



The School that I'd like

Imagine a school which acknowledges that all children learn in different ways and in which teachers harness the power of learning preferences to optimise teaching and learning. In this school teachers also recognise that many apparent learning difficulties can often be explained as learning differences which will respond to changes in methods, materials and approaches. Also many of the special educational needs which formerly occupied the attention of class/subject teachers and SENCOs may now be seen as ordinary learning needs which are dealt with in mainstream settings through the differentiated curriculum plan. As a result the school is writing far fewer Individual Education Plans (IEPs): those that are written are of high quality, and are very carefully monitored and evaluated to actively direct and inform the way children are taught in mainstream settings.

This school is particularly aware of the needs of the growing numbers of non-traditional learners who do not function well in a didactic environment and who often think faster than they read, write, spell or do number work. Therefore there is a house style, evident in every classroom, in which children are required to explore ideas, concepts and strategies within the framework of their preferred learning approaches. They are also actively encouraged to present evidence of their learning and understanding within these preferences.

An interesting aspect of this school is the calm, confident way in which all children approach their learning. Even the most vulnerable learners are set up to succeed because they are effectively working within their comfort zones for much of the time and operating from a secure platform of strength and competence. When challenged to move outside their comfort zones they are able to respond with confidence because of their platform of previous success. One consequence of this confidence and emotional security is the positive way in which all children approach assessments, even some of those national assessments which seem to be carefully engineered to marginalise children who learn in non-traditional ways. Although this school is very successful in terms of results, it values this success less than it values its eclectic, confident and independent learners who are developing across the full range of ability and social, emotional and intellectual need.