



# Personalising learning – 4

Curriculum and advice & guidance

David Hargreaves

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Specialist Schools Trust  
EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY

## **Personalising learning – 4**

Curriculum and advice & guidance

A joint publication with The Secondary Heads Association

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## **This publication**

### **Audience**

Teachers and leaders at all levels in education.

### **Aim**

To show how two ‘gateways’ – curriculum and advice & guidance – can help both teachers and students in the journey towards personalising learning.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

This pamphlet reflects the presentations and discussions at the Specialist Schools Trust and Secondary Heads Association conferences in Leicester and London, June and July 2005. Thanks are due to the keynote presenters, Mark Hewlett (director, Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools) and David Andrews (education consultant) to the presenters from schools, for which contacts are provided at the end, and to Kai Vacher, head of personalising learning for the Specialist Schools Trust, and other colleagues who helped in the conduct of the conferences.

Personalised learning was defined by David Miliband when he was Minister for Schools: 'Personalised learning demands that every aspect of teaching and support is designed around a pupil's needs...'

The term personalising learning is preferable to personalised learning, which implies a product to be delivered rather than a professional process or journey. Teachers have always sought to do this, though they know that they do not in practice succeed in meeting every need of every student. So the injunction from ministers amounts to a plea to make any changes to current practice that will allow teachers to meet more of the needs of more students more fully than in the past.

In this series of six pamphlets, personalising learning is approached through nine gateways. The first pamphlet, *Personalising learning: next steps in working laterally* set the general context and outlined the gateways and the sequence of conferences and pamphlets:

- Student voice *and* assessment for learning (reported in the second pamphlet)

- Learning to learn *and* the new technologies (reported in the third pamphlet)
- Curriculum *and* advice & guidance (the subject of this pamphlet)
- Workforce development *and* mentoring & coaching (the subject of conferences in the summer and early autumn of 2005)
- The organisation and design of the school (the subject of the final conference in January 2006).

The conferences are revealing complex interactions between the gateways, which are not silos to be treated independently. Indeed, the overall impact of the gateways on students can be understood as a sequence of five core themes or strands that capture what characterises the student for whom learning is being successfully personalised:

- **Engagement** of the student in learning and schooling
- **Responsibility** assumed by the student for learning and for behaviour
- **Independence** in student control over learning
- **Maturity** in relationships with staff and peers
- **Co-construction** by students of their education and the design of teaching and learning.

The case studies reported in this pamphlet illustrate how these five themes constantly appear as a kind of trademark of successful personalisation.

The discussion of each gateway explored in this pamphlet is divided into two parts. The first part is an introductory overview of the area, drawing on both practical work and more theoretical ideas. It sets the gateway in the wider context of policy development and the gateways as a whole. The second part is based on case studies presented at conference, offering various stepping stones or suggestions on ways in which the gateway might be better constructed.

Personalising learning is a **journey** for both teachers and students. The learning involved cannot be rushed: the pace will vary from time to time as the journey develops its natural rhythms. Progress is made as those involved gain the confidence to move forward to more ambitious activities.

The general advice for each gateway is **think big – start small**. In other words, have the vision of where you might be when the stepping stones are in place, embedded in the culture and routine life of the school. **But** start with a small group of willing volunteers on a limited agenda of innovation from among the stepping stones. These become the foundations on which both to build more challenging developments and to draw other colleagues into the venture. The presenters of the case studies have shared the stages of how they progressively developed policies and new practices for the curriculum and advice & guidance over several years: these are not quick fix solutions.

It may be helpful to start work simultaneously, with different teams, on more than one gateway. Most of our case studies reveal how they developed at least two in parallel. The teams soon discover the overlap and see how each supports and strengthens the other. Such an approach demonstrates how distributed innovation requires distributed leadership.

The wealth of practical experience with the gateways cannot be captured in a short pamphlet. So details of the contributors, and guidance to further reading and resources, may be found at the end of the pamphlet.

### **Questions**

Who in your school is ready to think big about the curriculum or the advice & guidance offered to students and others?

Which individuals among your staff are ready to undertake the work involved in the chosen gateway(s)?

Which departments/groups are ready to explore curriculum reform?

What background preparation is needed? How much help comes from the resources, suggestions and potential contacts provided in this pamphlet?

# Chapter 2 Curriculum: the gateway

*'Dynamic governments remain porous. Renewal rarely comes from within. One of the optical illusions of government is that those inside of it think of themselves as the drivers of change... Yet most far-reaching ideas and changes come from outside... Governments are more often vehicles than initiators. They play a role in embedding these changes but typically they get involved only at a late stage... The smarter governments around the world realise that they need to build innovation into their everyday working: through experimental zones and pilots, competitive funds and rewards for promising ideas. And new ideas need time to evolve – preferably away from the spotlight... Most radical change has to start outside government, usually from the bottom rather than the top.'*  
(italics in the original)

The writer is Geoff Mulgan who was the first head of Demos, the influential think tank, and who from 1997 to 2004 played a key role in 10 Downing Street, including being head of policy and director of the strategy unit. His is a voice of considerable experience and authority.

The broad line adopted in our conferences and pamphlets is that personalising learning is nothing less than the path to the transformation of secondary education. It is our belief that this transformation will be led by schools, using their capacity to innovate and to disseminate their innovations by working laterally. If this is done well, then as Mulgan suggests government education policy will follow.

In our journey through the first four gateways, we have come to recognise the importance of students as co-designers and co-producers of the learning and teaching at the heart of

transformation. The curriculum gateway is a special challenge, for unlike the first four gateways, it is already strongly prescribed from the centre. There seems to be little opportunity for students to co-construct the curriculum when teachers themselves seem to have so little room to manoeuvre. The national curriculum was not devised by schools and then later adopted by government: it was imposed on schools in 1988 in a form determined by ministers. Moreover it has, despite limited revisions, been so prescriptive that there has been little opportunity for teacher-led innovation. Indeed, the way the curriculum is organised and taught – the realm of pedagogy – though in theory left to schools, has in practice also been heavily constrained by government policy. Is the curriculum an exception to Mulgan's general thesis, or could and should it apply here too? It is this terrain that this pamphlet explores.

In the first pamphlet of the series, this transformation was described as a transition from the 19th century educational imaginary – what people at the birth of compulsory education took as their natural and taken-for-granted assumptions – to the educational imaginary of the 21st century, where quite different assumptions are now being tested. In terms of curriculum, there is a strong contrast between the two imaginaries:

### **19th century imaginary**

- Educational aims and outcomes are few, simple and uncontested
- Curriculum is specified as knowledge to be absorbed
- Knowledge is conceived as subjects or disciplines that can be pre-specified in sequential detail and be taught and learned in lessons.

### **21st century imaginary**

- Educational aims and outcomes are many, complex and contested
- Curriculum is specified as competences to be acquired

- Competences are conceived as essential learnings that cannot easily be pre-specified in sequential detail, but are best acquired through activities designed as projects.

At present we are in transition between the two imaginaries. We have not by any means wholly abandoned the 19th century assumptions: they cling to our thinking and our practice, sometimes for good but often as an impediment. The national curriculum belongs to the 19th century educational imaginary but dominates policy and practice. Most have yet to grasp the implications of the emerging curriculum models of a 21st century educational imaginary, though we are often attracted to new conceptions of what should and could be learned during the school years and the very different practices these would probably demand.

Every school has to choose where it now stands on curriculum issues during this period of transition. To what degree should we retain or abandon the curriculum of the 19th century educational imaginary and to what extent should we explore or embrace the curriculum of the 21st century imaginary? This is perhaps the most challenging of decisions that schools now make. The first four gateways could be constructed, even in quite radical ways, without necessarily changing the existing national curriculum: but the four gateways that follow the curriculum gateway – advice & guidance, mentoring and coaching, workforce development, and school design and organisation – are all deeply affected by decisions made on the curriculum.

### **The return of educational aims**

At the beginning of mass schooling in 1870, educational aims were openly debated. For the middle and upper classes, the curriculum and its outcomes were designed as appropriate for an educated person of the ruling classes: a classical education. For the working classes, the aims and content were limited to the requirements of industrial society: the masses should not learn too much for fear of stimulating social revolution. Over the next 100 years the aims of education, the content of the curriculum, and the outcomes of schooling were subject to

interaction and adjustment in the light of the changing demands of society. Issues of pedagogy and the accountability of schools were secondary. The secondary school curriculum resisted change, and the birth of the comprehensive school did not fundamentally disturb the dominance of the academic curriculum designed for grammar and independent schools.

By the 1980s, the key issue was the accountability of schools and teachers. Appropriate performance indicators and metrics were developed (especially student tests for each key stage), which shaped the outcomes of schooling (performance in league tables), which in turn influenced how the stabilised national curriculum was taught. Educational aims were a marginal issue, despite the fact that for the many educational stakeholders, including employers, aims and outcomes were more extensive and varied than in the past and widely contested.

Today the government grip of curriculum and educational outcomes remains tight: the pressure of accountability for student achievement narrowly measured by test performance still rules – despite some acknowledgement of the need for ‘intelligent accountability’.

And there are some who would keep it so, in order to retain much of the 19th century educational imaginary. Thus Chris Woodhead, the former chief inspector of schools, wrote in *the Daily Telegraph*: [In the construction of the national curriculum] ‘what ought to have been a relatively straightforward exercise in the definition of subject knowledge turned into a doctrinal dispute about the purposes of education, the need to preserve the seamless web of knowledge and the importance of cross-curricular skills and themes. I know. I was there. I bear the scars... What matters is the teaching of individual subjects, and what matters within each subject is the definition of the essential knowledge and understanding that should be taught to children... I want students to be taught more facts.’

We shall explore alternative approaches to what is ‘essential’ shortly, but the matter of educational aims is surely not some arcane ‘doctrinal dispute’ but rather a matter of urgent and proper debate. We must ask what is now needed to enable young people to face the undoubted challenges of the 21st century.

In England, the comprehensive school curriculum has consisted mainly of the academic subjects and disciplines of the grammar schools. From the 1970s onwards, various attempts at adjustment were made, both conceptually, such as HMI’s ‘areas of experience’ or organisationally, such as various types of integration in the humanities, in the sciences and in PSHE. But with the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988 most experimentation ended. Curriculum development was largely brought to a halt for a decade.

### **The new curriculum development: the case of England**

The most notable step on the road to a curriculum for the 21st century educational imaginary began with Valerie Bayliss’s discussion paper for the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), *Redefining schooling*, in 1998, which led to the launch of the *Opening minds* project a year later.

Its radical intention was clear from the start. It begins with educational aims and then seeks to define the content of education that will realise those aims. ‘We start from the proposition, first, that the education system of the future must equip individuals to meet the demand and challenges that they will face in managing their lives and their work; and secondly that these will be so great as to require a reappraisal of what it is that people should learn from their education. The importance of the school curriculum in this context can hardly be underestimated. Curriculum – the specification of what is to be taught in schools – is a powerful, perhaps the most powerful, driver of education... It is the underpinning philosophy and content of the curriculum which effectively defines the purpose of the system... It is potentially the engine for transforming learning.’

This is distinctly opposed to the stance of both Conservative government and, at that time, the newly elected Labour government. Curriculum change was not held by Labour to be a key component of the much heralded ‘transformation’ that was to replace mere ‘improvement’.

*Opening minds* did not contest the stated (and unimpeachably bland) aims of the national curriculum. Rather it questioned the outcomes of education by asking what through these general aims would become the educated person of the 21st century. Specifying the kind of person that schooling should create leads naturally to a question of whether the curriculum is appropriate to that task. To challenge both educational outcomes and the underpinning curriculum is to interrogate, even if implicitly, the aims of education. By refusing to make accountability the core issue, *Opening minds* returned attention to a pre-1988 debate in which curriculum was the link between the aims or purposes of education (what education is for) and its outcomes (the kinds of person that schooling should produce).

The project defined the curriculum in five broad categories conceptualised as a collection of the competences of the educated person, namely:

- Competences for learning
- Competences for citizenship
- Competences for relating to people
- Competences for managing situations
- Competences for managing information.

The conventional subjects would be drawn upon as key resources for the realisation by learners of these competences. A small number of schools pioneered the project and today some 60 schools are implementing a version of it. Among them are some of the conference presentations to be discussed in the next chapter.

Happily, educators now agree that we shall not get the curriculum right if it is disconnected from educational aims. A good curriculum, Mark Hewlett told the conference, ‘is directly

derived from aims and objectives which clearly and explicitly describe the whole range of (i) knowledge and understanding, (ii) skills and (iii) personal qualities and attitudes which it is hoped that the learners will have acquired after they have experienced the curriculum.'

Knowledge and understanding, he argued, includes:

- Basic competences
- Academic disciplines
- Knowledge of problems and conflicts people are likely to face
- Knowledge of opportunities
- Investigative skills.

Skills and general abilities include:

- Learning skills
- Thinking skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Teamwork skills
- Planning and organisation skills.

Personal qualities and attitudes include:

- Common sense and judgment
- Self-discipline
- Perseverance
- Resilience
- Drive and initiative
- Sensitivity and empathy
- Integrity
- Leadership.

Most of the national curriculum could be successfully taught without the learner acquiring most of these skills and qualities. Something is going wrong.

### **The new curriculum development: the case of Tasmania**

Meanwhile, at the other side of the world, in the small state of Tasmania, the educational community (ministers, officials, principals, teachers, governing bodies, parents, employers, higher education etc.) has been following a parallel path. This starts from the question: what are our values and what are the purposes or aims of education? Their conclusion is that students need to learn:

- To relate, participate and care
- To live full, healthy lives
- To create purposeful futures
- To act ethically
- To learn
- To think, know and understand.

From this, they derive what they call the five essential learnings:

- Thinking (including enquiry and reflective thinking)
- Communicating (including numeracy and various forms of literacy)
- Personal futures (including identity, well-being, ethical conduct)
- Social responsibility (including acting democratically, valuing diversity)
- World futures (including technological solutions and sustainable futures).

These in turn culminate in outcomes for students as

- Inquiring and reflective thinkers
- Effective communicators
- Self-directed ethical people

- Responsible citizens
- World contributors.

Principles for teaching, learning and assessment are then devised to realise the essential learnings. (Further details can be found on the Tasmanian website – see end of pamphlet.)

These ‘essential learnings’, like the RSA’s ‘competences’ can be realised in many different ways. There are three critical questions:

- What is the place of the conventional subjects and disciplines in a curriculum of this kind?
- If they have a place, in what form should they be contained or represented?
- How should such a curriculum be taught in secondary schools?

The traditional subjects and disciplines have a place in such a curriculum for two reasons. First, they are the way in which much of the knowledge created over past centuries has been constructed and transmitted. We cannot deprive the next generation of this inheritance, though their future knowledge may well be framed in different ways. Secondly, the 14-19 curriculum continues for most students to be constrained by public examinations, particularly the GCSE and A-level. The syllabuses (‘specifications’) and examinations are largely in the form of conventional subjects. So much teaching and learning in key stage 4 will continue to be in subjects.

In practice, therefore, most schools will find it easier to develop a different approach to curriculum in key stage 3, where the teaching and learning need not take the form of subjects. Instead the learning can be organised around the competences or essential learnings, and the subjects subsumed under them. This is precisely where *Opening minds* has been most influential. Easing the transition from key stage 2 to 3 is not just about social adjustment, but about continuity in learning and pedagogy, which challenges the sudden imposition on 11 year olds of separate subjects taught by a large number of specialist teachers.

Moreover, while the subjects are almost universally taught in relatively short blocks of time called lessons, competences and essential learnings might be taught in a very different way. Many schools have begun to increase the length of lessons, even up to a whole day devoted to one topic or theme, which of course forces teachers to adopt a different pedagogy – usually with beneficial effects on students, who come to play more active and varied roles.

### **Lessons and projects**

The key stage 3 strategy did lead to many improved lessons, but at the cost of making the lesson itself a more standardised and predictable unit. It sought to reinvigorate the lesson, rather than to challenge whether this is the best unit of teaching and learning. Some pupils continue to be disengaged because they are still bored by the content and the way in which it is taught.

There is, however, an alternative formulation: the project, which may well be more appropriate to a curriculum constructed in terms of competences or essential learnings. The project, at its best, contrasts sharply with the lesson in a number of ways:

- The task is big and authentic: it's a real-world problem to be solved
- The task is co-constructed by teacher and students
- The task has clear outcomes which are seen by students as worthwhile
- The task solution involves a demanding range of competences
- The task involves some time out of school
- The task takes some time to complete – usually at least a full day
- Completion depends on adult help and advice
- Completion depends on teamwork
- Completion demands high level of feedback and on-the-job flexibility

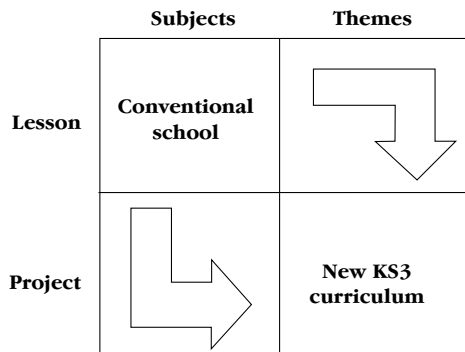
- Success is celebrated.

Ask students what experiences meet these criteria, and the answer will almost always refer to a major extra-curricular activity. It is no accident that these events are the most cherished and long remembered experiences of secondary education. They characterise personalised learning at its best. But the ‘lesson’ has become so sacred and unquestionable a unit of teaching and learning that we have rarely sought to teach the official curriculum in a different way.

Projects can be taught through a series of lessons – but with difficulty. Treat the above list as a set of criteria for a really good lesson, and you will soon see how rare it would be for a lesson to meet most, let alone all, of them. Projects demand a different way of using time and space than conventional lessons. Nor should we confuse themes with projects. Themes are ways of providing coherence to multi-disciplinary schemes, and as such may well give students a better rationale for what it is they learn. But themes are not necessarily taught through a project structure.

I suspect that competences and essential learnings are best learned through themes taught as projects, but there are intermediate stages of themes taught through lessons (eg integrated humanities) or subjects taught through projects (a day given over occasionally to a single subject) – see figure 1.

Figure 1 Competences and essential learnings are best learned through themes taught as projects



Themes taught through projects may consist of nothing more than the traditional subjects and disciplines – and some argue that old wine in new bottles is all that is needed to engage key stage 3 learners in their schooling and to prepare them for 21st century living.

In key stage 4 and beyond, work-related learning, work-based learning and extended work experience offer rich opportunities for project-type structures for learning. At King's School, Winchester, for example, post-16 pathways and are not divided into academic and vocational; all have a vocational element. While lessons meet few of the criteria for a project, much of what happens in work-based learning meets many of them.

Life in the workplace is sometimes said to be more engaging than school for some young people because it is more 'relevant': my suspicion is that its attraction derives from the essential authenticity of a hands-on task – where the project criteria necessarily apply.

### **Disciplines, multi-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity**

For my own part, I do not believe the acquisition of subjects or disciplines would be enough to ensure that young people acquire the Tasmanian 'essential learnings' or the RSA's 'competences'. These, I suggest, demand more than multi-disciplinarity, namely trans-disciplinarity, and the difference between them is crucial.

'Trans-disciplinarity... develops a distinct but evolving framework to guide problem-solving efforts. This is generated and sustained in the context of application and not developed first and then applied to that context later by a different group of practitioners. The solution does not arise solely, or even mainly, from the application of knowledge that already exists. Although elements of existing knowledge must have entered into it, genuine creativity is involved and the theoretical consensus, once attained, cannot easily be reduced to disciplinary parts.... [Trans-disciplinarity] is dynamic. It is problem-solving capability on the move.... New knowledge produced in this way may not easily fit into any one of the disciplines that contributed to the solution.'

(Gibbons *et al*, 1994.)

Trans-disciplinarity is most obvious in higher education, especially at postgraduate level, where big issues are tackled that go beyond the limits of a discipline's knowledge-base. But it is also necessarily present, albeit in a diluted form, in the secondary curriculum when several subjects underpin a theme that is taught through project structures rather than lessons. I say necessarily present, because in true projects there has to be an authentic problem to solve, and such problems cannot be solved by just adding together bits from different disciplines.

In seeking a solution to the problem, students naturally draw on some of the disciplines and thereby learn to master them; but they also quite naturally look beyond the disciplines and thus begin to recognise that disciplines have limits in tackling real-world problems. It is here that learners can begin to be genuinely creative, and the need for creative problem-solving is at the heart of engaging young people in their formal education. Thus we see the trans-disciplinarity in the key stage 3 curriculum of some of our best schools. For example, in the learning-to-learn course at Cramlington Community High School, the curriculum consists of themes such as *Communication in the 21st century, Living cities, The global citizen, Can science save us?*

A challenge for subject specialisms is to provide a lead in the very difficult task of discovering how the subject can be effectively taught and learned in a trans-disciplinary context as well as in separate provision. In the past, much multi-disciplinary teaching failed both to teach the fundamentals of the contributory disciplines and to reach a level of true trans-disciplinarity.

There should be no doubt about the level of expertise that is needed here: trans-disciplinarity is achieved only when teachers are experts in the disciplines, knowing both their strengths and limitations. Teachers with a poor grasp of the disciplines or with a narrow, inward-looking view of their subject do not make a success of trans-disciplinarity.

## A two-year key stage 3 and other possibilities

Many schools are experimenting with various versions of a two-year key stage 3 for some or even all students. The common perception is that this is designed for 'able' students who can take GCSE a year early and then immediately embark on AS studies. It can also be used to provide an 'extra' year free from the national curriculum – not necessarily year 9 and not necessarily involving taking GCSEs early. The year can be used for learning-to-learn courses or for intensive study such as immersion in a modern foreign language or in-depth studies, in all of which it is much easier to use project structures. Indeed it may well be that projects provide a better preparation for A-level and/or vocational studies as well as a more rounded education and life skills. It is projects and opportunities for students to become researchers that encourage them to gain independence in their learning (see Personalising learning – 2, page 16).

The five years that make up key stages 3 and 4 were designed as three years followed by two years – not for a good reason, but because preparation for the GCSE assumed two years, so key stage 3 had to be three years long. Schools are now beginning to experiment with alternatives to 3+2, such as:

- **2+3** (move quickly through key stage 3 to provide a longer key stage 4 preparation for GCSE)
- **2+2+1** (an extra year after early GCSE, with various possibilities, such as additional GCSEs and/or vocational courses or tasters, an enriched year before post-16 courses, or an early start to AS courses)
- **1+2+2** (a transitional year, perhaps with learning to learn courses and/or consolidation of literacy and numeracy, before embarking on a two-year key stage 3 national curriculum)
- **2+1+2** (a break year before beginning GCSE courses, with projects to consolidate key stage 3 learning and to ensure engagement)
- **3+2**, as normal, but condensing mainstream teaching to leave one quarter to one third of the whole period for regular days or weeks of concurrent projects, immersion and enrichment.

It may be that the needs of different students will require different patterns: why, apart from administrative convenience, should one size fit all? Stages are ceasing to be strictly age-related. Key stage 3 can be reduced to two years for all students, as at Saffron Walden County High School, but it is possible, though administratively more complicated, for several patterns to be contained within this three-year period. Some students need extra support and consolidation; some need additional challenge or enrichment; others need the experience of school to be radically altered – project work, work-based learning, etc. Given that many of the new patterns are based on stage of learning, not age, then the age-cohort, which has been at the heart of secondary education, is giving way to mixed-age groupings – inevitable if the GCSE or key stage tests are to be taken when the student is ready rather than when convention demands. Despite the constraints of the key stage tests and threat to the sanity of the timetabler, is this not what a serious approach to personalisation necessarily entails?

And once key stages 3 and 4 are given new structures, then this opens post-16 provision to being structured differently too. It may be that our traditional assumption that anyone taking A-level in a mainstream subject will have pursued that subject for each year during key stages 3 and 4 is not necessarily warranted. Is it really essential for an A-level student in, say, history or French or chemistry, to have followed this standard route? Is it this assumption that has produced a kind of gridlock for many schools over the structure of years 7 to 11? Are there alternative and more flexible structures during these years by which students can indeed be given an adequate grounding for A-level courses?

Clearly, the days of the very concept of ‘key stages’ in secondary education are now numbered: they imply a fixed structure of 3+2+2 with stable age-cohorts, which in most schools will, I suggest, disappear within the next few years.

## **Conclusion**

Personalising learning entails designing a curriculum and pedagogy that meet a wide range of educational aims directed at educating the whole person. The national curriculum and its associated assessment regime have not succeeded in this task.

Some schools are developing new approaches to the curriculum in key stage 3, through different structures and with a different pedagogy but still retaining many of the strengths of the traditional subjects and disciplines.

As for 14-19, at the time of writing the government's proposals, following the Tomlinson report, have yet to be finalised, and so have not been discussed here.

It is an open question whether we shall in due course reach a new consensus on what makes a good curriculum for the whole of secondary education.

### Questions

To what extent are your educational aims for students being realised by the national curriculum, especially in key stage 3?

Which aspects of the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 (i) do you think most need to change, and (ii) do you plan to change in your school?

Are the approaches of *Opening minds* and essential learnings attractive to you? Could they be used as a basis for curriculum reform in your school?

How in practice can you induct your students into the disciplines and simultaneously provide them with an experience in trans-disciplinarity?

How much of the teaching in your school has the structure of the project? To what degree and in what ways might you replace lessons with projects, especially in key stage 3?

Do you see value in alternatives to the 3+2 structure for key stages 3 and 4? Does one single pattern need to apply to all students?

Is curriculum reform in your school being impeded by a conservative approach to timetabling?

Is your curriculum provision appropriate for, and a path to, the 21st century educational imaginary?

# Chapter 3 Curriculum: stepping stones

Parents understand that much of the primary school curriculum is not necessarily taught in the form of discrete subjects; but they assume the secondary curriculum will indeed be so taught. Some parents – especially middle-class, well-educated parents – are often deeply suspicious of anything different, even of integrated science as against physics, chemistry and biology. Secondary schools, in this view, get down to ‘real’ learning and that means subjects taught as subjects so labelled by a subject expert.

The competences and essential learnings are not absent from the conventional subjects of the secondary curriculum. But they appear in them only partially, and almost always in an implicit and incoherent way, so that they are not experienced directly by either staff or students.

So how make the transition? How is the school supposed to move in key stage 3 from the ordinary subject-based curriculum to the competences and essential learnings? Whether the curriculum is in this form, or remains wholly or largely as subjects, how might a school move from a conventional 3+2+2 structure to a different one, or more radically, to a range of concurrent alternative structures to meet more fully the needs of more students?

There are no obvious stepping stones. Each school has to make its own diagnosis of its problems and then decide on the next steps. The case studies provided here are a resource of ideas and practical steps from which a school seeking curriculum change can draw. Note that every school seems to involve the following.

- The school's head and leadership team believe that sustained or increased improvement through personalisation requires some rethinking about the curriculum.
- The driver is to ensure that students get a better experience of learning, and it is this that leads to questions about conventional curriculum content and structures.
- The curriculum gateway needs to be reformed alongside change in other gateways.
- Change is designed to be reversible if success is not achieved.
- The staff who try new ways of working are volunteers.
- Future developments are built on a rigorous evaluation of what has happened in the pilot.
- The timetable becomes the servant of the curriculum, not its master.

### **St Luke's C of E Secondary School, Portsmouth**

(headteacher Krysia Butwilowska)

In 1999, after OfSTED inspection, the school was under threat of closure and the new head was brought in for the school's last chance. Immediately she set about the major task of the restructuring and re-culturing the school to get it out of special measures as rapidly as possible.

Reform of the curriculum was held to be an essential part of the solution to meet the needs of the students, many of whom come from a disadvantaged background. At the heart of the change was the reduction of key stage 3, in which the foundation subjects would be condensed into two years, combined with an emphasis on literacy to give access to the whole curriculum. Integrated studies was introduced, in which 18 of the 25 hours would be spent with one teacher who, wherever possible, would continue with the same students for several years. This provided a new stability and continuity in learning as well as a better transition from primary school. In addition, some subjects were offered in whole-day sessions, which meant that the curriculum could be given the structure of a project rather than the conventional lesson, with obvious benefits for learners.

About two thirds of the students were due to follow a vocational pathway, with a mix of GCSE and GNVQ. The staff were convinced that many would be better engaged with their learning if they could get some qualifications under their belt before year 11. The condensed key stage 3 meant that options could be started early in year 9, and some students – and not just the academic ones – were able to fast-track to public examinations in year 10. This proved to motivate many students: it raised their self-confidence as well as their expectations and aspirations. It encouraged students to strive for success in the core subjects as well as providing much more flexibility in year 11, allowing students to work off-site in work settings or in the local college.

The results demonstrated the power of the curriculum and associated structural reforms. The GCSE performance shot from 6% 5+A\*-C in 2001 to 45% in 2004, making St Luke's the seventh most improved school in the country. The head – rightly in my view – treats retention rates as a more accurate indicator of the extent to which the changes reflect the success of personalisation, and the improvement in meeting students' needs. In 2000 17% of year 11 went on to study in college: in 2004 this figure had increased to 60%.

Personalisation through curriculum reform was central to what the head described as a challenging journey for all involved. From threatened closure to a high performance by staff and students tells its own story of how personalising the curriculum can enhance achievement.

### **John Cabot CTC, Bristol** (principal David Carter)

The conference presentation was entitled 'Creating a new generation of learners': the radical change to the year 7 curriculum is grounded in a commitment to making better learners fit for life in the 21st century. The focus on learning is manifest in many small ways in the school. Heads of department, for example, have been given new titles to emphasise their leadership in learning. So the head of mathematics has become the leader of learning in mathematics.

The school has dropped the 3+2 structure in favour of a 1+2+2 model, with year 7 as a transition year, in structure, content and style. In terms of content, the head has been seeking a better balance between knowledge and skills in students' curriculum diet and so year 7 focuses strongly on learning to learn and the acquisition of competences that will be drawn on in years 8-11 and beyond. The competences are largely based on those of the RSA's *Opening minds*, described above. They are taught through five themes that become the framework for the year 7 curriculum:

- Learning to learn
- Community and environment
- Communication
- Lifestyles and health
- Finance and enterprise.

Each theme comprises several projects. For example, the communication theme has as its first project *Celebration city*, which explores the question 'How and why does the community of Bristol celebrate?' A related project is called *Innovative city* which explores the question: 'How do we fit into our city – and how does Bristol fit into the world?' The projects that make up the five themes are thus both multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary. The national curriculum is not taught through subjects, but the subjects are drawn on as material and resources relevant to the themes and their projects.

Such a curriculum cannot be taught in a conventional way. The school works a 45-period week. At any one time, year 7 students follow two projects, each using some nine periods. Fridays are called Innovation Day and the nine periods are devoted to a topic on science and technology. The remaining periods are allocated as follows:

- 4 periods each to literacy and numeracy
- 2 periods to Euro-time – MFL and the relevant culture
- 2 periods to arts

- 2 periods to ICT combined with citizenship
- 4 periods of PE.

Such a curriculum needs to be taught in a different way. The students remain in the same room for three days of the week and are taught by the same teacher for two and a half days a week. There is clearly continuity with the students' experience of primary education.

To ensure that the competences are not mere rhetoric that might get lost in the content of the themes, each student has a Competence Passport, in which the student's achievement in terms of the competences linked to the themes/projects is recorded and evaluated.

Huge emphasis is placed on learners becoming more independent in, and taking responsibility for, their learning. It is not just a matter of the overarching changes described above: there are also many minor changes in practice. While it is common nowadays at the beginning of a lesson for teachers to summarise what happened in a previous lesson, at this school three students are asked to provide this recap, which serves a double function of ensuring that students learn to do this independently, and of providing the teacher with feedback on student perception of the purposes and outcomes of the previous lesson.

The school's approach is bearing fruit. The staff are finding that the students are more engaged in year 8 and beyond, and are learning better. Indeed, aspects of year 8 curriculum are having to be scrutinised because of the high levels of achievement of the year 7 students. The school is looking at providing a range of ways in which to structure the remaining four years, but is also moving towards one that is not mentioned among those listed at the end of the last chapter, namely 1+3+1. In this structure, students complete year 7 as already described, and then some begin GCSE work in year 8, with further GCSEs in years 9 and 10, leaving year 11 free for a whole range of possibilities.

This is the only school I know of that is planning to condense much of what has been the normal content of the five-year key stages 3 and 4 into the middle three years, leaving the outer years 7 and 11 open to radical change.

**St John's School and Community College, Marlborough**  
(headteacher Patrick Hazlewood)

In 2001 the head felt the school had reached a plateau and that, if the school was to continue to improve, a radical change was preferable to sliding gradually down the slope. The obstacle to improvement, he felt as a practising teacher as well as head, was the national curriculum.

The starting point was a simple question: what does effective learning look like? The answer from the point of view of the subject teacher is reasonably clear. But what if the same question is asked from the learner's point of view? During any week, the student is presented with several bodies of knowledge (ie subjects) cut up into smaller slabs and presented in short blocks of time (ie lessons). This complex whole as experienced by the student is not really seen or understood by each specialist teacher, who is largely ignorant of what happens to the learners outside their specialism.

The effect, the leadership team concluded, is an incoherent experience of learning that turns many students off, even when they apparently accept the school's routines. This could not be squared with the demands that the 21st century would make on learners, demands that were much more likely to be met by the competences suggested by the RSA's *Opening minds* project to which the school became linked. The staff decided that three year 7 classes/groups would follow the RSA curriculum as a pilot or experimental group, and the other six classes would serve as a control group. The teaching team of 20 decided on a structure of six modules (without subjects being taught separately), each lasting six weeks, with cross-disciplinary titles, taught by just six teachers per group.

Once the new programme was underway, the learning experience did indeed become more coherent for students. But there was also a surprise that had not been expected: the

students began to take more control over, and show independence in, their learning. The new system laid high expectations on learners, who responded by taking more responsibility.

The modules also developed a kind of unpredictability: there was no clear, inexorable endpoint, but an openness of multiple possible directions. Choices had to be made and reasons articulated for making a choice. This is, of course, a feature of many authentic tasks. The effect on learners was deeper engagement: they wanted to go on working at the task even when formal study was technically over.

It became unnecessary to set homework as the students naturally continued with the work or prepared for the next stage. Involving parents in students' out-of-school work became easier, because it is a more natural form of adult-child collaboration.

The modules did cover the content of the national curriculum, but because the content was organised, taught and learned in a very different way, it did not *feel* like the national curriculum, to either staff or students. And when it came to the year 9 tests, the students in the pilot performed significantly better in all subjects than the control group taught the national curriculum in the conventional subject-based way. Their improvement has continued into year 10, and their coursework is markedly better than expected. Attendance and behaviour also improved – the side-effects of deeper engagement.

The group that found this experiment most difficult was, of course, the teachers. They had to have the courage to come outside their safe subject boxes and take the risks of treating knowledge and understanding by students, and thus their own expertise, in a new and scary way. But the success of the pilot attracted new followers: by the second year, nearly four times as many teachers wanted to be involved. It was teachers, not just students, who needed deep support for radical change.

**Saffron Walden County High School, Essex** (headteacher John Hartley)

This is a large (2000 pupils), high achieving school (84% 5+A\*-C in GCSE), serving a relatively advantaged area, with a history of commitment to innovation under successive headteachers. It began to challenge its own assumptions about its curriculum provision in terms of personalisation: a one-size-fits-all programme; too subject based and teacher led; too driven by the age-cohort structure; insufficient enrichment.

The decision was then made to tackle key stage 3 in two ways. First, to improve transfer and transition from primary schools to enhance continuity and progression; and secondly to reduce key stage 3 to two years for all students.

This in turn stimulated innovation in learning schemes, student tracking, assessment and academic review. Year 8 students improved in attendance and worked harder at lessons they found more interesting. Levels of attainment and rates of progress improved. Teachers too liked the change and found teaching more enjoyable. The common assumption that spending more time on teaching a subject necessarily improves learning and achievement was now being challenged.

Options to be taken in year 9 had to be decided at the end of year 8, which meant that guidance for students and parents needed to be improved.

The intended key benefit of the key stage 3 reforms was, of course, to provide more flexibility in the 14-19 years. From year 9 subjects can be taken in one year or two, to ensure that assessment occurs when the student is ready. This means that in year 11 students can either start on AS or choose various forms of enrichment. There are obvious timetabling challenges, since AS classes potentially contain students from year 11, 12 and 13. The transition to the new system is particularly difficult. But staff believe it is worth the effort to personalise learning.

## **Priory Technology College, Preston**

(headteacher Peter Young)

As in many schools, staff at Priory are seeking to provide greater choice and a more personalised curriculum offer in key stage 4, and the means of achieving this is through alternative pathways.

Students may choose one of three pathways, with guidance from teachers. All students follow a core of 9 periods out of 25, covering English, maths, PE and RE. All other subjects are flexible in terms of choice and length of study.

Pathway 1 (15% of students) is aimed at the gifted and talented. This is a traditional academic course, but students take English and ICT GCSE a year early to provide space in year 11 for either early AS or a range of student-driven enrichment activities.

Pathway 2 (70% of students) is subdivided in four option blocks: technology and science; ICT; humanities; creative arts.

Pathway 3 (15% of students) is aimed at students for whom the traditional curriculum and GCSE diet is inappropriate. In year 10 the students have half a day in the local college and follow ASDAN units. In a radical move, it was decided that they would, with some extra teaching, take English and maths GCSE in year 10. Levels of achievement rose as a result of this concentration. Students were motivated to gain the qualification, and space was released for a different structure in year 11, when students spend two to three days out of school on work-related and work-based study.

These three pathways are not segregated streams in which students are taught separately. In most lessons, students from more than one pathway will be working together. The timetabling is, of course, very complicated, but as at Saffron Walden the staff are convinced that it is worth the effort.

## **Bridgemary Community School, Gosport, Hampshire**

(headteacher Cheryl Heron)

At this school, which serves a disadvantaged community and has recently come out of special measures, personalising learning is seen to demand a move away from the narrow obsession with GCSE that hinders the need to meet individual learning needs.

So staff, students and parents are being provided with the more sophisticated language of the national qualifications framework and the ladder of levels of achievement in qualifications, from access to level 3.

In addition, the much wider range of qualifications that are approved by QCA for accreditation under Section 96 has become a source of qualifications that the school can indeed offer within its own resources. Examples of qualifications that can be built into the school's curriculum programmes include: certificate in citizenship (entry); certificate in PE (entry); foundation certificate in drug awareness (level 1); foundation certificate in sustainable development (level 1); certificate in contemporary music (level 1); certificate in practical languages (level 1).

The school is eroding the notion of the age-based year-group and instead groups students vertically according to their level of achievement – not ability, which has so often been the basis of grouping in secondary schools.

If qualifications provide a ladder of achievement, why not organise groups so that students can climb the ladder by moving to the next level when they are ready? This is what the school is seeking to create. Students will usually work at different levels in different subjects, and transfer to the next level when they are ready.

As in other schools making ambitious, radical changes, there are challenges to timetabling and organisation, but the school is showing that these can be overcome.

## **Questions**

Which aspects of the educational philosophy in the case study schools are most attractive to you?

Which practices in the case studies are the most appropriate and applicable to your school in developing your curriculum for greater personalisation?

Is there a particular group of teachers who are keen to reconstruct parts of the curriculum and are well placed to do so? Should this occur within selected subject departments and/or in a particular year group, or a combination of the two?

Can you combine the development of the curriculum with other gateways, and especially with assessment for learning, student voice and learning to learn?

Is the timetable the servant of your curriculum or its master?

# Chapter 4 Advice & guidance: the gateway

After key stage 3, secondary schools have much less freedom over the design and content of the curriculum, simply because the 14-19 phase is so strongly constrained by public examinations, especially GCSE and A-levels. Schools are judged, by government and public, on the basis of their performance in these examinations.

The awarding bodies (exam boards), regulated by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, are themselves strongly influenced by higher education. The grip of the universities over the school curriculum has been increasing steadily, as the proportion of each cohort seeking admission rises to some 50%. On the vocational side, the employers, through the sector skills councils, will influence the character of new vocational qualifications.

Personalising learning means ensuring that all students are on a course of study that meets their needs and aspirations. As the constraints of the national curriculum in secondary education diminish, there are choices to be made; and these choices have consequences. Advice & guidance is essential if students and their parents/carers are to make sound choices. It needs to be available as soon as significant choices are to be made, and in today's secondary schools this occurs from year 8 onwards.

But is the advice & guidance gateway merely an adjunct to the curriculum gateway, ensuring better curriculum choice in the 14-19 phase? I believe it is far more than that, and to understand why we must make a historical detour.

## **Mass production and mass customisation**

Lessons may be learned from the history of personalisation (or customisation, as it is more often called) in the world of business and industry.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, most goods and services were the result of craftsmanship, and were often produced to meet particular customer needs. Then Henry Ford introduced mass production.

Ford's genius was this. Cars were made by craftsmen and then sold to the public, at the cost of manufacture plus the profit. Few people could afford the price, so car ownership was limited. Ford understood that cars were for many of the population a highly desirable product, but were simply too expensive. So he reversed the ordinary logic by which one makes a product or service and offers it for sale at a reasonable price, taking account of costs and the need for some profit. He worked out what a middle-class American family might be able to afford for a car, and then set about designing car production so that the car could be manufactured and sold for that price. It worked, and the rest is history.

The drawback to mass production is that the product (or service) has to be standardised to enable low cost production. As Ford famously put it: 'Any customer can have a car painted any colour he wants so long as it is black.' People bought Ford cars, but soon they wanted one of a different colour. The industry responded (though Ford himself was too slow), and increased choice for the customer opened the door to mass customisation – the term coined in 1987 by Fred Davis – the secret of which is to meet more of the preferences of the customer by increasing the range of products or services, but at relatively little extra cost above that of the mass produced equivalent. Thus today there are huge choices over basic products such as shampoos or toothpastes, purportedly to meet individual needs and preferences.

Choice is usually preferable to no choice, but choice often falls short of what people want. A next step was the creation of 'the experience economy', in which the consumer not merely

acquires goods or services but enjoys a memorable experience in so doing. Hotels, restaurants and theatres attract customers by staging memorable events that add value to their basic service.

The question is this: into which of these three categories – mass production, mass customisation, or the experience economy – does the secondary school best fit? After 1870, elementary schools resembled factories as their function was to pre-socialise rural youth for their later life in the factory. It was decided what could be spent on the education of the masses and then the elementary schools were created to fit the planned expenditure. Education in the elementary school was a form of mass production before its time.

I believe the secondary school too is strongly marked by its historical origins. While educators have sought steadily to move towards a more customised or personalised model, progress has been slow.

### **19th century imaginary**

- Schools are designed like factories
- Schools are similar and interchangeable
- Education is producer-led: the focus is on teaching

### **21st century imaginary**

- Educational services are designed to personalise learning
- Schools become progressively dissimilar and distinctive
- Education is user-led: the focus is on learning.

In mass production, the company has to persuade customers that they need or want a pre-determined standardised product. In mass-produced education, teachers have to persuade students that they need or want a pre-determined, standardised curriculum – and do not find it easy to do so. The parallel between these worlds is uncomfortable for educators. In mass customisation, the company has to discover customers' needs and wants, and then redesign the production and delivery systems to meet them. Is this happening in education as part of

the customisation or personalisation of learning? If not, why not? Is the secondary school nevertheless accelerating away from the 19th century educational imaginary? If so, towards what exactly? There are further lessons that may be learned from the history of customisation in the business world.

### **The support economy**

Businesses are under constant pressure to respond flexibly to the world in which they operate and to meet the changing needs and expectations of their clients. *The support economy* by Shoshana Zuboff and James Maxmin opens with a view of a rapidly changing world to which business must adapt if it is to survive.

‘People have changed more than the organizations on which their well-being depends.... Their sense of self is more intricate, acute, detailed, vast and rich than at any other time in human history. They have learned to make sense of their lives in unique and private ways, to forge the delicate tissue of meaning that marks their lives as their own... [and they have] a deep and abiding yearning for psychological self-determination.... As a result of these new dreams, a chasm has opened up between people and the organizations on which they depend. People have undergone a discontinuity in mentality, but organizations have not.’

Zuboff and Maxmin do not write about secondary schools or their students, but I believe the analysis applies here too. Indeed, Brian Caldwell’s iNet pamphlet *The new enterprise logic of schools* develops this argument in detail. But does the solution for business also offer a parallel application to education? Their argument is that there is a need for what they call a ‘new enterprise logic’ or a new way of conceptualising business and its relationship to customers. The drive to this has been created by the new technologies, but they are insufficient to create the necessary transformation. They are the bridge to the transformation, but more is needed, and in particular the two principal components of the new enterprise logic: **deep support** and **federations**.

The new enterprise logic is characterised by mutuality and interdependence. Business assumes greater responsibility for the consumers' experience: the support is no longer partial or fragmented.

'Individuals want honest assistance in meeting the challenges of their intricate lives... In providing deep support, enterprises assume full accountability and responsibility for every aspect of the consumption experience. Deep support provides ongoing relationship based on advocacy, mutual respect, trust, and the acute alignment of interests.'

Such deep support cannot easily be provided by a single firm, but can be provided by federations of companies.

'To create integrated deep support, companies would have to be linked in cross-industry multi-enterprise support networks, each and all aligned with the individuals they support. We view federations as dynamic enterprise partnerships and alliances that can eliminate traditional industry boundaries to support individuals and particular constituencies of individuals in unique ways.'

There is indeed a curious parallel with some recent developments in education. Federations and collegiates of various kinds are springing up around England, and further afield. As commissioner for London schools Tim Brighouse has pointed out, it is difficult for a single school to meet the needs of every one of its students; a federation of schools stands a far better chance. The same could apply to advice & guidance. Connexions has been found wanting – as many teachers and insiders predicted – and the weaknesses of the service are now officially acknowledged. A more extensive and integrated system will be needed to replace Connexions. As we shall see, outstanding schools are creating federation-type structures for advice & guidance by working with a wide range of external partners by which it becomes possible to provide 'deep support'.

The idea of federations clearly includes the current developments to create joined-up services for children and young people. In the words of the government's Green Paper

*Every child matters:* ‘Child protection cannot be separated from policies to improve children’s lives as a whole. We need to focus both on the universal services which every child uses and on more targeted services for those with additional needs. The policies set out in this Green Paper are designed both to protect children and to maximise their potential. It sets out a framework for services that cover children and young people from birth to 19 living in England.’

Here indeed is some radical thinking about what deep support really entails. I believe we may need something even more radical. There is a link between the curriculum and advice & guidance gateways, one that demands some short-term attention. But these two gateways must interact in complex ways with the other gateways if the goal of personalising learning is to be achieved, and the way forward must take account of those interactions. Deep support is a richer concept than IAG (information, advice and guidance), and needs other gateways, including student voice, the new technologies and mentoring & coaching, as well as the greater learner independence that arises in the best practice of learning to learn and assessment for learning. Deep support is about the learner as a person and the kind of person the education service seeks to create. Deep learning demands deep support.

In some schools a radical rethinking of pastoral systems is taking place, and this will influence academic structures too. The academic structure of subject departments and faculties and a related pastoral structure (horizontal or vertical) have been the twin pillars (each guarded by a deputy head with that label) that made comprehensive schools recognisable as such. They are now being redesigned in the drive to personalise learning.

At **Horndean Technology College**, the head of year, as an almost ubiquitous job title in comprehensives, has been changed into a ‘learning manager’. The job is genuinely different, and covers a range of activities: curriculum evenings for parents and students; revision classes and support systems for students in the exam period; training for e-learning; monitoring the academic mentoring of students by subject

specialists. The former pastoral system has been replaced by student support services, designed as a one-stop shop staffed by a range of multi-tasked people – none of whom is a teacher. Included in their work is a range of administrative duties previously done by the deputy head of year (now abolished). Twice a term there is a ‘multi-agency meeting’ attended by police, social services and health professionals to deal in a co-ordinated way with particular students causing concern.

Part of Horndean’s approach was to rethink pastoral care in a way that actively encouraged student independence and responsibility, two of the emerging five themes of personalisation (see Introduction to this pamphlet). In the new system, students were actively encouraged to identify their own problems, to develop strategies for solving them and thus to take responsibility for themselves.

At **Severn Vale School**, Gloucester, what is in effect a core student support services team consists of four people:

- An assistant headteacher, and former head of careers, who leads the team
- An IAG expert, with additional responsibility for work experiences, links to Connexions (2 tutors x 1 day per week), business mentors, mock interviews etc
- A lead person on exclusions, with responsibility for re-entry with personalised support, sometimes including time in the social inclusion unit
- An attendance officer.

They give collective coherence to deep support, and link with a wide variety of internal colleagues and external partners, including the community liaison police officer, who has now joined the governing body. Interestingly, the school has relabelled its PHSE as CSP, or curriculum support and pastoral care, which includes the use of Progress File and the introduction of individual learning plans (ILPs) for year 9 students.

At **Frederick Gent School** in Derbyshire the head and staff have challenged the traditional approach to pastoral care as distinct from curriculum provision. They call the area Guidance, the aims of which, they insist, are indistinguishable from learning and teaching – promoting success for all students. But the approach is different, for it entails identifying as early as possible the barriers to learning and taking proactive, preventative action. At the heart of this is the creation of mutual respect between teachers and learners – one of the five key themes of personalising learning – and a culture of collaboration. So the guidance managers in the school are, quite simply, managers of young people’s learning. This demands that the whole system be carefully integrated. The school is responding positively and proactively to the challenges of *Every child matters*, and so transforming its relationship with external agencies and with its community.

The subtitle of the presentation by **King’s School Winchester** on both gateways in this pamphlet was absolutely to the point: ‘If we want deep learning we need deep support.’ The school has invested massively in external partners, especially from the business world, to act as mentors to their students. The school staff have neither the time nor the experience to substitute for this: deep support entails drawing on the outside world and the legitimacy that working adults bring to advising young people.

All this takes us forward to the three remaining gateways – mentoring & coaching, workforce development and the design and organisation of schools. The conclusion of the Zuboff and Maxmin book is suggestive:

‘In the old logic, the standardization required to serve the mass created a divergence between producers and consumers, and among all participants in the supply chain. In the new order, supporting individuals uniquely creates a convergence of interests between advocates and individuals, as well as among participants in federated support networks. This is not merely a transformation of the organization. This is a transformation of the entire commercial system.’

Change a few words to translate this passage to education, and you will have a glimpse of what might be needed if the education service is to realise in full the demands of personalising learning. It is a glimpse too of what is occurring in our leading edge schools.

### **Questions**

Consider what your school offers to its students. Is the offer closer to mass production or to mass customisation? What are the implications of your answer for the task of personalising learning?

In your school, what is being done about advice & guidance to support personalising learning? Are you sufficiently ambitious in forging partnerships with external agencies to create the federations that through collaboration provide deep support for students?

How far does the creation of deep support necessitate a rethink of your pastoral system? How radical a change do you think is needed?

# Chapter 5 Advice & guidance: stepping stones

Personalising learning clearly involves ensuring that all students receive appropriate advice and guidance about their studies and where they will lead at a later stage in their lives. All schools offer some advice & guidance to students, but it is done better in some schools than in others. The stepping stones towards better practice offered here take the form of an audit, the items of which have been much influenced by David Andrews's keynote at the conference as well as the four presentations from schools (see end of pamphlet for the references). It is assumed that every school has something to learn, especially with reference to the 14-19 developments now taking place, about how it might improve its information, advice and guidance (IAG) system – a term that is commonly used for adults but is now coming into use for young people too.

An IAG system has to take into account the complexity of the IAG processes, both formal and informal, around a core set of seven questions:

1. Who (IAG experts, teachers, parents, other students, external partners and mentors) gives IAG?
2. To whom (the individual student, a class of students, their parents)?
3. What kind of information, advice and guidance?
4. Of what quality?
5. On what matters?
6. For what purpose?
7. At what stage?

## Curriculum and advice & guidance

At **Horndean Technology College**, the staff felt pleased with their reforms and the creation of their student support services. Until, that is, they conducted an evaluation among students, teachers, parents and professional partners. For this revealed that in some places their new provision was experienced as cumbersome, unclear, uncoordinated and confusing.

The audit below is offered in the same spirit of learning. It can be used as a self-evaluation tool, but it can also readily be adapted as an evaluation tool to tap the perceptions or ‘voice’ of various user groups.

### The advice and guidance audit

Audit items	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Students and parents receive high quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) on post-14 and post-16 options, well before choices are made.				
IAG ensures that all students follow a coherent learning programme, rather than an incoherent pick'n'mix selection of options.				
IAG on vocational courses and pathways (eg apprenticeships) is as good as for their academic equivalents.				
Action is taken to counter gender bias over different academic and vocational pathways and choices.				
Feedback from IAG experience and evidence informs curriculum planning, provision and timetabling.				
IAG continues through key stage 4 and beyond, in line with the student's progression and possible changes of direction in study, aspiration for higher education or vocational training, and career preference.				
Careers education begins in year 7 and 8 linked to PHSE and citizenship provision.				
Within your IAG, there is adequate provision for students in self-help skills so that they know where to get IAG independently and how to evaluate what they find.				
This self-help provision is explicitly related to your learning-to-learn provision and use of Progress File or its equivalent.				
Individual learning plans, and their construction and use, are linked to IAG.				
IAG is linked in a coherent way to tutoring, mentoring, coaching and counselling.				
IAG is linked to work experience.				
The pathways we offer to students meet the needs of all of them.				
IAG is always given in the learner's own best interest rather than in the school's interest (eg retaining a student post-16 when there is more appropriate provision elsewhere) or a teacher's interest (eg recruitment to an option because the student is bright or to make up numbers).				
The school's staff are aware of the limits and potential biases of their knowledge, experience and understanding when they provide students with informal IAG.				
IAG, both formal and informal, is impartial in our school.				
IAG provided in school is adequately linked to external support for IAG (eg Connexions).				
The role that external partners play in IAG is explicit to staff, students and parents.				
Governors play a role in IAG.				
We are striking the right balance between internal and external provision for IAG.				
IAG helps students and their parents distinguish between wants and needs.				
IAG helps parents to have appropriate and sufficiently high expectations and aspirations for their sons/daughters.				
We use student evaluations or student voice on our IAG provision and adapt it accordingly.				
We gather parent evaluations on our IAG provision and adapt it accordingly.				
The new technologies are being fully used to support IAG provision as well as recording and retrieval of relevant student data.				

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## **Curriculum**

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Caroline Derbyshire, Tim Hardingham

Bridgemary Community School

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Cheryl Heron, Richard Carlyle

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[www.stlukes-southsea.org.uk](http://www.stlukes-southsea.org.uk)

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John Cabot CTC

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Patricia Brown

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David Page

Frederick Gent School  
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