Teacher research has been placed at the heart of teaching and learning at Wycombe High School and this has led to national recognition. **Dorothy Lepkowska** reports

School-led research

“involving the whole school in research and enquiry helps to develop a community of reflective practitioners.”

The report concluded: “The clear belief that change can happen through impact is apparent and the visit to the school provided an insight into staff of all ages and experience, gaining deeper reflective attitudes towards their work.”

Staff were helped and supported through the process with regular meetings, workshops, webinars, and coaching. Keynote speakers are invited, while documents and resources are made available which staff understand research and can arrange and analyse their findings.

In each case, the staff produced a paper that indicated the research work being done by colleagues, and are encouraged to participate.

The purpose of evidence-informed enquiry is to make a positive difference. By evaluating thoroughly, schools can have confidence about the consequences of any potential changes in practice. Working collaboratively offers opportunities to discuss enquiries with others, both within and beyond the school, which improves critical thinking and analysis and helps to identify the implications of findings.

Crucially, senior leaders ensure that time is allocated, and materials and expertise provided, to enable this level of engagement with research. This, said Ms Hankin, is “a clear indicator of the value the school places on research.”

One of the projects involved examining how maths is taught in China and whether there were any aspects to be learned or any common ground with British methods.

The research project fitted in with Wycombe High’s status as one of 14 maths hubs in England and with visits to Asia by its senior leaders.

The results showed that while there were some weaknesses with the existing methods, there were aspects of the Chinese approach that would not be appropriate in a local setting.

The themes and topics for research undertaken by staff in the teaching alliance were many and varied. For example, one year 6 teacher and an coordinator in a partner primary school, Claudia Hayes, developed her project based on: “To what extent can an intervention for writing boost motivation and subsequent attainment in 11-year-olds?”

Meanwhile, an English teacher and learning coach, Hannah Rogers, ran a project based on the question: “How can coaching be developed to have maximum impact on teaching and learning?”

In each case, the staff produced a paper that indicated the methodology used, the findings and their recommendations.

While compiling her report, Ms Hankin observed a number of research projects, including the trialling of a bring your own device (BYOD) scheme and the effects of using tablets on pupils’ engagement.

Mr Joshi added: “We want to reward schools who have made important decisions and achieved significant achievements or changes through their engagement with research, enquiry and evaluating evidence. We also aim to help steer their future thinking with additional recommendations where needed.”

The Department for Education’s new Standard for Teachers’ Professional Development states that successful CPD should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise, include collaboration, challenge and be maintained over time. Furthermore, it should place a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes. We are fully in agreement with these principles and this is mirrored in the work we do with schools.”

**Dorothy Lepkowska** is a freelance education writer.

Further information

For details of the resources available to support research-based practice in schools, visit www.nfer.ac.uk/research-markjectives/SecEd

**SecEd** is a supporter of the NFER’s Research Mark accreditation. **Dorothy Lepkowska** looks at how the Research Mark and related resources can help schools on their journey.