

Are you research ready?

Assess the level of engagement in R&D in your school and alliance

The following **self-diagnosis tool**¹ provides a means of assessing the extent to which R&D is embedded in your school and alliance across the following dimensions of school life:²

1. Initial teacher education, induction and early career development
2. Continuing professional learning and development (CPLD)
3. Leadership (including talent management and SLEs)
4. School improvement and school-to-school support

The tool can be used to assess levels of research engagement as a school (**S**) and an alliance (**A**), recognising that individual schools in an alliance or wider partnership may well be starting at different places in relation to R&D.

For each area of school life, the toolkit focuses on three main forms of research engagement:

1. **RESEARCH & DESIGN**: use of data and research to inform strategic decision-making and the design and content of programmes and interventions;
2. **DEVELOPMENT & ENQUIRY**: opportunities for staff and pupils to engage with research and engage in collaborative enquiry to stimulate professional and pupil learning;
3. **EVALUATION & QUALITY ASSURANCE**: use of evaluation strategies to measure impact and inform future planning and decision-making.

As well as helping to understand where you are starting from, the tool is also intended as a **guide to help you go further**: each section contains ideas about possible interventions and is followed by suggestions for **getting started** and **taking the next step** to expand and embed a research rich culture in your school and alliance.

¹ This tool has been developed by a group of teaching schools as part of a [collaborative project](#) for the National College of Teaching and Leadership. The design of this tool was informed by a mapping exercise amongst project participants of the range of R&D activities taking place across different dimensions of school life.

² These dimensions correspond to the 'Big 6' areas for teaching schools: ITE, CPD, succession planning & talent management, Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs), school-to-school support and R&D. Although developed primarily for teaching schools and alliances, the tool is intended to be useful for all schools and partnerships.

How to Use the Tool

We suggest working through each section below with colleagues in your school and alliance. Start by assessing in pairs which elements of R&D are currently in place and then discuss together how far they are successfully embedded.

Ask a **critical friend** for support and challenge in answering three follow up questions:

- 1) How do you know whether R&D in each area is actually effective? What evidence do you have to support your view and how can you
- 2) What are the priority areas when it comes to expanding & embedding R&D?
- 3) What interventions are likely to be most useful in your context, taking into account school and alliance needs, development stage as an alliance, relationships and social capital, and delegation and distribution of leadership.³

Please note that the aim of the exercise is not to end up with a tick in every box in the 'Embedding' column (the highest level of engagement), as not all the activities listed here will be appropriate for every school and alliance. Thinking about the **context, needs & values** of your setting will help identify priorities and indicate which activities are likely to be most useful for you.

Suggestions for further reading, useful links and resources are included at the end of the document.

³ These questions are based on the 'strategic questions' posed in the research report by Stoll (2015) *Three greats for a self-improving school system: pedagogy, professional development and leadership*.

Self-diagnosis Tool: Assessing the level of research engagement in the School and Alliance

Aspects of school life	EMERGING	S ✓	A ✓	EXPANDING	S ✓	A ✓	EMBEDDING	S ✓	A ✓
1. Induction & early career development									
NQT induction programme	RESEARCH & DESIGN: research is used sporadically to inform induction activities			Some research is used to inform induction activities			Internal and external research is used to inform the planning, design, & content of induction programme		
	DEVELOPMENT & ENQUIRY: Developing research capability is not an explicit part of the programme			Induction activities provide some opportunities to access research and develop skills of enquiry and evaluation			Targeted development activities offer extended opportunities for NQTs to engage with research, develop enquiry skills and gain confidence in evaluation		
	EVALUATION & QA: some forms of feedback are collected to monitor impact			Evaluation strategies are used to monitor impact			A range of evaluation strategies are used to monitor impact, including involvement of NQTs in planning and review of induction programme		
RQT programme	RESEARCH & DESIGN: Early career programme is partially informed by research			Early career programme is generally informed by research			Early career development programme is fully informed by internal and external research		
	DEVELOPMENT & ENQUIRY: Developing research capability is not an explicit part of the programme			RQTs have some opportunities to access research & learn enquiry and evaluation techniques			RQT programme builds research literacy & capability through training in research methods, enquiry techniques and evaluation strategies		
	EVALUATION & QA: some forms of feedback are collected to monitor impact			Evaluation strategies are used to monitor impact			A range of evaluation strategies are used to monitor impact, including involvement of RQTs in review and planning of induction programme		
Masters level programme	Participation in Masters level courses is left to individuals			Early career teachers are encouraged to participate in the University Masters level programme			Early career teachers are actively encouraged to participate in the University Masters level programme and share learning with colleagues		

Aspects of school life	EMERGING	S	A	EXPANDING	S	A	EMBEDDING	S	A
		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
2. Continuing Professional Learning & Development (CPLD)									
Planning & design of CPLD programme	Research is sometimes used to inform professional learning activities			Planning and content of professional learning activities are generally informed by research			Research is a touchstone for all CPLD activities: external/internal research & needs analysis is used to inform the planning, design & content of the CPLD programme		
Role of strategic partners	HEI partners/external experts provide occasional support for collaborative R&D			HEI partners/external experts supports collaborative R&D			HEI partners/external experts provide specialist expertise to support collaborative R&D at all stages of professional learning		
Professional development goals	Professional development goals are not generally linked to research-related skills			Staff are increasingly encouraged to set challenging goals for professional development, which may include a reference to using evidence and skills of enquiry and reflection			All staff are supported to set challenging goals for professional development, with an explicit focus on learning from evidence, enquiry and critical reflection		
Coaching and Mentoring	Coaching and mentoring is available for some staff			Opportunities for coaching and mentoring are available for many or most staff though not always organised in a structured way			There is an established programme of peer mentoring and/or coaching based on training, common principles and capacity-building framework		
Cycles of enquiry	Staff do not generally take part in collaborative R&D or cycles of enquiry			A growing number of staff are able to take part in research projects and collaborative enquiry to investigate identified issues in the school or classroom			All staff are encouraged and supported to take part in cycles of collaborative enquiry, focusing on issues aligned with school development plan and/or areas of personal and professional interest		
Common enquiry tools	Tools are used for individual or one-off projects			Collaborative enquiry is supported by use of common tools			Collaborative enquiry is supported by the development & use of common tools and frameworks		

Experimenting & innovating	Staff are not generally encouraged to try new ideas			Staff are encouraged to use research evidence, though not generally encouraged to experiment with new ideas			Staff are encouraged to innovate and test new ideas and given the space and confidence to try things that may not work		
Evaluating impact	Staff often gather forms of data in their own classroom but are not routinely involved in systematic analysis or triangulation			Middle and senior leaders deploy a range of evaluation strategies and are involved in analysis of data and evidence			Key staff at all levels are able to use a range of evaluation strategies and involved in systematic analysis & triangulation of data, with discussion and critical reflection on implications for teaching & learning		
Critical friend	Internal/external critical friend provides occasional support			Internal/external critical friend provides support and challenge			Internal/external critical friend provides support, challenge & quality assurance for professional learning		
Sharing findings & informing practice	Limited opportunities to share or discuss ideas or integrate findings into wider practice			There are regular opportunities to share ideas and findings with others, though not necessarily leading to changes in practice			Established processes for sharing findings with colleagues & for well-evidence approaches to inform wider school policy and practice		
Visits & virtual learning communities	Staff rarely visit other schools or take part in VLEs			Some staff are encouraged to share evidence and good practice through visits and VLCs			Staff are enabled to visit other schools and engage in VLCs to share evidence & good practice		
Access to research	Generally left to the discretion of staff; individuals may look up research on-line			Staff are encouraged to make use of shared resources and look up additional sources where relevant			Professional library/on-line shared space contain R&D resources, research summaries & digests		
Training in research & enquiry	Little or no training in research methods & enquiry skills			Occasional training in research method, enquiry techniques and evaluation strategies			CPLD programme builds capability for all staff through ongoing training in research methods, enquiry techniques and evaluation strategies		

Taking the next step

For ideas and suggestions on *Getting Started with R&D*, have a look on the Research Rich Schools website.

Collaborative Enquiry

Encourage staff to work with colleagues to explore the learning taking place in their own classrooms and share feedback and reflections with colleagues. For example, you might like to try some of the following ideas:

- Encourage staff to form a professional learning group to share research, engage in enquiry and involve pupils as researchers
- Create a forum or space on a shared learning platform for staff to share good practice & promising ideas
- Set up a learning log to record reflections on learning
- Refresh existing CPD activities through [structured conversations](#) or [joint practice development](#)
- Strengthen coaching and mentoring programmes through a capacity-building framework such as the [National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching](#)
- Provide training in enquiry skills & secure release time for staff to engage in cycles of collaborative enquiry such as [lesson study](#)

Access to research and specialist knowledge:

- Draw on the specialist knowledge and research expertise of your HEI partner to help access research as well as plan enquiry projects
- Set up a professional learning library (on a shared platform or in printed form) containing resources, including research summaries, digests and case studies etc. Research Rich Schools has a list of resources that you might find helpful.
- Ask your librarian or information professional to help you gather information on specific topics and make suggestions on useful reading

Develop research skills to measure the impact of CPD:

- Before the event or activity, collect information on intended learning outcomes and review how the knowledge will be transferred to learners
- Use a survey, interviews or learning logs before and after the activity to assess changes in learning and attitudes
- Follow up the activity later in the year to assess sustained changes in learning, attitude and behaviour

Self-diagnosis Tool: Assessing the level of research engagement in the School and Alliance

Aspects of school life	EMERGING	S ✓	A ✓	EXPANDING	S ✓	A ✓	EMBEDDING	S ✓	A ✓
3. Leadership, talent management and SLEs									
Distributed leadership	R&D is not an explicit part of leadership development programmes			Distributed leadership builds capacity for research and enquiry			Distributed leadership builds capacity and ‘grows’ future research leaders and advocates for R&D		
Middle leaders	RESEARCH & DESIGN: research is sometimes used to inform leadership development activities			Research is used to inform middle leadership development programme			Planning, design and content of middle leadership development programmes is informed by internal and external research		
	DEVELOPMENT & ENQUIRY: Developing research capability is not an explicit part of the programme			Middle leaders have some opportunities to engage in collaborative enquiry			Middle leaders programmes offers extended opportunities to engage in cycles of collaborative enquiry		
	EVALUATION & QA: some forms of feedback are collected to monitor impact			Evaluation strategies are used to monitor impact			A range of evaluation strategies are used to monitor impact, including involvement of middle leaders in planning and review of programme.		
Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs)	RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT: R&D not explicit part of training for SLEs			Training for SLEs allows for knowledge exchange & enquiry skills			SLE training and on-going coaching support provides opportunities for knowledge exchange & includes collaborative enquiry techniques		
	DEVELOPMENT & ENQUIRY: Developing research capability is not an explicit part of SLE’s work			SLEs model and support best practice, including enquiry skills			SLEs model and support best practice in use of research, enquiry techniques and evaluation strategies		
	EVALUATION & QA: some forms of feedback are collected to monitor impact			Evaluation strategies are used to monitor impact			Role and impact of SLEs is carefully monitored and evaluated through range of evidence sources		

Strategic leadership	School ethos reflects some commitment to R&D			School ethos reflects a general commitment to R&D			Shared understanding and commitment to R&D underpins a positive and inclusive ethos		
	Research partially informs strategic planning and priorities			Research generally informs strategic planning and priorities			Research systematically informs strategic planning & priority setting, including key areas for enquiry		
	Strategic partners provide occasional support and challenge for SLT			Strategic partners provide regular support and challenge for SLT			Strategic partners and critical friends provide support & challenge and provide tools to extend leaders' thinking and become evidence-based		
	Engagement in R&D is a low priority for SLT			SLT supports involvement in research & enquiry			SLT is committed to building capacity for R&D and enabling wide participation in research & enquiry		
Governors	R&D has low visibility and priority for Governors			Governing Body is interested in and committed to R&D			Governing Body is actively committed to R&D and has a dedicated Research Champion		
	Individual governors attend training on use of data			Individual governors attend training on use of data and provide robust challenge			Bespoke training in use of data and research ensures Governing body provide robust questioning and challenge to senior leaders		
	Individual governors draw on wider evidence and research			Designated GB leads for key areas (e.g. SEND) ask questions about use of evidence and research			Designated GB leads for key areas (e.g. inclusion and SEND) support staff to use focused research and evidence from different sources		

Taking the Next Step: Leadership of R&D

Case studies of research engaged schools shows the crucial importance of leadership at all levels in enabling effective R&D, spanning middle and senior leadership within the school and alliance, school project leaders and as projects grow, teacher group leaders.

Middle leadership

You might consider the following actions to expand and embed research engagement amongst middle leaders:

- Set up a **middle leader programme** on an alliance basis which links leaders within and across schools to work in triads on cycles of enquiry
- Encourage leaders to record their reflections on learning in a **learning log or journal**
- Set up an **online leadership forum** for middle leaders to share good practice, extend and reflect on their leadership skills and support other curriculum leaders
- Develop **shared leadership standards** involving enquiry skills and evaluation strategies to clarify what being an 'outstanding leader' looks like in your school or alliance

Strategic leadership & disciplined innovation

Studies highlight the crucial role that school and alliance leaders play in creating a valued place in schools for R&D and aligning activity to priority areas for teaching and learning:

- Develop a shared understanding with strategic partners across the alliance (including HEIs) about what disciplined innovations and school-based enquiry means and how it can be developed within the school and across the alliance
- Identify clear priority areas that would benefit from an enquiry project
- Equip a core of key staff and students with research skills
- Enable as many schools as possible to participate in an action learning project
- Audit skills in research and enquiry that leaders at different levels consider they lack
- Share procurement of or partnering with an HEI to deliver an alliance-based Masters' programme

Self-diagnosis Tool: Assessing the level of research engagement in the School and Alliance

Aspects of school life	EMERGING	S ✓	A ✓	EXPANDING	S ✓	A ✓	EMBEDDING	S ✓	A ✓
4. School improvement and school-to-school support									
School self-evaluation	School improvement includes analysis of data and self-evaluation			School improvement includes peer review based on joint analysis of data and self-evaluation			School improvement is driven by peer review based on joint analysis of performance & progress data and self-evaluations to diagnose schools' improvement needs		
Appraisal & performance management	R&D is not an explicit part of appraisal and performance management			Staff appraisal and performance management includes reference to research priorities and enquiry projects			Collaborative enquiry is integrated into school appraisal and performance management systems through shared tools and protocols		
Joint practice development	Occasional joint planning and peer observations for specific tasks or within year groups and subject departments			Regular joint planning and peer observations mostly involving staff working in same year group or subject department			Cross-alliance JPD is embedded in shared systems and processes for joint planning and peer observations		
Collaborative enquiry	No established programme of collaborative enquiry			Collaborative enquiry contributes to professional and pupil learning			An embedded programme of collaborative enquiry builds a deeper and more consistent understanding pupil learning and ways of closing attainment gaps		
Use of enquiry skills	Staff do not regularly take part in enquiry			Key staff use enquiry skills to assess effectiveness of teaching strategies			Training in research & enquiry skills enables staff to assess effectiveness of teaching strategies for different learners		
Disciplined innovation	Staff are not encourage to take risks or experiment with new ideas			Staff are encouraged to use research evidence, though not generally encouraged to experiment with new ideas			Research ethos is embedded in a school culture which encourages risk-taking, disciplined innovation and critical reflection		

Taking the Next Step: School Improvement and R&D

Integrating R&D, CPD and School Improvement

Forms of collaborative enquiry, such as cross-alliance action research or lesson study, can act as a powerful tool for professional learning and school improvement. Rather than treating these as separate strands of activity, consider ways of building evidence-based practice and collaborative enquiry into planning for school improvement. For example, you might consider:

- replacing the School Improvement Plan with a combined **Teaching & Learning Plan**, which would allow you to identify priority areas for improvement and then plan and use focused enquiry to deepen knowledge of effective approaches in each area to improve pupil learning
- ensure that research evidence is part of school development planning and that new resources or practices are evaluated before they are adopted on a larger scale

Improving teaching and learning through R&D

Research rich schools adopt different ways to promote engagement in R&D, making explicit the benefits for improving teaching and learning:

- encourage every member of staff to make a **Teaching and Learning pledge**, setting out an area in which they want to improve their practice over the course of the year
- introduce **Teaching and Learning Bursaries** as an incentive for staff who engage actively in collaborative R&D and share their findings from research with colleagues within and beyond their team
- suggest research activity to staff during their performance reviews and encourage staff to develop research skills by taking part in Masters level programmes
- hold an annual 'Showcase' or Celebration event to recognise the contribution that staff have made to teaching & learning through engaging in R&D

Create a culture of disciplined innovation

- Develop a culture which recognises that outstanding lessons are often characterised by risk-taking and innovation and underpinned by reflection
- Try to create an atmosphere where pedagogy and research is discussed beyond formal meetings, for example over coffee in the staff room

Suggestions for further reading:

The Research Rich Schools website gives some useful ideas and resources for Getting Started with R&D. Have a look at examples of case studies for emerging, expanding and embedding R&D, together with a list of on-line [resources](#) to help you access external research and engage in enquiry, innovation and evaluation.

For an overview of the evidence from national and international studies on the **contribution that research makes to teacher education**, have a look at the interim and final report from the [BERA-RSA Inquiry into the role of research in teacher education](#): BERA (2014) *Research and the Teaching Profession: Building the capacity for a self-improving education system*, London: BERA

The National College for Teaching & Leadership has recently published the final reports from the [Teaching Schools R&D network](#) national themes project 2012-2014:

Key messages from the report are summarised in the [executive summary](#) and full [research report](#), *Three Greats for a Self-Improving System*, by Professor Louise Stoll (NCTL 2015).

Case studies are available for each of the three themes: [what makes great professional development](#); [what makes great pedagogy](#) and [leadership of great pedagogy](#).

It is worth having a look at the **Intervention Toolkit** in Appendix 4 of the [Leadership of great pedagogy](#) research report by Simon Rea and colleagues (NCTL 2015), which was designed to assist TSA leaders to select, deploy and evaluate useful interventions. It provides a list of 'candidate interventions', based on known good practice by schools and partnerships, which can be used to develop their schools and alliances.

Have a look at the five questions about the future role of TSAs in leading R&D activity in [Approaches to Research & Development for 'great pedagogy' and 'great CPD' in teaching school alliances](#), by Professor Bronwen Maxwell and Professor Toby Greany and colleagues (NCTL 2015).

[Using Evidence in the Classroom: What Works and Why?](#) (Nelson and O'Brien 2014) provides a useful overview of what is currently known about effective approaches to school and teacher engagement with evidence, as well as highlighting some of the systemic issues and challenges and suggesting actions and solutions to address them. It is based on findings from a rapid evidence review conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

In [Evidence for the Frontline](#), Jonathan Sharples (2013) presents the components of what he terms a 'knowledge mobilisation (KMb) ecosystem'. Put simply, KMb is the process by which evidence is produced by research organisations, transformed into accessible and usable outputs through a process of collaboration and/or mediation, and implemented by teachers in order to better their teaching practice and enhance learner outcomes.