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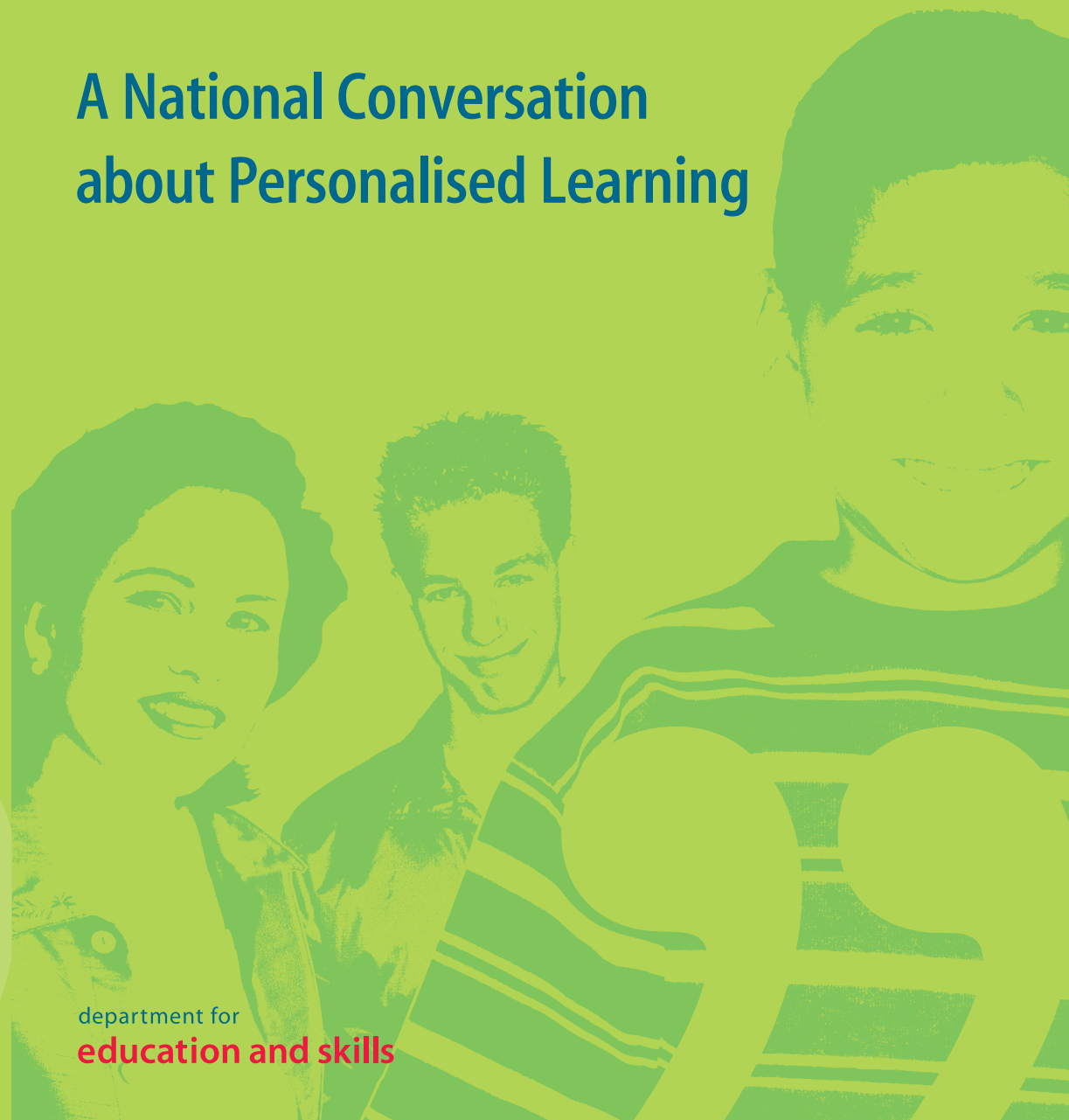
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department for  
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## A National Conversation about Personalised Learning



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**education and skills**



“I really stretch each of my pupils. I pitch their work carefully so that they can do it but still find it challenging. Then I can decide exactly how to tailor their next stage.”

## Introduction

Personalised learning is an idea that is capturing the imagination of teachers, children and young people across the country. It is an idea that has its roots in the best practices of the teaching profession, and it has the potential to make every young person’s learning experience stretching, creative, fun and successful. We believe personalised learning can help us all answer enduring questions about:

- How can we help every child do even better?
- What teaching practices should we employ to do so?
- How together can we solve the specific challenges faced in each school?

This pamphlet, and the website it is allied to, crystallise what has been learnt in practice and policy to date. The intention is to provide headteachers, teachers, support staff and governors with a shared foundation for the development of personalised learning. The website also provides an opportunity for you to inform a wider audience about how learning is being personalised in your school.

The pamphlet has four main sections. It describes the concepts of personalisation and personalised learning. It identifies principles that can help guide actions at each level of the system. It clarifies the main components of personalised learning and it invites you to join a national debate about how personalised learning can best be developed.

This pamphlet represents a first word on personalised learning, not the last word. We hope that you will visit the personalised learning website to help chart the future. You will find there access to case studies, some of which are mentioned in this booklet, together with more detail on the range of resources currently available to you.

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning)


## What is personalisation and personalised learning?

Personalisation is a very simple concept. It is about putting citizens at the heart of public services and enabling them to have a say in the design and improvement of the organisations that serve them.


In education this can be understood as personalised learning - the drive to tailor education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person's potential. David Miliband, in his 2004 speech to the North of England Conference, described this as:

*“High expectations of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on a sound knowledge and understanding of each child's needs. It is not individualised learning where pupils sit alone. Nor is it pupils left to their own devices - which too often reinforces low aspirations. It means shaping teaching around the way different youngsters learn; it means taking the care to nurture the unique talents of every pupil.”*

Personalised learning is not a new DfES initiative. Many schools and teachers have tailored curriculum and teaching methods to meet the needs of children and young people with great success for many years, as the examples throughout this pamphlet show. What is new is our drive to make the best practices universal. We want to help all schools and teachers establish their own approaches to personalised learning, so that across the education system the learning needs and talents of young people are used to guide decision making.




“Do you think that you are personalising learning in your school?...”



“... We are working towards it, we want every child to experience excellence in their own learning.”

## Principles at the heart of personalised learning

To build a successful system of personalised learning, we must begin by acknowledging that giving every single child the chance to be the best they can be, whatever their talent or background, is not the betrayal of excellence, it is the fulfilment of it. Personalised learning means high quality teaching that is responsive to the different ways students achieve their best. There is a clear moral and educational case for pursuing this approach. A system that responds to individual pupils, by creating an education path that takes account of their needs, interests and aspirations, will not only generate excellence, it will also make a strong contribution to equity and social justice.



“I want to be the first in my family to go to university and I really feel that my teachers are moving me in the right direction to help me get there.”

This leads directly to the principles that can help guide our day-to-day practices:

- for children and young people, it means clear learning pathways through the education system and the motivation to become independent, e-literate, fulfilled, lifelong learners;
- for schools, it means a professional ethos that accepts and assumes every child comes to the classroom with a different knowledge base and skill set, as well as varying aptitudes and aspirations; and that, as a result, there is a determination for every young person's needs to be assessed and their talents developed through diverse teaching strategies;
- for school governors, it means promoting high standards of educational achievement and well-being for every pupil, ensuring that all aspects of organising and running the school work together to get the best for all pupils;
- for the DfES and local authorities, it means a responsibility to create the conditions in which teachers and schools have the flexibility and capability to personalise the learning experience of all their pupils; combined with a system of intelligent accountability so that central intervention is in inverse proportion to success;
- and for the system as a whole, it means the shared goals of high quality and high equity.

The rationale of these principles is clear - to raise standards by focusing teaching and learning on the aptitudes and interests of pupils and by removing any barriers to learning. The key question is how collectively we build this offer for every pupil and every parent.

# The key components of personalised learning

Our starting point for delivering personalised learning is the expertise and professionalism of the whole school team. We know headteachers, teachers and support staff already do much to fulfil the potential of every pupil. Our belief is that there are five key components that can help to deepen and extend this personalisation of education.

## Assessment for Learning

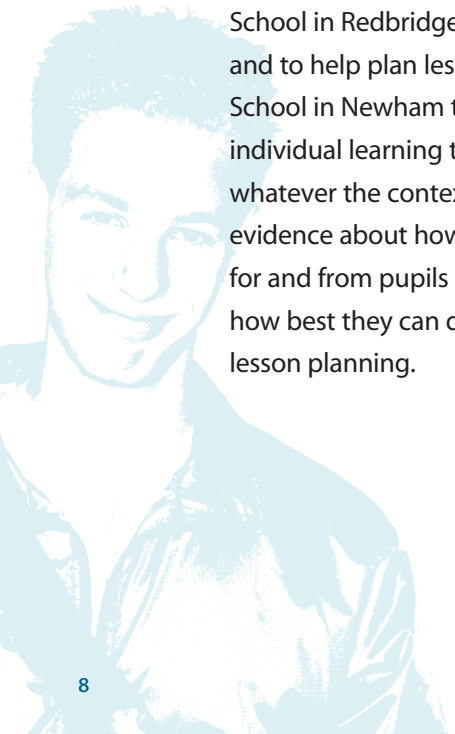
A personalised offer depends on really knowing the strengths and weaknesses of individual children and young people. We believe a key means of doing so is assessment for learning and the use of evidence and dialogue to identify every pupil's learning needs.

There are of course different ways to ally assessment for learning to the existing expertise of the teaching profession. Teachers at Seven Kings School in Redbridge use data to provide structured feedback to pupils and to help plan lessons according to need. At St. Bonaventure's School in Newham the combination of student tracking and agreed individual learning targets is used to tackle underperformance. But whatever the contextual practice, the rationale is always the same: clear evidence about how to drive up individual attainment; clear feedback for and from pupils so there is clarity on what they need to improve and how best they can do so; and a clear link between student learning and lesson planning.

## Effective Teaching and Learning Strategies

Personalised learning demands teaching and learning strategies that develop the competence and confidence of every learner by actively engaging and stretching them.

For teachers, it means a focus on their repertoire of teaching skills, their subject specialisms and their management of the learning experience. Personalised learning requires a range of whole class, group and individual teaching, learning and ICT strategies to transmit knowledge, to instil key learning skills and to accommodate different paces of learning.



“I've started putting quotes in my essays. What else can I do to make my work better? ...”

“... Yes, I've noticed! That's really good - and your work will improve even more if you can show why you are using the quote.”



For pupils, this means a focus on their learning skills and their capability to take forward their own learning. At Stifford Primary School in Grays, Essex, for example, teachers assist children to take control of their own learning by setting with them realistic learning challenges, such as re-designing the school grounds, and evaluating the outcomes of their learning. At Cramlington Community High School in Northumberland teachers help students identify and develop their learning skills and then structure their lessons according to how students will most effectively learn.

### Curriculum Entitlement and Choice

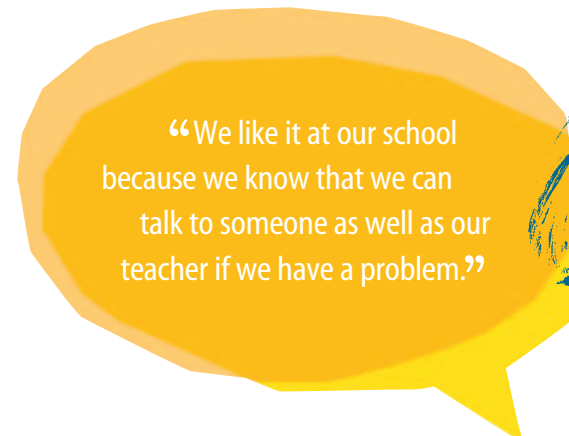
Personalised learning demands a curriculum entitlement and choice that delivers a breadth of study, personal relevance and flexible learning pathways through the education system.

The National Curriculum is a vital foundation for all 5 to 14 year olds. New GCSEs in subjects like Engineering, ICT, Health and Social Care broaden the offer, and the Tomlinson Working Group holds the potential for wider reform at 14-19. But it is teachers and schools who have the

capacity to harness the enquiry and enthusiasm of students. In primary schools this means teachers using the flexibilities that already exist to ally high standards in the basics with opportunities for enrichment and creativity. At Westbury Park Primary School in Bristol, regular curriculum-focused weeks, such as Arts, Science and Book weeks, offer the opportunity to explore the curriculum in greater depth. In the early secondary years it means students are actively engaged by exciting curricula and specialist subject enquiry. At 14-19 it means schools working together to extend curriculum choice - like at the Central Gateshead 6th Form Consortium, which offers a common prospectus, a wide range of academic and vocational courses and a choice of movement for students across participating institutions.



“I’ve been given a lot of help by my school to help me decide which vocational GCSEs to take - they’ve really understood what’s right for me.”



“We like it at our school because we know that we can talk to someone as well as our teacher if we have a problem.”

## School Organisation

Personalised learning demands that school leaders and teachers think creatively about school organisation, so as to best support high quality teaching and learning and to ensure that pupil performance and pupil welfare are mutually supportive.

Across the country there is a range of innovative responses. At Tidemill Primary School in Lewisham the benefits of workforce remodelling and increased planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time for teachers have resulted in one of the most dramatic school improvements in the country. At Lynn Grove High School in Norfolk effective use of ICT means that the school's four walls are no longer a constraint to pupil progress. A 'Virtual School'

provides online materials and support that are used extensively by students outside normal hours. At Ninestiles School in Birmingham there is a clear and consistent policy on 'behaviour for learning' to create an environment in which all students feel safe and secure and can flourish as individuals. The common purpose linking these strategies is a focus on the progress of every pupil. Their shared effect is to ensure pupils receive a consistently good experience of education with the emphasis both on progress and enjoyment.



“I was never very good at school myself, but is there anything I can do to help my daughter? ...”



“... Just ask her what she's been studying. You'll help by getting her to explain it. You don't always have to understand everything yourself.”

## Strong Partnership Beyond the School

Personalised learning demands strong partnership beyond the school to drive forward progress in the classroom, to remove barriers to learning and to support pupil well-being.

This means a strong partnership with parents and carers, so that they become more closely involved in their child’s learning and help improve behaviour and attendance. The English Martyrs Primary School in Sefton, for example, runs regular workshops with parents, carers, teachers and children so that they work together to increase participation and progression. It means strong partnerships with local institutions to extend the learning opportunities of young people and broaden their horizons. It means using the opportunities of the Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’ to integrate children’s services by bringing family support, social care and health services together with education to help support all children and in particular those with additional needs. Extended schools, such as King’s Park Primary in Bournemouth and Dyke House School in Hartlepool, can lead the way by reaching out to the community.

**These are the five key components of personalised learning. We believe they offer a framework for implementation: a set of tools for schools and teachers to employ contextually so as to respond to the challenges they face. We believe that these are shared principles. But we understand that practices will look different in different schools.**



## The National Conversation: schools leading reform

We would like you to join a national conversation about how personalisation can be used to drive success in every school. It is a conversation that has already started: at the series of conferences the DfES held with secondary headteachers and, with the Primary National Strategy, with primary headteachers during 2003; at the joint conferences being organised by the Specialist Schools Trust [www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk) and the Secondary Heads Association [www.sha.org.uk](http://www.sha.org.uk); through the Leadership Network of the National College for School Leadership [www.ncsl.org.uk/ldr](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/ldr); at learning exchanges between schools facing similar challenges; and in discussions in classrooms throughout the country.

We would like you to take a further step in the conversation by visiting the personalised learning website [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning) where you will be able to discuss with a system-wide audience:

- how you are personalising learning in your school, with the opportunity to collaborate on best practice by posting case studies on to the web;
- whether the resources for progress we are providing are helpful, many of which can be reviewed by following the web links at the back of this document;
- what more the DfES can do to help.

Building an offer of personalised learning is a significant challenge for teachers, schools and local and national government. But it is an offer that is massively in the interests of young people. We look forward to working with you to make it a reality.





## Resources for Progress:

**The Primary National Strategy** – is supporting schools to provide opportunities for all children to fulfil their potential through a commitment to high standards and excellence within an engaging, broad and rich curriculum which has an explicit focus on learning and teaching and assessment for learning. It is helping schools to secure early learning through the Foundation Stage, promote continuity between phases and build stronger links with parents as partners in learning. You can find further details of how the Primary National Strategy is providing this support with links to the associated materials for the immediate future. [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary)


**The Key Stage 3 National Strategy** – is helping schools to ensure all pupils make best progress and become motivated, independent learners by improving teaching and learning, developing assessment for learning and promoting inclusion and tackling underperformance through targeted intervention. It is helping schools to design curriculum and school strategies tailored to pupils' needs and aspirations and to involve parents as partners in learning. You can find details of how the KS3 National Strategy is providing this support, with links to the associated materials for the immediate future. [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3)

**Workforce Remodelling** – allows schools to give teachers the time and support they need to offer a more differentiated approach to meet the needs of individual pupils, by building a whole school team and thinking creatively about the use of all their resources. [www.remodelling.org](http://www.remodelling.org)

**The New Relationship with Schools** – will give schools greater flexibility over how they deploy their resources, with rigorous self-evaluation and the support of a school improvement partner helping schools to personalise learning. [www.teachernet.gov.uk/newrelationship](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/newrelationship)

**Extended Schools** – provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. [www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools)

**School Buildings** – run a website which includes information, designs and innovative ideas for shaping the environment for teaching and learning, together with information about the different types of capital funding allocated by the DfES to LEAs and schools. This includes details about the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme for secondary schools. [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/schoolbuildings](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/schoolbuildings)



“I go to Breakfast Club at school when Dad goes to work and sometimes he comes and learns French with me after school.”

**ICT in Schools** – holds massive potential to tailor education to the needs of young people. The website is a resource to help teachers embed ICT in their teaching and learning so that students benefit from the use of new technologies in the classroom.

[www.dfes.gov.uk/ictinschools](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ictinschools)

**The Gifted and Talented Programme** – supports schools in personalising education at the top end of the ability range. Students will receive a tailored teaching and learning programme built around the five components of personalised learning, together with complementary out-of-school study support.

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/giftedandtalented](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/giftedandtalented)

**Special Education Needs (SEN) and Disability** – the SEN website provides a growing range of materials for teachers and governors, setting out schools' responsibilities and highlighting effective practice in supporting particular groups of children with special needs.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen)

**14-19 Gateway** – provides up-to-date information, guidance and good practice in transforming 14-19 education, so as to give young people more freedom to follow programmes that meet their needs and aspirations. [www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19)

**GovernorNet** – provides governors with up-to-date information on everything governors need to know to fulfil their statutory responsibility for promoting high standards of educational achievement and well-being for all their pupils, including the latest governor information pack on Workforce Remodelling. [www.governornet.co.uk](http://www.governornet.co.uk)

**TeacherNet and the School Standards Site** – are web-based resources for teachers and schools, with ideas and support material to help schools personalise learning. The Teaching and Learning sections contain information ranging from details of DfES initiatives, school lesson plans and museum and gallery visits, to a guide for resources available from charities and help with pupils with medical needs.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk) and [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk)

**The Innovation Unit** – acts as a catalyst for change in education. Staffed by senior practitioners, the Unit bridges policy and practice to create an arena in which all parties can develop innovative responses to learning challenges that face the education system. On the website there is information about some of the work the Unit is developing on personalised learning, as well as how to join the Innovation Online Community's ongoing discussion about personalised learning.

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit)

**The Personalised Learning Team** – will monitor the personalised learning website and will be happy to work with you in this national discussion.

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning)