NCSE PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2025/26

SCHOOL RESEARCH SUMMARY

School name: CIC Summerhill Sligo

Practising teacher lead: Keelan Waters & Brendan Fitzsimons

Research theme: Improving student outcomes

Research aim:
Reduce early-year behaviour incidents and Year-Head referrals; especially for students with SEN and those previously flagged as Not Achieved; by explicitly teaching accessible, UDL-informed study skills prior to assessments.

Methods

Cohorts: First-year students in 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.
Measures: Referral to Year Head and minor behaviour incidents recorded on the school MIS.
Subgroup: Students who recorded Not Achieved (<50 Average grade) in the November Assessments exams.
Approach: Year-on-year comparison of the total number of referrals and minor behaviour incidents among the subgroup November and next Assessment window (February)

There were 52 Students involved in this research. This included all first-year students in 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (whole cohort), with an analytic focus on those previously recorded as Not Achieved (<50% avg) in the November assessment Period.

Teachers/Staff: A Sub-Committee of our research team was established.

All staff delivered study skills lessons to students

Research findings

Policy change effect: Behaviour-referral guidelines changed between 2023-24 and 2024-25. This led to a general reduction in recorded behaviour referrals across the year group, independent of the intervention.

Low base rates: In both the pre- and post-intervention periods, incident numbers were very low, limiting the usefulness of year-on-year comparisons for the Not Achieved (NA) subgroup and the whole cohort.

My top three findings

Behaviour-referral guidelines changed between 2023-24 and 2024-25, driving a general drop in recorded incidents across the year group therefore impact on referrals is inconclusive due to policy change. With very low base rates in both pre and post-intervention periods, year-on-year comparisons don't validly isolate the intervention's effect.

The pre-assessment study-skills intervention is feasible and acceptable school-wide. The pre-assessment study-skills intervention ran in October across all first-year classes within normal timetables—no extra periods or cover were required. Staff reported it was straightforward to embed retrieval starters and weekly planner checks in ordinary lessons. Students engaged well with planners and preparation routines. The sequence aligned with SEN/UDL practices (clear routines), which aided consistency across subjects.

Materials were low-cost and reusable (shared resources), making the package practical to repeat annually and easy for new staff to adopt.

Behaviour referrals were not a stable measure because the recording policy changed. When undertaking the intervention in the future, we should ensure that referral definitions won't change between academic years. The current policy is remaining in place for the next academic year so next years results might unearth some findings.

Impact of my research

We standardised an October study-skills sequence for all first years across subjects. We aligned routines with UDL/SEN supports (clear steps, visuals, chunking).

We agreed to stabilise behaviour-referral definitions that had management benefits. Staff and students engaged well; we now have a common language for study routines across classes.