

Personalising education: person-centred approaches in schools

Learning from Norris Bank
Primary School

Helen Sanderson, Tabitha Smith and Jaimee Lewis



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Summary

Norris Bank Primary School in Stockport has developed a way of putting the learner in the centre of the education process. This personalises the curriculum to the students and supports their welfare. This paper will cover how Norris Bank has moved on from its early beginnings - which was set out in our first paper *Introducing Person-Centred Thinking in a Primary School*¹ - through to their recent improvement in their Ofsted results from 'good' to 'outstanding'. It tracks the school's work to continue implementing person-centred approaches across their curriculum and covers:

- Why Norris Bank's experiences have shown the importance of One Page Profiles.
- How they have involved the whole school community in developing One Page Profiles for every student.
- Work on integrating One Page Profiles into the curriculum.
- Identifying student's hopes and aspirations – how to do it, using and displaying them and plans for the future.
- Continuing the journey to personalised education - Introducing person-centred reviews.
- How person-centred thinking can influence the school development plan – involving the whole school community from staff, to parents and children.
- Personalising home school agreements.

This paper isn't intended as a how-to guide for developing One Page Profiles – that information is contained in a sister document *One Page Profiles in Schools: A Guide* which can be downloaded for free from www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

¹Sanderson H. and Smith, T. *Introducing One Page Profiles in Primary Schools* HSA Press, Stockport, 2009 www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

Introduction

“Some schools have a production line mentality that assumes the main thing children have in common is their year of manufacture. We all know the examples of children who might be the same age but better at certain subjects than people who are older than them; or those who perform better at different times of day, or in small groups rather than large ones. We need to start waking children up to what is inside of them and go in the opposite direction to standardisation.” Sir Ken Robinson, RSA lecture on changing education paradigms.

Leading thinkers like Sir Ken Robinson and Charles Leadbeater² are encouraging schools to personalise their curriculums through participation. This means starting with the principle of encouraging children, from an early age and across all backgrounds, to become more involved in making decisions about what they would like to learn. Children’s personal involvement in making these choices, including how they like to learn and what targets they want to set for themselves, would turn them into more active learners.

Given the government’s agenda to move further and faster with personalising public services, these ideas feel more relevant than ever.

² Leadbeater C., *Personalisation through Participation*, Demos, London, 2004

While we await the results of the SEN and Disability Green Paper³ consultation, we know the focus will be on supporting better life outcomes for young people:

“... teachers (should) feel able to identify effectively what a child needs to help them to learn and to plan support to help every child progress well, reflecting the specific needs of children with SEN and those who may just be struggling with learning...”

“... parents have the information they need about how the school is supporting their child...”

There is a continued focus on taking person-centred approaches into mainstream schools so all children can become more active learners in the way Charles Leadbeater and Sir Ken Robinson describe. This is underpinned by other long-standing key policy documents including:

- Every Child Matters⁴, which aims for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to enjoy, achieve and make a positive contribution to their life through their involvement in the services (like education) that support them.

³ Department of Education., *Support and Aspiration: a new approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability – A Consultation* London, 2010

⁴ Department for Education and Skills, 2004 <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DfES/1081/2004>

- The SEN Codes of Practice⁵ which sets policies and procedures aimed at enabling pupils with SEN to reach their full potential, to be included fully in their school communities and make a successful transition to adulthood.
- The previous government’s programme of Putting People First⁶, which introduced person-centred practice as mainstream government policy and is now reflected in Think Local, Act Personal – a cross-sector commitment to personalisation of care and support.

Norris Bank Primary School in Stockport has been working to make sure every child and their teacher knows what is important to the individual and what they need to be supported in the classroom. Taking their principles from the values behind person-centred practice – which firmly places young people at the centre of any decisions made about their support or education and has its roots in helping young learning disabled students through transition – the school has introduced One Page Profiles for every student.

One Page Profiles capture important information to enable teachers to personalise learning for each young person. This information enables teachers to be aware of the strengths, interests and specific support needs of their pupils. The documents can be

⁵ Department for Education and Skills, 2001 <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES%200581%20200MIG2228.pdf>

⁶ Department of Health, Putting People First: A shared vision and commitment to transforming adult social care 1997 http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_081118

used to inform action planning and target setting, so that these reflect what is important to the young person and how best to support them. This can make targets more meaningful and relevant to the young person. They are a way for the young person to have a voice in how they are supported in school, and to have their strengths and what is important to them as an individual acknowledged. One Page Profiles are also a way for parents/carers to share their knowledge and expertise on how best to support their child.

This is Norris Bank’s way of putting the learner in the centre of the education process, personalising the curriculum to their needs and supporting their welfare. It’s at the heart of all the school does. Ultimately, One Page Profiles influence the way that child is taught within school. Because it is a “live” document, it can be added to on a regular basis, for example, at the beginning and end of each school year. They form an essential starting point of discussions with new teachers and anyone else who might work with the children.

Why One Page Profiles are important

Since our original paper was written, Tabitha Smith, Norris Bank’s Special Education Needs coordinator, said that getting all children in the school to have their own One Page Profile – the labour of a long-term project – has been their most significant development over the past two years. When she was first introduced to the idea, there was an immediate recognition of the benefits for pupils, teachers and parents:

“It was an opportunity to develop a succinct document that highlights the child’s strengths, as seen by themselves, their peers and their parents; while also highlighting their preferred ways of learning.”

Tabitha said this is really important for meeting the push towards personalised curriculums; and that while it would have been easy to simply develop profiles for children with special education needs, the potential for using them with all students across the school was recognised and put into action.

“We wanted to try this process with a whole range of students to see how it could influence their experience of school and learning. Working alongside parents, who bring a different perspective from school staff, is always a valuable process too. We decided that rather than singling certain children out – for example those with the most specific learning or behavioural needs - we started with the entire Year 3 class and gradually moved from there.”

“After the initial trial, a real impetus developed. We realised that if we wanted to take person-centred learning seriously, it couldn’t just be a particular class, or just the SEN children or reception students.

It had to be for everyone. This wasn’t a quick, overnight fix – it had to be done properly and become part of who we are and what we do.”

Involving the whole school community in developing a One Page Profile for every child

When Tabitha and her colleagues realised the One Page Profiles were working so well for their Year 3 students, they set their sights to ensuring every child in the school – across all year levels - had a One Page Profile by the time school broke up for the end of term in June 2010. They wanted to do this by building on their success from the initial trial.

So that Tabitha was able to get all the teachers at Norris Bank onside for the work, Tabitha ran a staff meeting with leading advisor on person-centred approaches, Helen Sanderson, to talk them through it.

“Because teachers have so much being flung at them, we wanted to make sure they really understood the principles behind the work and were protected from feeling they were doing things they might see weren’t useful.”

The project was presented to the whole staff at their weekly meeting, providing an overview of the project in relation to the Every Child Matters programme, the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, as well as the

Government's agenda to place a higher emphasis on personalised planning and how this translates to schools.

They then used the person-centred thinking tool 'Four plus One' to describe to the gathered staff what they had tried and learned so far, what they were pleased with in terms of the work done to date and any concerns they had taking the work forward.

Tabitha said everyone was given the opportunity to give their views and ideas.

“We openly shared the things that we had learned, the main one being how the development of One Page Profiles must be built into the curriculum, and not just a bolt on. We were very pleased with some aspects, especially the uptake of One Page Profiles to make a positive contribution to transition, both within the school and for those moving onto High School. Our concerns were based on needing the project to be built into the whole school ethos, and that we need to have teachers on board with the ideas, and to be committed to using the Profiles throughout the year. It must be seen as so much more than a ‘mere flash in the pan’.”

They also invited each teacher to think about how they personally could be involved in developing One Page Profiles and the best way to start this.

It was during this process that they crystalized Norris Bank's ambition to be the first mainstream primary school that incorporates One Page Profiles throughout the curriculum, and school year, for all children and staff.

“There were some great ideas, including having One Page Profiles on a restricted part of the school website, with access just for the family and the child.”

To get started on this goal, Tabitha and her colleagues ran training sessions for teachers, teaching assistants and parent volunteers, who would help run one-to-one sessions with children in the classrooms. The training provided a snapshot of how the process of developing a one page profile would work (so they could assist the process in the classroom) and supported teachers in understanding how they could contribute to the information gathering process. For parents, the training started by asking everyone to share something that they liked and admired about their child.

All adults involved in the project were given the booklet One Page Profiles – A Guide for Schools⁷ which was written to explain this project. The process for was then rolled out across the school by:

- Starting with one-to-one sessions with each child, using the information gathering sheets from the workbook.
- Asking parent and/or carers to fill in the 'stars' sheet about

⁷ Sanderson H., Smith, T., Wilson L. One Page Profiles - a Guide for Schools June 2010 HSA Press Stockport <http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/media/34885/oppinschlguide.pdf>

appreciations, and the 'Top Tips' sheet.

- Teachers and Teaching Assistants adding their information to this and create the first draft of the one page profile.
- Sending the draft home for the child and parents to check, amend and add to.
- A final version going back to parents at the end of term, and becoming an important part of sharing information from the current class teacher to the new class teacher.

Tabitha said that the considerable effort required was worth it:

“As the end of term loomed closer, we worked within a very tight schedule, but there was an amazing buzz of activity. Within two weeks of the process starting, every child had their draft one page profile to take home. The feedback from the teaching assistants and the parent helpers was so very positive. They really enjoyed working on a one-to-one basis with children and finding out information that was new to them. It certainly gives a rounded picture of the children. We used many of the parent helpers to type up the information, as well as gathering it.”

The drafts were sent home for checking, with a covering letter explaining how, given the 'live' nature

of the documents, that they would be worked on and added to as the new academic year progresses.

“If there was a disagreement about what was written in the One Page Profile, then we decided that was ok and reinforced the message that they will be continually worked upon. It's about being flexible and responsive to parents' wishes. We also had a good response from children – they generally were very excited about the process. Of course, there are things we need to do differently or better next time around, so we made sure to ask for constructive feedback about the process from parents.”

Tabitha and colleagues drew attention to the One Page Profiles at regular intervals throughout the year; initially at the 'Meet the Teacher' evening held in September, and then again at the November parents evening. Now that all children have one, Tabitha said it was a good starting point for introducing them continuously as part of normal school life, and their development have been built in to September term calendar.

“Creating the profiles is a really good exercise - implementing the whole process across the entire school was exciting and seeing parents working with volunteers with children

was lovely. The response from parents on how they can help was remarkably good. We're moving slowly, working to a place so that the final One Page Profiles are ready to go with reports with July 2011."

Integrating One Page Profiles into the curriculum

In order that One Page Profiles are meaningful to children, parents and teachers, it is essential that there are clear links to work already being done in the classroom. Being a 'bolt on' is not really an option. The Profiles need to be integral to at least one aspect of teaching and learning. This way, they become self sustaining; there will be a set point every year when they are revisited, revised, updated.

Tabitha said that Norris Bank places a high priority on building the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) curriculum into everything that they do.

"The school year is divided up into six sub headings, each building on skills that are taught and experienced through assemblies, teacher-led class sessions, small group activities and circle time sessions. The spring half term topic is entitled 'It's Good To Be Me', and the areas of study fit the different sections of the One Page Profile perfectly."

Tabitha said that during this topic, the

children reflect on their strengths, as well as the strengths of their peers.

"Their self awareness is developed. Social skills are also worked on, as the children have to reflect upon and comment on their relationships with others. They are encouraged to articulate how their feelings affect their behaviours."

By developing the One Page Profile during this half term topic, the children's thoughts are recorded in an attractive and accessible form.

This can then be developed as the rest of the year progresses, and form part of the dialogue between teachers on transition, as well as used during the Summer Term Parents evening meetings.

The One Page Profiles are filed on a shared area in the computer system so all teachers can access them. Within another year, Tabitha thinks that the teachers will be increasingly comfortable with the process and will ensure the profiles are updated regularly. Tabitha will continue to do specific and focused work with a particular class each term to ensure work continues on updating and refining the process.

"We shared our One Page Profiles work with our local Member of Parliament, Ann Coffey and she said they were a fantastic way into personalised learning, and entirely reflects the Every Child Matters

agenda. One Page Profiles were also part of our successful submission for an Inclusion Quality Mark.”

There is even an opportunity to use One Page Profiles with staff. For example, using them with teaching assistants when doing their performance assessments so they include quotes from children and the teachers and detail what is important to the staff member and they have an opportunity to see what others perceive as their strengths and what they should work on next.

Identifying hopes and aspirations – how to do it, using and displaying them and plans for the future

As part of Tabitha’s drive to increase parental involvement in their children’s education, a letter is sent home in September asking for parents to share with the hopes and aspirations they have for their children. This was in the form of a star that they filled in and returned to Tabitha.

Tabitha said she was initially concerned she might receive unachievable or unrealistic social or academic aspirations so she was careful with the wording.

“They’re really good and I was so pleased with the response – not everyone came back to us but a majority did. It was lovely to read the very positive aspirations; ranging from ‘to be

able to read their little sister a story’ through to ‘continue to love coming to school’.”

All the hopes and aspirations stars were typed up by the school administration assistant into class sets. These are kept by each class teacher and form the opening dialogue at Norris Bank’s autumn term parents’ evening. The stars themselves are cut out, laminated and turned into a display around the main entrance to the school. This means parents, children, Governors and visitors can read them; and as Tabitha says, “we can all work together towards achieving these hopes and aspirations”.

“Last year there was only one that was an academic target; rather they were all about friendship, confidence and enjoyment. This year, I’ve noticed there are more academic targets and I find that interesting. We also keep a record of who has said what – our secretary types this up and keeps the list.”

“We tried using this information to give teachers an opening line at the parents’ evening – ‘your hope was... and how did it go?’ However, we received feedback from both teachers and parents that it took too much time on the night. Instead, we are now giving parents the opportunity to tell us if there is anything

in particular they want to talk about so we know in advance if they want to discuss their hopes and aspirations.”

“Ultimately, I think the Hopes and Aspirations Stars are lovely and I’ll be using them every year.”

Continuing the journey to personalised education: introducing person-centred reviews

Within an academic year there are two planned times to officially meet and discuss children’s progress: in October and again in March. Norris Bank holds their SEN Reviews during these months. At Norris Bank, children who are at the School Action level of the SEN ‘ladder’ (used when there is evidence that a child is not making progress at school and there is a need for action to be taken to help with their learning) meet with the class teacher to evaluate the Individualised Education Programme (IEP) and agree new targets. Those children who are at the School Action Plus level (a step further along the SEN ladder from School Action) and those children who have a SEN Statement have a more formal review meeting. This involves Tabitha as the SENCo and all outside agencies; as well as the class-teacher, parents and the pupils themselves are involved.

As recently as 2009, Tabitha chaired the reviews and they were run along ‘traditional’ lines of discussing progress through reports, comments and IEP targets which have been set

previously and then agreed. However, as part of the school’s journey to a more personalised way of learning, Tabitha held two Reviews in October 2010 with a very different agenda and format.

The same people were present as at a ‘traditional’ review - teacher, parents, learning support assistants, SENCO, pupil, head teacher – but with the addition of a person-centred review facilitator. The meeting was split up into distinct sections:

The review had a very positive start, whereby everyone in the room wrote down on a large sheet of paper all the things that they liked and admired about the pupil. This doesn’t just cover academic issues, but also social issues and positive views on the student’s appearance, manner and relationship with others.

“This proved to be very important for the pupil themselves; they could see that other people did really think great things of them.”

They then moved onto the main section of the meeting, which, as Tabitha describes, proved to be “an amazingly constructive and indeed cathartic session”.

“All of us had a large sheet of paper split into two: ‘What is working?’ and ‘What is not working?’ We spent time completing this large sheet on our own, and we found that everyone was being very

honest about how the pupil's challenging behaviour made us feel, and how it affected how we worked."

"From this we analysed the different responses, and found that there were common threads in both sections. There were approaches and strategies that worked really well for this pupil, and that these approaches worked well for everyone involved with the pupil, both at home and at school. We then looked at the aspects that caused us and the pupil difficulties, both at home and at school. Once again there were common threads that appeared on everyone's sheets. We spent valuable time discussing these concerns, and then built these into very personalised, appropriate and applicable targets for the new IEP."

"Usually, the targets would be decided before the meeting; this was a real departure to go into the meeting without targets. In fact, it is far more sensible as these targets can then be discussed and agreed by everyone and therefore pinpoints the real areas of concern."

Tabitha said she was really pleased at the feedback she had received after the first person-centred reviews.

"I found the meeting amazing. I feel like I have turned a corner with him." Teacher involved in a person-centred review for her student.

After the review meeting, the usual minutes were typed up and the official paperwork submitted to the local council. But Tabitha says that more importantly, there was an immediate impact on all those who participated, making them feel they could develop really personalised and meaningful targets that were clearly understood by everyone involved with the pupil.

"Person-centred reviews are very powerful and cathartic for everyone involved as it gives them an opportunity to say what's on their mind - opening up like this is very liberating. We will develop a more detailed One Page Profile to support the pupil on a daily basis and especially for when new teachers and adults come in to work with us and the students. The One Page Profiles will clearly reflect the strategies that work best, and gives adults and students the chance to work at their very best."

Tabitha and colleagues agreed that the new person-centred reviews process went so well that they would repeat it for the March reviews. They worked in particular with one of their pupils at the School Action Plus stage. They used his statement of educational needs and linked its recommendations

to the reviews process so they could write very clear and relevant targets.

“We will be able to build in the funding element of support and targets to ensure they have long lasting impact. Linking person-centred reviews to funding and budgets is a new area for us.”

Norris Bank has developed the process in such a way that supports everyone involved in preparing for the review. Tabitha meets with the teacher individually to discuss the needs of the pupil in the class and also sends a letter out to the parents involved usually one month ahead.

“This is a really valuable time, as it gives me a clear overview of all the individual needs of the children. We develop the targets with parents of children with specific needs. This is very powerful for the parents. In the future, we’re planning to involve the children in the reviews too. The process is being built into the school development plan because building it on what’s working and not working helps with the decision making process at management level.”

How person-centred thinking can influence the school development plan – involving the whole school community from staff, to parents and children

Historically, the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher have written the school development plan and then presented it to the staff. In 2010, Norris Bank adopted a very different approach that involved all stakeholders in the school, including parents and children, and used person-centred thinking tools to inform decision making and planning.

The process was started in a school assembly, where Tabitha and colleagues used the person-centred thinking tools ‘working’, ‘not working’ and ‘important in the future’ with parents and children.

“We wanted to build on our success with person-centred reviews and used the same headings with families and children in our Community Assembly. These usually takes place on the last Friday in each month and we invite parents and relatives to join us for a celebration of our school and then to join us in our staff room for tea, coffee and cakes.”

“On this particular Friday, having seen our cheerleaders and heard a pupil play the piano, we focused on what people liked about the school and what is going well. Parents were given a piece of paper and a pen as they arrived to record their thoughts about what is working and these were collected in at the end of the assembly. Children also had the opportunity to share their ideas with a ‘shoulder partner’.”

The discussion was then moved on to find out what their priorities would be for the coming year. Tabitha said she found this very interesting, as there were similar themes running all the way through from Reception to Year 6. These ideas were fed back to parents via the Friday Issue, the weekly school newsletter. They were also developed in classes, with children working together to identify the top three things that they thought were going really well. This then moved into the top three things that they wanted to change at school in the next year.

“This information will be considered as part of the process we go through to create a new school development plan. Each class will get feedback on their ideas, with a focus on the part their ideas played in the plan, and what is going to happen next. We are excited about using person centred thinking tools

in this way and it’s part of embedding a person-centred culture throughout the school.”

Tabitha and colleagues also collated the ideas generated at the assembly and in the classroom, and took them to the staff training day where school governors, support staff, midday assistants, teachers and the school improvement advisor were invited to create a new development plan. They all had the same opportunity (as the parents and children) to write their own priorities on post-it notes.

All the ideas generated were then allocated to one of three categories:

- Creating confident learners.
- Creating successful learners.
- Creating responsible citizens.

The group at the staff training day was then split into three, with each group working on one of the areas. They had to go through all the proposed ideas and decide which would actually become a new priority on the development plan. Once these key priorities had been agreed, clear success criteria were written, with a programme of actions that need to be done to meet these priorities.

Tabitha said that during this process, the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher were not involved in any of the decision making processes, meaning that the staff and teachers of Norris Bank could build a development plan that was not only relevant, but also one that everyone felt part of creating.

“The level of discussion from the group members was really high. Teachers, teaching assistants, parents and governors were all working alongside each other in a very productive, meaningful and informed way. By the end of the day, we had a team of people who felt that their opinions mattered, a team of people who felt that they really did have a say in the development plan for next year. From this starting point, we know that everyone will want the development plan to be a success. We look forward to putting all their ideas into action.”

They also explored linking information from person-centred reviews to the discussion about funding, as they prepared to set their new budget in April.

Tabitha said there was still some work to do to make sure the information and ideas generated through this process really made a difference to implementing the development plan.

“The whole process was fantastically exciting and generated so much energy it was unbelievable. In reflection, we need to ensure this isn’t a superficial process and maintains the strategic focus. For example, we did ask children and parents at the assembly what did they what

want to see kept in the school development plan... things like ‘What makes me happy? What makes me excited? What is going well?’ and this generated a long list, so it gave people a voice, but next time we’ll be more specific so we get more strategic ideas rather than quick fixes.”

Personalising home school agreements

Norris Bank has also taken what they learnt about person-centred thinking tools and applied it to home-school agreements. They are now, according to Tabitha, “worth more than just the paper they’re written on” and from September 2011, all children have been given a beautiful, full colour laminated card, detailing the School Agreements and the “Golden Rules”.

“Norris Bank’s intention was to make this statutory document meaningful, relevant and person-centred. We initially sent out a request to parents asking for their views on the existing Home School Agreement and gave them the opportunity to suggest positive ways forward.”

“I’ve always felt the potential of Home School Agreements were wasted. Children come into the school, they get it signed but no one ever brings it up again. So if we want to get

parents more involved in their child's education, we need to update the agreement – give it a revamp – so it's much more accessible on a practical level. Previously, it was filed away and never reviewed."

Tabitha and her colleagues developed the Home School Agreements so they have very strong links to Norris Bank's key aims. There were statutory guidelines that needed to be met, but Tabitha felt confident they could 'marry' these requirements with the statements in their key aims:

1. We will provide lessons that engage children's minds and bodies.
2. We will create a culture of respect, trust and partnership.
3. We will run a happy and contented school for all.
4. We will work together.
5. We will be confident to try new things and take risks.
6. We will develop an environment that creates a sense of belonging and pride in all the work in it.

"We developed a format that was accessible for all of this, and similar to the headings on a One Page Profile. This made it meaningful and relevant. Because there are guidelines as to the process of updating a Home School Agreement; we ensured a Governor was involved in the process and consulted with parents, staff and children on the draft."

The headings Norris Bank used in their Home School Agreements were:

- What is important to us here at school? (important to).
- How can we work in partnership to achieve this together? (how we can best support each other).
- What will the school do to achieve this?
- What we need you to do to help us achieve this?
- What we need your child to do to help us achieve this?

Parents responded well to the draft and one in particular provided an idea of linking the headings with the 'Golden Rules', which are well understood throughout primary classrooms as being the benchmark for good behaviour.

"When I fed back to this parent that her idea was really good and that we had used it, she went all pink and was very pleased! We managed to fit the required headings as laid down in statutory guidance, with the school's aims and vision, and with the Golden Rules. We were pleased that the fit happened so naturally."

Each of these areas had statements that came under the headings:

- The school will:
- To help the school achieve this, as a parent I will:
- To help the school achieve this, as a pupil at Norris Bank I will:

“The first group of parents we introduced to this new, revised (and attractive) Home School Agreement was our Reception parents, who came for their first meeting in June. We then rolled it out to the rest of our parents at the ‘Meet The Teacher’ evening in September.”

Some of the feedback from parents about this work has included:

“I think that it clearly defines everyone’s role.”

“Overall, a good set of points which sum up curriculum, pastoral and social issues.”

“As this is not legally binding, how can it be enforced?”

“I particularly like the way it includes the children’s agreement as well as parents, as I personally would read this to my children and explain what is expected of them.”

Tabitha said the pupils were positive about the work they had done and staff felt the new Home School Agreement reflected their ethos and aims.

“The agreement specifically mentions the school developing personalised information about each child (a one page profile) and reviewing progress (using working and not working).”

“We have plans for keeping this live and meaningful. We have produced a paper A5 size ‘booklet’ Home School Agreement and also developed poster versions of the agreements and golden rules for each classroom, office and the corridors. A smaller, laminated copy is given out to each pupil to be kept in book bags. Sharing the information is the first step, and building long term strategies to keep it ‘live’ is vital.”

Tabitha is also producing a newsletter which will have a section devoted to the work on the Home School Agreement, and also the other work on person-centred approaches within the school. There will be monthly updates, featuring one of the ‘agreements’, what this means in practice at Norris Bank and providing a ‘progress report’ on how things are going.

“This will be in our regular weekly newsletter. We are building in a way to review how the Home School Agreement works in practice from the perspectives of the parents, pupils and staff each year, using the person-centred thinking tool ‘Working and Not working from different perspectives.”

Our School Agreements and Golden Rules

We will run a happy contented school for all

We will ensure a sense of belonging and pride

We will create a culture of respect, trust and partnership

We are confident to try new things and take risks

We will work together

We will provide lessons that engage children

We are kind and helpful

We work hard

We are honest

We are gentle

We look after property

We listen



Conclusion

Two years on from the original paper on introducing One Page Profiles into schools, Tabitha and her colleagues are really pleased with the progress that has been made to personalise education at Norris Bank.

Judging by the reaction of Ofsted inspectors in late 2010, the work has really paid off. They described Norris Bank's work on the profiles as "very useful aids to personal development that ensure appropriate support and challenge are in place for all".

"They hadn't seen anything like it before and were absolutely fascinated by our work on this. I showed them examples and talked them through how we developed them and how they have been able to demonstrate the links with current care guidance and support. We achieved an 'outstanding' result."

"Person-centred approaches are really exciting and worthwhile, but it's a drip drip change, not a sudden change. We have worked very hard to ensure that every single pupil at the school has a One Page Profile. We have a team of parental volunteers who worked alongside us, talking to the pupils and helping to type up all the responses."

"We have reflected on what worked, and what didn't work and will improve their effectiveness by creating them as postcards that children can give to their new teachers. We hope this will ensure they are easier to use on a day-to-day basis. This postcard will be hand written rather than typed - so that the older pupils can write it themselves. The elements will remain the same; what we like and admire about the pupil, what is important to the pupil, and what they would like their new teacher to know about themselves. A copy of the postcard will be sent home with the child's report."

My name is

Like and admire about me

Important to me

Me

What my teacher needs to know to support me

What my teacher needs to know to support me

“The teachers are keen, as they can see the benefits of having information about the new children in their class. The Guide to One Page Profiles in schools that we wrote last year to support the project will be used again, to focus questions and we’re continuing to ensure that a true picture of each child is captured in a meaningful and useful manner. The more specific the responses, the better the quality of personalised attention we can give.”

Some of Tabitha’s top tips for other schools looking at introducing person-centred approaches into their schools are to be patient, recognise it’s a long-term goal, ensure everyone is on board with the idea, keep track of the valuable learning along the way and make time to reflect.

“Once the draft has gone out, ask for feedback on it. The biggest thing is to make sure that everybody is on board with the idea. Otherwise it’s just something that’s done, rather than it being useful. It’s got to be like that and there is no point unless it’s useful.”

“Remember to appreciate it’s a slow process because it’s such a big thing to introduce to a school. And bear in mind

the profile can be in different formats and can be adjusted so it’s useful in different situations. There is a danger it is just a bit of paper that is kept in a file, so the profiles have got to be made useful for teachers too. If it is a different format, it keeps people interested in reading it. People are given so many bits of paper these days. You need to get an understanding of why people are doing this work and the benefits for the teachers.”

Tabitha says that the biggest selling point of One Page Profiles is it provides teachers with useful information to get conversation going with children at the beginning of term like ‘how’s your cat?’ or ‘I know you have a stick insect at home’.

“It’s such a useful way of building rapport for people at the very start of term. And by reflecting on what worked and did not work about the way we are introducing and using One Page Profiles, we are able to get better and better at making them living documents that make a difference for all.”

As Sir Ken Robinson says, learning happens in groups and that collaboration is the ‘stuff of growth’.
