

Introducing Person Centred Thinking in a Primary School

Tabitha Smith and Helen Sanderson

Introduction

The 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' programme is focused on giving every child the support they require, whatever their needs, abilities, background or circumstances. As such, these outcomes tie in closely with the emerging emphasis on personalised learning which is a key aspect of the new relationship with schools. 'Every Child Matters' and the Government's personalisation agenda requires schools to keep exploring ways to focus on keeping the child at the centre of the curriculum and school life as a whole. To make Every Child Matters an integral part of the curriculum, it needs to be built into every aspect of school life. There needs to be an emphasis on personal development; promoting learners' wellbeing and enabling them to develop their potential as healthy, enterprising and responsible citizens. Personalised learning is central to raising standards and is critical in working towards a society where a child's chances of success are not limited by their socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity or any disability. The new personal, learning and thinking skills framework seeks to develop the qualities and skills that learners need for success in learning and in life. One way to deliver this is through using person centred thinking. Person centred thinking tools have emerged from person centred planning, which the Government wants to make available for everyone (Putting People First, 2007).

This paper shows how one Primary School introduced person centred thinking with pupils and staff. It explains the process for introducing person centred thinking, and what went well, and what was learned along the way.

We hope that this is of interest to teachers and wider school staff both in Mainstream Primary Schools, as well as Special Schools. Local Authorities who are interested in person centred approaches may also find this useful. We have provided detail and examples, for schools that may be interested in taking a similar approach.

Introducing One Page Profiles

The SENCo at the school was introduced to the concept of person centred thinking and One Page Profiles by a parent who had used this approach to 'introduce' her child to their new teacher. The One Page Profile clearly describes what people like and admire about this child, what is important to them from their perspective and how best to support them.

The SENCo could immediately see that creating a One Page Profile seemed very important for some of our pupils on the SEN register. The One Page Profile explains ways to work with and help each child, and ultimately should influence the way that child is taught within school. The Profile is a working document, added to on a regular basis. It forms the starting point of discussions with new teachers and anyone else who might work with the children.

Initially, we (SENCo and Parent Helper) thought that we would work with a small number of our SEN children. Such a document would be invaluable for Supply Teachers, and also act as a record of the systems and approaches to behaviour and work that help the child. However, on reflection we felt that there was one class where there were a number of children that would benefit from the Profile. We did not want one group of children to feel that they had been singled out, and therefore we decided to work with the whole class.

A letter was sent home to all the parents of this one class, with an example of a One Page Profile, having had a meeting with the teacher to explain the process (Appendix one).



LAURA

WHAT OTHERS LIKE ABOUT ME, AND WHAT I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF

Artistic, Caring, Good at climbing, swimming and sports,
Gives great cuddles, Creative, Good at making, drawing and building stuff,
Great at reading, Trustworthy, Thoughtful, Adventurous, Totally reliable

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME

- My cats Jess and Mia
- Playing with my friends - Eleanor, Annabelle, Abbie, Caitlin and Freya
- Seeing my cousins, Honor, Phoebe, Maya, Tyler and Joshua
- Going to Centre Parcs every year with Granny, Aunty Wendy, Uncle Dave, Aunty Clare and Uncle Miguel
- My yellow teddy, Sunny, who sleeps on my bed
- Knowing what is going to happen each day, and planning ahead for special things like my birthday (I like to plan my party about 4 months in advance!)
- Being helpful in class
- Knowing what is being asked of me in class
- Supporting Manchester City and going to matches with Gill and Babs

HOW TO SUPPORT LAURA

- Laura is sensitive and perceives a small negative comment as a big telling off. A non confrontational approach works best with Laura
- Laura needs lots of praise and encouragement
- Laura does not like change very much and particularly needs lots of reassurance about changing classes
- Laura can seem quiet and shy before you get to know her but she is confident enough to initiate a conversation with a teacher or adult

Thank you to Mrs. Hardman, Mrs. Stephenson, Granny, Aunty Wendy, Uncle Dave, Aunty Clare, and Uncle Miguel for helping Laura, Mummy and Daddy to write Laura's plan for school
JULY 2006

Starting One Page Profiles in class

An afternoon session was dedicated to starting the process with the class. Our SENCo, Teaching Assistant and Parent Helper introduced the idea of creating a One Page Profile. This was presented in child friendly language, with examples. The children were excited about the idea of creating something all about themselves.

a. Great things about me

The first step was to gather the information for the ‘What people like and admire about me’ part of the One Page Profile. After the initial discussion, the children had to think about positive things about each other. Many schools do this as part of the Circle Time sessions, and as part of the PHSE or SEAL curriculum. There are a number of ways that this could have been recorded. We decided to make it an ‘active’ session, and so taped paper onto everyone’s backs. We called it our ‘Great Things About Me’ session. All the children and adults then went around writing good things about other people.

We did have to stop the session midway through, to return the focus onto saying only positive and good things about each other. Vigilance is needed to spot the children that are collecting very few positive comments, and to also watch out for those children who find it funny to write rude things. Poor handwriting can also lead to problems, so some children might prefer to have a scribe.

When between 5 and 10 comments had been collected, the children took their sheets off and read the comments. There was an obvious sense of pride when children realised that others thought great things about them.

These comments were then added to as the children thought about great things about themselves. These were recorded on a Stars sheet, which acted as a reference point for their own thoughts about themselves, and others’ thoughts about them (Appendix two).

Here are a few of the comments written by the children about each other:

- ‘You have lovely hair.’
- ‘I like you because you like me.’
- ‘You are good at gymnastics.’
- ‘You have lovely eyes.’

Here are a few comments written by the children about themselves:

- ‘I am good at art.’
- ‘I am a good worker.’
- ‘I am brave.’

The Teaching Assistant working with the children stated that ‘the children really enjoyed this session because it was active and different to their normal way of working.’

The next stage was to involve the parents at an active level. Having found out great things about the children from their own perspective, we sent a Stars sheet home for parents to complete, sharing the things that they think are great about their children. The response to this was excellent, and we had a high return rate. The comments were focussing on personality traits, not just academic achievements. These comments were incredibly revealing and heart warming.

Here are a few comments written by parents about their children:

- 'I admire his enthusiasm for life.'
- 'I admire her boundless energy.'
- 'He is wonderful to be around; he is great company.'
- 'I love the way he shrugs his shoulders and carries on.'
- 'I love the way he sticks his tongue out when he concentrates.'

We used a template to record the 'likes and admires' for each child.

b. What is important to me

The next section in a One Page Profile is 'What is important to me'. We decided to gather this information individually with children, and to then follow this up with parents.

Our Teaching Assistant then worked on a 1:1 basis with the children using a sheet of questions (Appendix three) as a basis for questions. The sheet of questions is part of a workbook that is usually used to help children prepare for IEP and transition reviews (http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/Reading_Room/How/Person_Centred_Reviews.html). This was time consuming but extremely worthwhile. The process was revealing as each child responded so differently; some were very positive about themselves, and the things in their life that were important. Other children needed a lot of help to discover the aspects of their life that were important. Giving children this quiet time to reflect upon themselves was fascinating to watch, as the children visibly grew in confidence and started to become more chatty, animated and interested in themselves. Without exception they enjoyed spending time talking about themselves, and discovered aspects of themselves not acknowledged before. The Teaching Assistant who worked with the children felt that 'the children grew in confidence as they talked about themselves. They all really enjoyed spending time on a 1:1 basis, as I could give them my whole attention. It was also interesting to see the values of modern day children.'

We took a photo of each child, and added this, and the 'What is important to me' information to their developing One Page Profile. Each profile was customised to the child with clipart that reflected what is important to them.

c. Adding the support section and reviewing with parents

The next section in a One Page Profile is the 'support section'. This describes how teachers and other school staff can best support the child at school. It is important that this is informed by the parents, so school is able to build on what parents find works at home in supporting their child.

Initially we thought we would do this section at the Parents Evening, but then realised that in a five minute interview, there was just not enough time. It would also add another pressure to the already pressured teacher.

Instead we sent the profile home with a letter asking parents (Appendix four) to share the information with us about best support for their child, and also to review the information on the profile so far with their child, and make any changes or additions.

Parents returned the sheets with very helpful information, for example:

- 'He is reluctant to start work in case he is wrong.'
- 'Although he can seem boisterous when playing with his friends, he can lack confidence if anyone is watching him.'
- 'Remind her if she forget instructions.'
- 'He needs time to calm down if I get frustrated.'

However, we got a very small return rate compared to the return on the 'stars' sheet that we sent home for parents to complete.

There could be several reasons for this. It may have been seen as harder to do than the first request for 'great things about your child'. We may not have explained it clearly enough for parents to know what was expected of them, or it may not have been seen as important enough, as it was not a formal part of the curriculum. On the next page is an example One Page Profile for Hannah.



HANNAH'S ONE PAGE PROFILE



GREAT THINGS ABOUT HANNAH

She is clever and cool
She is funny
Hannah is very pretty and always kind
She is trendy and sporty
She is good at playing the piano
She is happy and thoughtful
She is fun to be with

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO HANNAH?

- Drawing with water pastels and doing pictures.
- Chatting to my friends in Golden Time.
- Having pizza for school dinners.
- Playing with Siobhan, Heather, Abbey and Sophie.
- Playing with my Bratz dolls.
- Watching TV - my favourite is Merlin.
- Making things like Playdough cakes and things out of salt dough.
- Having friends for a sleepover and making dens.
- Going on a trampoline.
- Watching DVDs (with popcorn!).
- Going to bed with my favourite soft toys.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO SUPPORT ME

- Hannah is quiet at school but underneath has lots of energy and a very lively personality which people who know her well get to see. She needs to release this energy by doing energetic things such as singing and dancing, otherwise she can, in her own words get 'giddy'.
- Hannah is very good natured and often puts other people's wishes before her own. She sometimes needs encouragement to put forward what she wants or is happy with.
- Hannah can get anxious about certain issues or situations and this could appear to others that she is being difficult. If she appears difficult, talk to her about what the issue is and she usually needs lots of reassurance.



d. Learning and further plans for One Page Profiles in the class

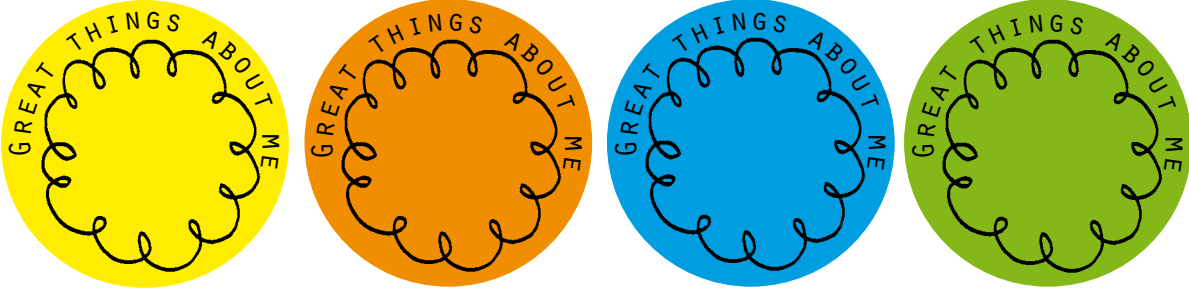
We learned that the process of developing the profiles has been very powerful for the children, and a good way to engage parents in sharing what they like and admire about their child. The class teacher, although supportive of the process, was not present during the first session with the children. This made it difficult for her to keep the momentum going in the class, and we relied on the Teaching Assistant, and Parent Helper to complete the One Page Profiles with the children.

We can see how the information on the One Page Profiles can fit well with the SEAL theme is 'It's Good To Be Me'. This theme lends itself perfectly to this work, and is part of the curriculum for the second half of the spring term. The teacher is very interested in doing this, and is also the PHSE Coordinator. She has given every class teacher copies of all the sheets that we used, and others from the reviews pack. The teacher will then explore how we can embed the person centred thinking information and One Page Profiles into the curriculum. This will mean that the One Page Profiles are reviewed and updated as part of class room work, using other sheets from the workbook, instead of seen as a separate activity.

Other schools that are interested in developing One Page Profiles with children could therefore do this as part of the curriculum from the start. We are exploring the possibility of using the person centred thinking tool 'working and not working' with the children and develop individual action plans with them from that. The updated profiles could be used at the end of the year to form part of the child's 'report' and to handover to the next teacher.

Starting with 'Great things about me' in another class

We wanted to take one specific aspect of the One Page Profile, and see if it would work as a 'stand alone' system within a class. This time, we worked closely with the class teacher, who has built each stage into her curriculum plan. With our mixed Year 5/6 class, each child has a 'Great Things About' certificate. The children themselves have designed this as part of their ICT skills session. Each child, in ICT is creating their own A5 sheet to put these on with the title 'great things about (and their name)'. They are taking and uploading their own photo and adding clip art. We have also had stickers specially made, with space for the teacher to be very specific about why a child is given a sticker. In essence, this is taking a traditional sticker chart to the 'next level'. This helps the teacher to be very specific about what they are appreciating about the child (characteristics, behaviour or academically) by writing it on the sticker (e.g. 'good listener').



As the class teacher has been involved from the start, and as it has been the class teacher working with the class during planned lesson time, the system has established itself well. The teacher has made a 'washing line' across the class to hang them on. As soon as a child gets 10 stickers, they then go up in their weekly whole school 'Achievement Assembly' (where good work and good effort is recognised) and a photocopy of their sticker chart will go home to their parents as well.

The 'Great things about me' certificate is also a starting point for developing One Page Profiles later. There is a photocopyable example in Appendix five, if schools wanted to use a similar approach, and you could contact us about the stickers (helen@helensandersonassociates.co.uk)

Starting One Page Profiles with Teachers and Teaching Assistants

The Head Teacher wanted to use the idea of One Page Profiles as a basis for recording the outcomes of the school's Performance Management cycle. Therefore, every teacher has a One Page Profile, stating interests and strengths as well as targets. This allows the school to work with and develop further the different strengths and interests of the staff. This same system has been introduced as the Teaching Assistants start a Performance Management cycle. In this way, One Page Profiles start to become our way of recording information about everyone in the school teachers, Teaching Assistants as well as children. It helps us to keep in mind what we like and appreciate about each other, focus on what is important to each of us, as well as knowing the specific ways that we can support each other. Opposite is a completed example of a profile with a Teaching Assistant.

Brian Holland

What we like and admire about Brian

'You understand my teaching style and respond to my ideas! You have a fantastic enthusiastic approach, which means you really involve yourself in our topics, bringing things in for us to use.' (TB)

'You are enthusiastic and you have a great sense of humour. You are quick to understand a task and to move it forward.' (SS)

You are a great support in the classroom, and I love your enthusiasm. (PK)

'You really care about our children as individuals.' (LD)

And the children say....
 'You laugh a lot!
 'You always know what to do.'
 'You are really good at helping me, and I am getting better at doing things.'
 'I love reading with you.'

What is important to Brian

You bring all your many and varied life experiences to work with you everyday, for us to benefit from. Your love of walking, your knowledge of films and the theatre, as well as reading is fantastic. You are also a Magistrate (to keep us all in order!) as well as a Marker for Leicester University. The care that you show to your wife is not to be forgotten; your Big Walk in the summer will be raising money for Christies, and I hope that the school can support you well with this adventure.

So no wonder you are with us for only three days a week as a Teaching Assistant. You joined us in September, and although you do still feel the 'new one on the block', you really love the job. In your own words: 'This is the best job I have ever had! I get all the rewards without the stress. I get a real buzz from the job'.

Brian's strengths

You are very aware that each teacher works every differently, and that over the course of your three days, you work with four of our KS2 teachers. You like the variety and difference in styles and expectations. You really like to be drawn in and become part of the lesson, and enjoy interacting with the teacher as part of the lessons. You spend time in the class working with groups, you take groups out, as well as having 1:1 sessions with children. You also are very happy to do the more routine 'housekeeping' side of the job such as photocopying.

You do feel valued by all the teachers, but you find that you are not used in the same way by all of the staff. Some teachers perhaps use you in a more 'traditional' TA role, whereas others may acknowledge and draw upon your experiences outside of this role. You do feel involved and that you can suggest ideas. You like to be able to use your initiative. You are flexible and willing to take on any activity that you are asked to do. You are not 'precious' about anything.

You are showing a very organised side to your character with the development of class files, where you keep lists, group information, planning, ideas, and activities. This is a super idea, especially for those TAs like you who move from class to class.

You feel comfortable with all members of staff, both teaching and support. You speak highly of Howard. You feel a real sense of belonging to the school as a whole. Every day is good, and you never leave feeling let down or disappointed.

You find the TA meetings useful, and enjoy having the opportunity to talk with other TAs about the job.

You would love to have the opportunity to experience different age ranges, and your involvement in the sewing club with Year 2 has highlighted to you that you like the younger children just as much as the older ones. This extra curricular involvement, as well as having your lunch with the children in the hall, show a very special side to your character.



Observations

There have been many times when I have observed you 'in action'.

I have seen you standing confidently and proudly in front of the whole class, secure with your position. This is so lovely to see and I hope that your confidence to be in this position continues to grow. Your relationship with the class teachers is fantastic.

I have seen you working with small groups, both in and out of the classroom. Your manner is always calm, encouraging and positive; and yet you are firmly in control of the situation.

You also work on a 1:1 basis with a variety of children. Once again, these tasks are carried out with an enthusiasm that is infectious.

With all these situations - as with everything that you do – you are positive and never moan.

I do hope that the planning that you are left with is clear and concise, and provides you with the information that you need. I know that you will ask if you are unclear about anything, but it is important for teachers to support you at all times; it is easy to forget that you are new to this game because of your confidence.

Where next....

I look forward to your Mapping/Orienteering club that you have kindly offered to run for the summer term. This will be giving our children very new and exciting experiences.

I know that you would like some training on the Interactive Whiteboard, and I will endeavor to arrange this. You also mentioned about having a more in depth knowledge and understanding of phonics; I will see what I can do about this one too!

You have certainly made an impact on the whole of Key Stage 2, and we are extremely confident and happy to extend your contract. We can now look forward to see if there are any specific training courses that you would like to attend, with a clear idea of who it would benefit, and when you would have the chance to carry out any necessary actions.

Do continue to ask questions; your desire to do the job well is clear.

Thank you for your enthusiasm and clear support of our school. It is appreciated.

In conclusion

From a chance conversation about One Page Profiles, we feel that the school has come a long way and learned some valuable lessons.

The purpose of creating One Page Profiles needs to be clearly explained to staff, children and parents. There needs to be a concise rationale for doing this work, and how the Profile will be developed as the child moves through the school.

The process of developing the Profiles was extremely valuable for adults and children alike, although it was time consuming. It would not be time consuming in the same way if it is built into the curriculum from the start.

The process needs to be built into the curriculum, and be part of a relevant theme. This will ensure that the teacher is fully involved in the project, momentum is maintained, and children see the relevance of what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Parental involvement is essential, so getting the parents on board needs to be managed carefully, and time allocated for them to work with their children and ultimately with the class teacher.

'This was an inspirational project which has invigorated our approaches to personalised learning here at Norris Bank, for children and staff.' Howard Bousfield Head Teacher

With thanks to Mrs Searle, Mrs McIvor, Miss Halstead and Mrs Koutsouvellis for lending us your classes.

To Brian Holland for letting us share his One Page profile.

To Mrs Waddington for your patience when working with the children on this project.

To all the children and their parents for sharing your views and aspirations.

Thank you to Dave Mulvey for creating the One Page Profile templates for the children and staff.

Thank you to Hannah and her family for their involvement with this work.

Appendix one • First letter home to parents

September 24th 2008

Dear Parents,

I am writing to let you know about two projects that I would like to organise with all the children in the Year 3 class.

As part of our whole school initiative on developing the social and emotional aspects of learning, we would like to develop with each pupil a 'One Page Profile'.

This is a document that has been created by the pupil, their friends and you as their parents. There will be some information that we would ask you, as parents, to fill in and return to school. The One Page Profile reflects the child's strengths, their hopes and aspirations, and how best we at school can support their learning. It is an excellent tool to raise their self esteem, as well as being a handy point of reference for any other adult who might work within the classroom.

This work will be carried out on Friday afternoons with the help of Helen Sanderson, who is mother to Laura and Kate. Helen specialises in using person centred approaches in schools and with families.

The class will also be involved in an ongoing emotional management programme run by Cora Sanders, who is an Emotional Literacy Advisor, and parent of Jo. This supports and compliments the work that Helen Sanderson will be doing with the class.

I believe that these projects are an excellent opportunity for the children to think about their strengths, and develop essential skills such as empathy and problem solving. The ultimate aim is to deliver a curriculum that 'fits' all children, and is therefore truly inclusive.

Helen will be in school this coming Friday, so if you have any queries or questions, do come in and see me before then. Cora will start her work next week.

Thank you for your interest.

With best wishes,

Tabitha Smith
Inclusion Coordinator

Appendix two • Star sheet

What others like and admire best about me.....

What I like and admire best about myself.....

Appendix three • Question sheet

What is important to me now

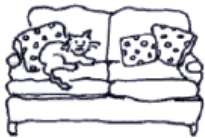
What I like to do...

At school



Empty rounded rectangular box for writing.

At home



Empty rounded rectangular box for writing.

Just for fun



Empty rounded rectangular box for writing.

At any other important places I go...

What I like to do with my friends



Empty rounded rectangular box for writing.

Appendix four • Letter home to parents about the support section

Dear Parents,

We are making excellent progress in compiling our One Page Profiles. The process so far has been very interesting for us as adults, and for the children themselves. We enjoyed the 1:1 time that your children has spent with us, talking about themselves, their interests and their strengths. We have seen their confidence grow as they spend time talking about themselves.

We enclose a copy of your child's One Page Profile, which at the moment is still a 'work in progress'.

You will notice that there are different boxes.

The box 'great things about your child' includes comments from their friends, themselves as well as from you as parents. If you have not yet returned the 'stars' sheet, there will be space in this box for you to write directly on, and then we will type this in.

The box 'what is important to your child' reflects what is important to them both at home and at school. Once again, please do add to this box and we will type up any additions.

The box 'what you need to know to support me' is for your hints and tips from home about how to get the best from your child. This box will also include the views and strategies used by the teacher. Please fill this in as well; for example 'Zoe can seem quiet at first, and would like you to initiate conversations until she gets to know you' or 'Mike can appear loud and confident, but often finds it difficult to ask for help.'

The fourth blank box will be added to over the coming months through class work, and as we learn more about your child.

We hope that you enjoy this profile; we would like you to go through it with your child, and add to it, or make any changes. (If your child wants a different photo, just let us know!) Please could you return these profiles with your comments and additions as soon as possible, or by the half term holiday at the latest.

Many thanks for your continued support and interest,
With best wishes,

Tabitha Smith
Inclusion Coordinator

Appendix five • Generic 'Great things about me' template



www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk