

Personalising learning

This paper was distributed at the GTC seminar 'Personalising learning: engaging all pupils' on 6 July 2007.

In April 2007, the General Teaching Council (GTC) provided its first advice to the Government on personalising learning in schools.

This seminar will inform the GTC's future advice, enable participants to share their experiences and provide an opportunity to hear from leading speakers.

The General Teaching Council has a statutory remit to advise Government and others on a wide range of issues which have a direct impact on standards of teaching and the quality of learning.

Personalised learning has become one of the most debated concepts in education in recent years and the GTC believes is increasingly important to ensure that the concept is coherent, universally understood and has a positive impact for all pupils.

The GTC's advice responds to recommendations made in the 2020 Vision report in January. This independent report was commissioned by the Government to create a vision for personalised learning, and was led by Christine Gilbert, who is now Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

The Council developed its advice based on its analysis of research evidence and its work with teachers, researchers and national policy organisations. The following paragraphs summarise the GTC's main areas of recommendation to Government.

1. Following the needs and interests of pupils

Personalising learning will involve changes to the roles of teachers and learners, to enable greater pupil participation and to reflect pupils' needs and interests. Schools are showing that this can best be achieved through a combination of assessment for learning, dialogue with pupils ('pupil voice') and the effective use of technology.

The Council recommends better support for teachers in understanding and using these approaches. This support should be available through improved resources and enhanced teacher learning.

2. Overcoming obstacles that prevent the personalisation of learning

The education system needs to separate assessment for national monitoring purposes from assessment that supports pupil learning. The current attempt to combine both assessment purposes through end of Key Stage testing is not only detrimental to pupil learning but also unsophisticated and inefficient in monitoring achievement nationally.

The GTC recommends a system that supports pupil learning and helps parents and teachers. The Government should shift the balance of schools' accountability towards parents and pupils, enabling improved dialogue with parents and less undue focus on national performance measures.

Teachers should have more flexibility in applying the curriculum, and schools should receive incentives to use existing flexibilities in the curriculum.

3. Addressing inequalities and meeting the needs of all pupils

Greater consideration should be given to each of the outcomes of Every Child Matters – a child's enjoyment, health, safety, positive contribution and economic well-being – alongside the academic achievements of pupils and schools.

Personalised learning should benefit all pupils and not just the 'gifted and talented' and those falling behind. Equally, the government and schools need to target teaching and resources towards early intervention for those at risk of underachievement.

The Government should support schools to implement their duties under equalities legislation, and teachers should have more opportunities to build their expertise in working with pupils with special education needs.

4. Personalising teacher learning and professional development

All teachers and staff should receive an entitlement to resourced access and participation in personalised – i.e. effective, relevant and sustained – continuing professional development.

Teachers need opportunities to enquire into effective and creative teaching approaches, and to develop their teaching practice accordingly.

How to find out more:

The GTC's full advice to government on personalising learning is available at www.gtce.org.uk/policy/policypapers

If you would like to find out more about the GTC's policy work in this area, please contact Andy Hudson: andrew.hudson@gtce.org.uk