

Executive Summary: A busy reader's guide to the research-sensitive school

Research-sensitive schools incorporate teaching and learning approaches that have research evidence of their effectiveness.

It is a whole-school enterprise, incorporating the following approaches:

1. Teaching and learning is *the* priority of the school. The school leader sets the priorities and moral case for research-sensitivity, but delegates its implementation. A supporting framework, covering issues such as behaviour or data collection, is in place.
2. Teachers act as reflective practitioners – reviewing, questioning and innovating. In order for them to do this, they are supported by the school, particularly by the provision of staff who are expert in distilling research.
3. Schools manage the tension between school priorities and teacher autonomy as reflective practitioners by providing good reasons – evidence - for the current priorities.
4. Schools create a matrix of structures – CPD, meetings, communication, inquiry questions, appraisals – through which these current priorities are thoroughly considered.
5. A community of practice develops of like-minded people for whom it is natural and routine to engage in casual conversation – teacher talk - about teaching and learning.
6. Conventional boundaries – classrooms, departments, schools - are treated as permeable.
7. Schools almost always adapt new teaching and learning approaches to suit their local conditions. However, the evaluation of new approaches tends to be weak. Local, small-scale evaluation is feasible and offers a solution to this.
8. Research-sensitive schools are isolated examples of practice. To be sustained and spread, they need a supportive infrastructure at local, regional and national level. This would include adequate funding, a supportive policy framework, a reciprocal relationship with the research community, and, of course, evaluation of the research-sensitive school approach to establish that it is more effective.