspiration, well-above average pupil premium and free school meal eligibility and a high prevalence of SEND and school exclusion. All this in a world of variable provision, inequitable assessment and funding, a lack of joined-up multi-agency working and a lack of applied evidential research in practice. Schools and agencies working in these areas offer hope.

“The scale of the challenge is vast.”

These papers exemplify or allude to particular SEND and under-achievement issues. There are increasing identification, novelty, *continues over*



frequency, severity, complexity and longevity of SEND. Meeting these needs is accompanied by issues of assessment, funding, multi-agency working and consistency of practice. Underlined is the importance of senior leadership in supporting special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) on whose shoulders the increasing demands fall. All of this research shows professionals keen to respond to the voice of the child and their needs at the earliest opportunity.

“All of this research shows professionals keen to respond to the voice of the child and their needs...”

Schools are the focus for learning, care and health and need to be clear about what they do for whom and why. Underachievement and SEND are often wrongly conflated. Those in England’s long tail of low attainment need assessment that distinguishes between the two. The tail is longer than the 15.5% identified with SEND of

which formal identification in an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is 3.3% (all schools, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in England, DfE 2020). SEND itself is often used as if a homogeneous term but it brings together the broadest range of abilities and disabilities, including those with and without cognitive impairment.

Many of these pieces of research aim to improve practice and outcomes for those with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) whether formally identified in an EHCP or not. ASD has seen the most rapid increase and prevalence, now 30% of all those with EHCPs. The second most prevalent is SLCN, 15% of those with EHCPs. Those diagnosed as having ASD or SLCN do not form a homogeneous subset of SEND. They can represent the full gamut of cognitive ability but the ASD pupils in these studies share learning characteristics that affect their rate of progress, social interaction, understanding and behaviour. They are prone

to anxiety and require routines and differentiation that promote emotional regulation and stimulus control with a reduction of triggers, notably noise, and increased predictability. Adult signing, physical signage and consistent use of tone, language and task presentation across staff teams working with other agencies and homes are key.

A failure to thrive is a calamity for any child and for their families but the stakes for these children and their families are even higher regardless of cognitive ability. They, in common with others with SEND, are far more likely to be unemployed or not keep a job for long and far more likely to be over-*continues over*





represented in prisons (Department of Work and Pensions, Ministry of Justice). At a basic human level, they are far more likely to be unhappy and suffer from mental health issues. Early effective intervention is essential. To be truly effective the child and parent voice must be heard and championed.

“A failure to thrive is a calamity for any child...”

This research then is important, not only because of the findings, but because of the process and what it demonstrates: the best endeavours for, and belief in, those we exist to serve. We see the best aspirations of a school-led system with leadership that forges partnerships of schools, between schools and other agencies and universities and strengthens the collaboration within staff teams. We see schools embracing parents as equals. We see the focus on assessment of need and provision designed around the needs of the child and the importance of the consistency of practice. We see that good practice for the most vulnerable and those with SEND is often good practice for all; that staff grow in professionalism and self-respect through pooling their knowledge and modelling of learning; and that we can be jointly accountable for children in a family of schools.

This research is also important because of the questions it prompts.

HOW GOOD IS THE STRATEGY AND QUALITY OF OUR SYSTEM FOR THOSE WITH SEND OR CLASSED AS VULNERABLE?

Can this research feed into our knowledge of present and future needs and numbers; early identification; multi-agency effectiveness, especially during schooling; transition to a fulfilled post-school life; the effective and dignified means to meet these needs and support those concerned; and a minimum entitlement for all?

DO WE HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT EQUALITY IS?

Is it seen banally as meaning the same or is there a concept of both what a bespoke entitlement to integrated education and care and its resource might be and the parts that education, health and social care must play? Is there to be an end to the present lack of clarity about needs and the and the disparity in funding levels and bands across the country?

DO WE KNOW WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE OF PROVISION IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE?

How does provision within and between regions, types of schools, LAs, health authorities best serve children in a pluralist, atomized system?

HOW DO WE LINK KNOWLEDGE, RESEARCH AND TRAINING?

How do we bring together higher education, initial teacher training, specialist providers and teaching schools with in-service professional learning and relate it to pedagogy and outcomes?

HOW DO WE MAKE BEST USE OF RESOURCES?

How do we make cost effective use of capital, revenue, human and practice resource underpinned by agreed criteria for the assessment of primary and secondary needs and the level of funding required?

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY INCLUSION?

Often this is mistaken for being synonymous with mainstream placement but it is so much more and is at the heart of all education, most acutely in areas of deprivation. Inclusion is a state of being, not place. It is the flexible process on a continuum of provision that brings about the right provision at the right time in the right place with the right people. Inclusion is being connected and feeling a valued participant. Inclusion is beyond a political statement or the naivety that sees equality as meaning the same. Inclusion accepts the cognitive, access and behavioural needs as givens but majors on the personalised and the affective. It trumpets how far forward one moves and not how high one jumps. It neither condones nor confirms failure but sets high and personally rewarding challenges that lead to an engaged and fulfilled sense of purpose.

Inclusion values both the quality of process and outcomes. It has an eye on the future but makes the most of the moment. Inclusion maximises learning both for its own sake and for its usefulness. It prioritises engagement and enjoyment. It demands empathy, intellectual rigour, resilience, good humour and a belief in bringing the best out of everyone and that everyone has something to give.

Inclusion is the holy grail: a sense of individual purpose, recognition and belonging brought about by differentiation of provision, method, task and outcome. Inclusion is not the preserve of those with special educational needs and disabilities but, in pursuing excellence for those who have these needs, all pupils in the system will benefit. ●

DOING THINGS BY THE BOOK

In 2018-20 The Laurel Trust supported an outstanding and highly successful research project in the North-East measuring the impact of collaboration with parents and carers to improve learning and care outcomes for children with additional needs particularly those living in deprived circumstances.

The project was led by Elaine O'Conner of The Dales Special School. Hollie Rankin is a Counsellor and Family Support Worker in Blythside and she played a key part in the project. She is also a talented writer. Her books are particularly relevant and helpful in the difficult and challenging circumstances we are living through. Hollie tells her story below.

I have worked in several schools in the North East of England over the last 11 years as a Counsellor and Family Support Officer. During this time I have seen first hand that sadly many children and their families are unable to access the support that they so desperately need. Many services have faced budget cuts in recent years, and many more are

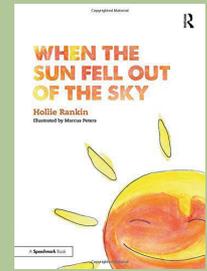
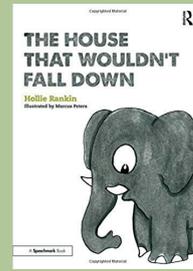
overwhelmed by the sheer number of referrals that they receive.

I realised that empowering parents, carers, school, health and care staff to provide emotional support could help to bridge the gap while children wait to be seen by other services, or in some cases could prevent issues from escalating further if support was provided early enough.

As a result, I wrote two story books designed to be read with children to promote discussion or thought, and a resource guide to accompany each book. The themes of the books are 'loss and bereavement' and 'trauma' but they encompass a myriad of different issues within these themes.

They are designed to guide adults to support children to express and explore their emotions both at home and at school, and the feedback from adults and children has been very encouraging.

Through my role as a Family Support Officer I was lucky enough to become involved with a project Supported by



the Laurel Trust and The Blyth Teaching School Alliance last year. I was able to support several parents from the schools I work in to attend workshops and groups in order to educate and empower them to support their children further. It was a wonderful experience, and one that the parents thoroughly enjoyed.

At the end of the research phase each of the schools were given a copy of Hollie's books. The feedback is that children and their families are benefitting from using the books. Currently the dissemination and extension of this exciting project is on hold but The Laurel Trust continues its support.

NATIONWIDE INNOVATION

The locations of our schools' research projects are shown here and represent a wide range of action-led research and the resulting innovation across schools in England. To contact any of the Lead Schools in your locality please email our Consultant Director: maggie.roger@laureltrust.org.uk. Posters giving details of the most recent research projects appear on the website: www.laureltrust.org.uk

