Current Thinking around Personalisation

Personalisation incorporates meeting the individual learning needs of all. But what does it all mean? Well Personalisation isn't a new educational concept. In the 90s John West-Burnham was asking in as many words: 'If I can have a mass production car built to my specification, why can my child not have a mass production education built to his?' Personalisation in education, though, means pupils get what they need; not what they want. It is not the pupil's decision, but someone else's. When it was mentioned heavily in David Milliband's speech in 2004 he made it clear what he didn't mean - It was not a computerised version of the 'individualised learning' of the 1970s: death by a thousand differentiated worksheets. Nor was it letting pupils do what they liked, which would simply trap children in their own low aspirations. All the same, learning must fit the 'learning styles, motivations and needs' of individuals. Pupils should, where possible, have curriculum choice but within the constraints driven by Assessment for Learning (AfL) and target setting. So the message about personalisation isn't completely consistent and fundamentally the question is how to make sense of it within a school.

Is it as simple as providing for different learning styles? Well a quick research on Google will produce a vast range of responses defining learning styles: One site divides pupils into visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile learners. Another one talks of reflectors, activists, theorists, and pragmatists. Whilst another talks of innovative, analytic, common sense and dynamic - and the list could go on. Of course knowing this information is fine but then we need to look at what are the practical implications for teachers. The British Council suggests slightly plaintively, 'If you vary the activities that you use in your lessons you are sure to cater for learners with different learning styles at least some of the time.'

The DfES went further to articulate five key components of personalised learning:
1. **Assessment for learning** is considered one of the biggest drivers for change and the use of data and dialogue to diagnose every student's learning needs. Essentially, this is about knowing the strengths and weaknesses of individual students.
2. **Teaching and learning strategies** that develop the competence and confidence of every learner by actively engaging and stretching them and build on individual needs.
This requires strategies that:
   - Actively engage and stretch all students;
   - Creatively deploy teachers, support staff and new technologies to extend learning opportunities;
   - Accommodate different paces and styles of learning.
   - Recognise that the multiple intelligences of pupils require a repertoire of teaching strategies.
3. **Curriculum entitlement and choice** that delivers breadth of study, personal relevance and flexible learning pathways through the education system thereby enabling students to acquire the skills to fulfil their own potential, by ensuring they have the capability and accept the responsibility to take forward their own learning. Ultimately curriculum choice engages and respects students.
4. **A student-centred** approach to school organisation, with school leaders and teachers thinking creatively about how to support high quality first teaching and learning resulting in a school ethos focused on student needs, with the whole school team taking time to find out the

needs and interests of students; with students listened to and their voice used to drive whole school improvement.

5. Strong partnership beyond the school will drive forward progress in the classroom, removing barriers to learning and supporting pupil well-being thus engaging the community, local institutions and social services; who in turn can support schools to drive forward progress in the classroom.

Current Personalised Practices at Beormund

We have a number of interrelated Personalised programmes of support to aid the children in their Learning Journeys. This list is not exhaustive and is written in no particular order:

- ✓ Small class sizes – no more than eight with a high pupil:teacher ratio.

- ✓ Basics tasks every morning – personalised not differentiated planning. Activities relate to the children's Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs). Tasks may be a reinforcement or consolidation of misunderstandings during previous lessons or an introduction of a new concept in preparation for whole class learning later in the week. Learning tasks may also be in response to a children's interest.

- ✓ Table top targets for Literacy and Numeracy are displayed on the children's tables. Basic tasks as well as homework are set in relation to these targets - that are taken from their PLPs.

- ✓ Personalisation meetings – class teams/whole school meet weekly to review and reflect upon and documentation in their Personalised Files. To evoke conversations about the individual child – effective strategies, barriers to learning, concerns

- ✓ Readiness to Reintegration (R2R) documents measure the children's social, emotional and academic progress. From this, children personalised behaviour targets are collectively agreed.

- ✓ Children are asked to reflect upon their own behaviour and attitudes to learning and quantify this using a token economy. Behaviour targets are displayed here.

- ✓ Personalised computer programmes such as Bug Club (reading), Education City, Abacus (Numeracy) and RM Maths enabling teachers to allocate books, set levels and support further learning. Additionally downloading relevant iPad Apps.

- ✓ Therapies: play therapy, art, music therapy, S&L therapy and reflexology, rebound therapy and Speech Bubbles are a plethora of interventions related to the children's needs.

- ✓ Learning Support Room (LSR) and the role of the Learning Support Manager to address difficult times in the school day for certain individuals or to support children during difficult periods in the school year e.g. bereavement.

- ✓ Pastoral Support team available to support individual families and signpost them to relevant support networks. They complete Home Visits in order

- ✓ Reading volunteers, student teachers, Shine Volunteers who come into school on a regular basis and provide 1:1 support.

✓ Mainstream experience is for children who are identified, primarily from the R2R documents by achieving 40+

✓ Staff personalisation programme relates to their Performance Management meetings and levels of responsibility within the school. Staff are encouraged to source their own CPD according to interest, capability and confidence as well as SLT identifying and encouraging different avenues.

✓ Other outside agency interventions for the child and/or family e.g. CAMHS, Early Help.

✓ School council representatives have the responsibility of contributing to change. The role highlights the recognition of pupil voice and is reflective of a British democratic society.

✓ Offsite enrichment activities provide children with first hand real life learning experiences outside of the classroom. These involve visiting museums, galleries theatres or making the most of the cultural experiences, tourist attractions and green spaces that London has to offer. The trips aim to develop children's self-esteem, motivation to learn, social understanding/cues and the skills and knowledge for life long learning.

✓ On site enrichment activities encourage socialisation and team building through sports activities, sports wall, playroom etc. It can also foster autonomy and develop life skills through activities such as cooking and BMX (maintenance and riding).

✓ Carousel Fridays expose the children to expert teaching and pursue different interests. These include judo, sports music and art. As well as RE/Citizenship and learning second languages such as French and Japanese.

The Ofsted report from February 2013 states that Beormund School:

It is not yet an outstanding school because

■ The impact of teaching is not resulting in outstanding progress overall. Inconsistencies mean learning at times is not focused precisely enough to promote outstanding progress.

■ The impact of leaders at all levels is now developing well and they understand that a more systematic approach to analysing performance will focus targets and make monitoring even more effective.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

■ Develop the quality of teaching further by:
ensuring progress tracking information is used with even greater precision to promote even more outstanding progress of individual pupils
developing targets that distinguish between good and outstanding progress for all learning, including both the personal development and academic aspects.

Further reading:

1. Personalised Learning - A Policy Overview
http://www.space4pl.org/resources/uploads/Personalised_Learning_Policy_Overview_100409_web.pdf
2. TES article around Personalisation http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=392798