

Transversal competences and school involvement: Learning to Learn Research in Schools in the UK

Steven Higgins
Professor of Education
University of Durham

s.e.higgins@durham.ac.uk



Overview

A photograph of two young women sitting at a desk in a classroom. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is pointing at a notebook. The woman on the right has dark hair pulled back and is holding a pen, looking at the notebook. They are both wearing white shirts. The background is a classroom with red bulletin boards and other students.

Research project

European context

Impact

Learners

Teachers

Schools and the wider community



Research project aims

- how *Learning to Learn* approaches support the development of confident and capable lifelong learners
- how different *Learning to Learn* approaches improve learning
- how *Learning to Learn* supports teacher's motivation and ability to cope with and manage change

Research themes

- how to assess *Learning to Learn*
- how to link *Learning to Learn* in school with family and community learning
- how to get transfer of *Learning to Learn* skills across the curriculum; and
- how Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) can support *Learning to Learn* in schools.

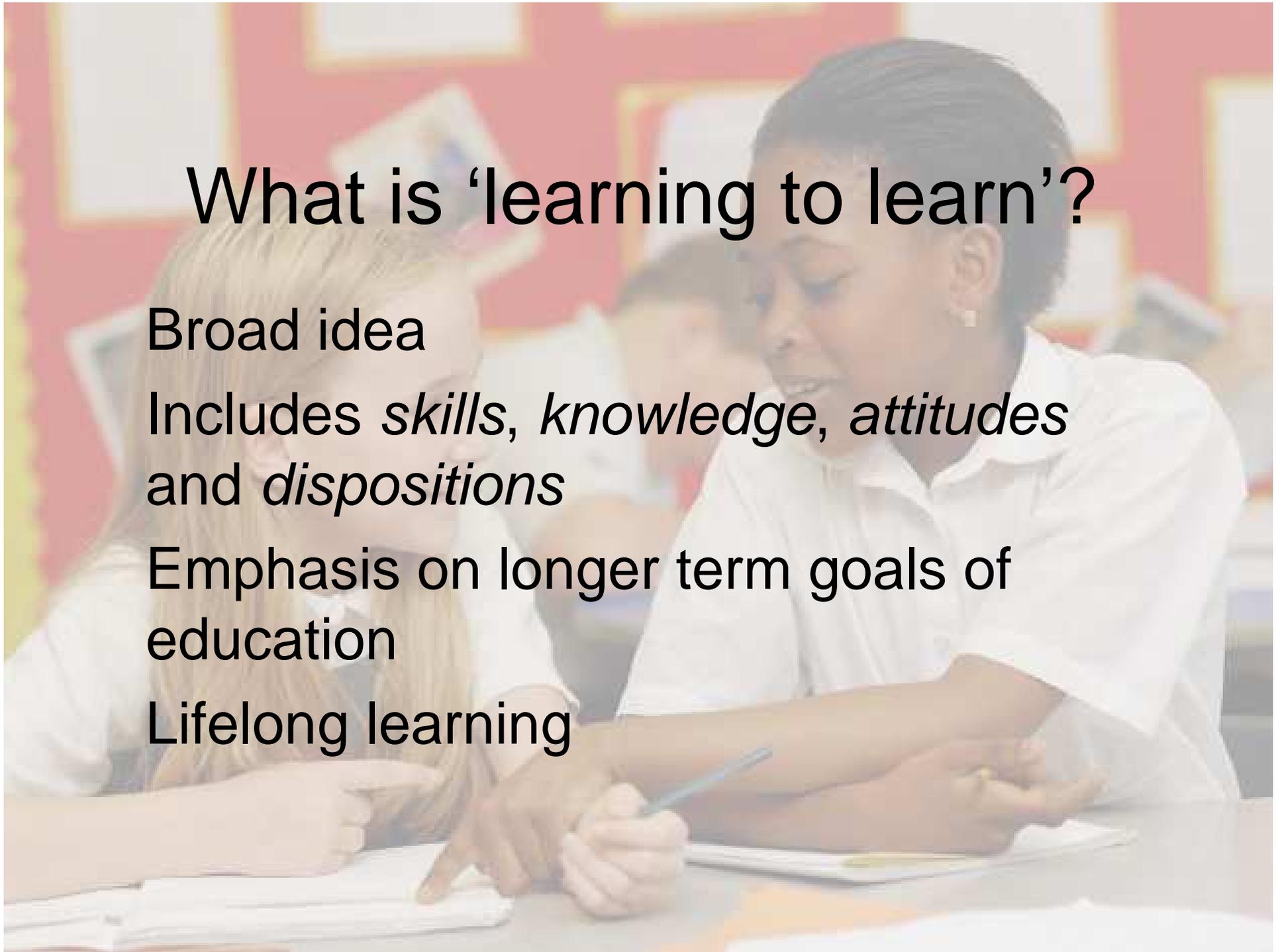
What is 'learning to learn'?

Broad idea

Includes *skills, knowledge, attitudes*
and *dispositions*

Emphasis on longer term goals of
education

Lifelong learning

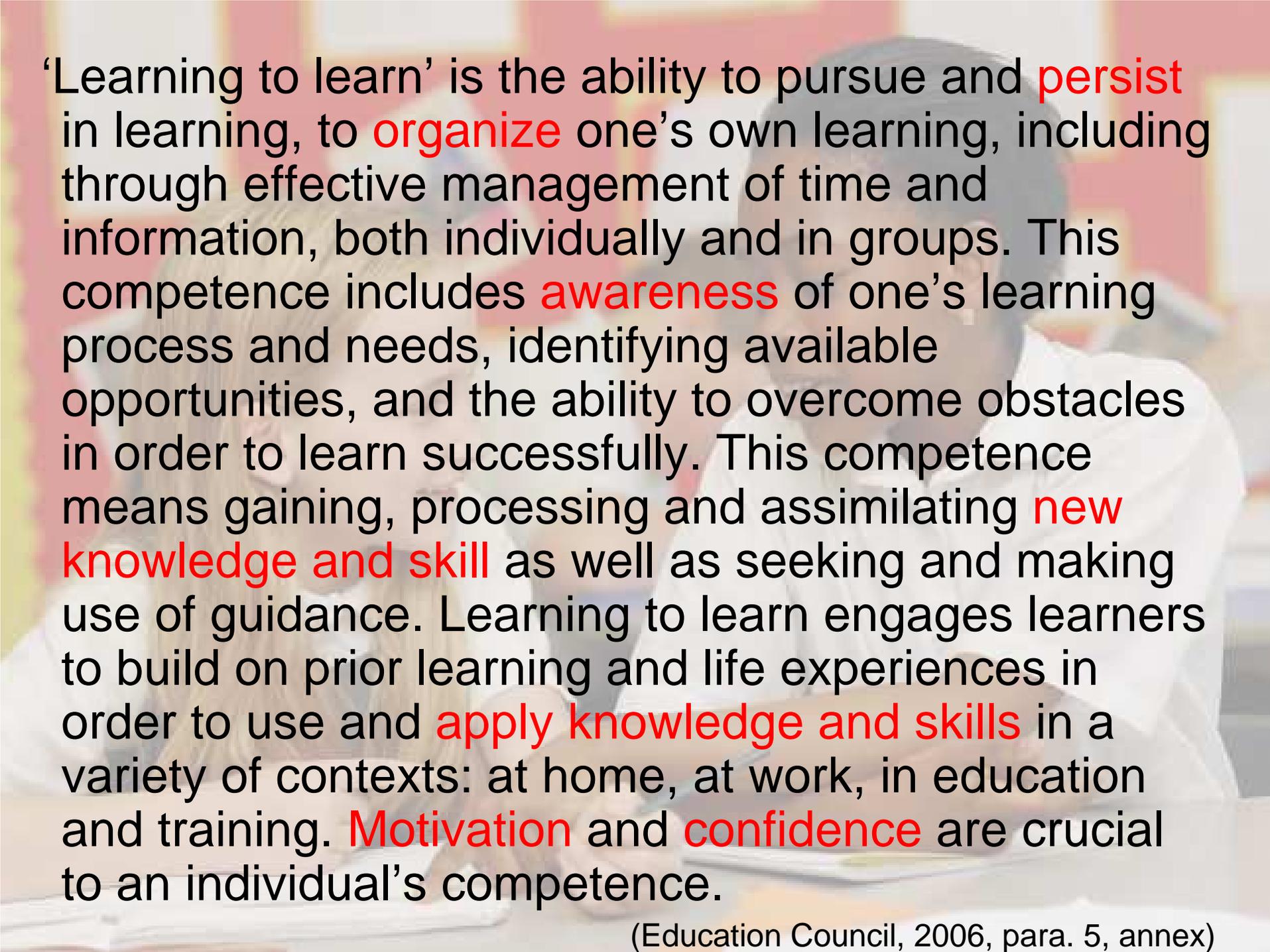


Campaign for Learning's definition of *Learning to Learn*

“a process of discovery about learning. It involves a set of principles and skills which, if understood and used, help learners learn more effectively and so become learners for life. At its heart is the belief that learning is learnable.”



<http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/>



‘Learning to learn’ is the ability to pursue and **persist** in learning, to **organize** one’s own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes **awareness** of one’s learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating **new knowledge and skill** as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and **apply knowledge and skills** in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. **Motivation** and **confidence** are crucial to an individual’s competence.

(Education Council, 2006, para. 5, annex)

Transversal competences

- Many of these competences are **transferable** or **transversal** competences;
- independent of subjects and based on **cross-curricular objectives**.
- They usually relate to;
 - better management of one's own learning,
 - social and interpersonal relations and
 - communication
- Reflect a general shift of emphasis from teaching to learning.

Key and transversal competences

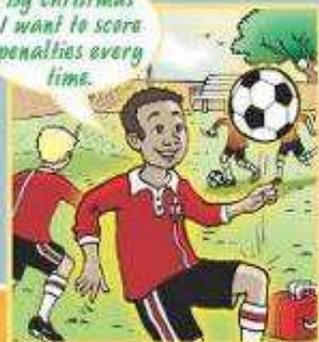
1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Communication in a foreign language
3. Mathematical literacy and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning-to-learn
6. Interpersonal and civic competences
7. Entrepreneurship
8. Cultural expression

Do you know how YOU learn best?

1 Be Ready

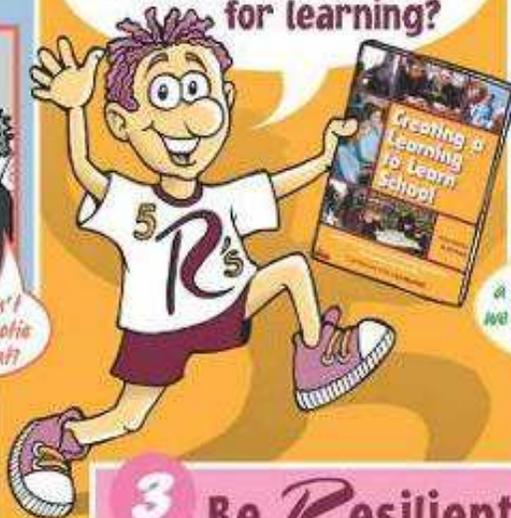
Know why you want to learn something and believe you can do it.

By Christmas I want to score penalties every time.



Why can't I play footie like that?

How good are you at the five R's for learning?

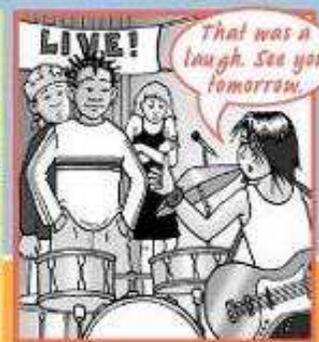


5 Always Reflect

Think back after you have learned something and consider how you could do better next time.



That was a good gig, but I think we need to practice more before next time.



2 Be Resourceful

Find out how you learn best. Keep trying out new approaches to learning.

I know I learn best with other people. Maybe Emma will help me.



Before we build the robot I need to have a picture in my head of what it will look like.

I haven't got a clue how to build this thing.



3 Be Resilient

Keep going and try different approaches when you're stuck.



I can't do this homework, but I could always look on the internet, phone a friend or look back at my notes.



I can't do this homework. I must be stupid.

4 Learn to Remember

Try to apply what you learn, for example by teaching it to someone else. Use different approaches to make the most of your memory.



I know I'll remember this better if I draw a mind map.



I'm going to tell you a story about Queen Elizabeth.



I don't know how I'll remember this.



LEARN FOR Your LIFE!

To find out more, visit www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

The development of *Learning to Learn*

First stage	Improving teaching Effective delivery of content knowledge
Second stage	Developing study skills Hints, tips and techniques
Third stage	Emotional and social aspects Characteristic ways of learning ('styles') Concerned with the 'how' of teaching
Fourth stage	Involvement of students in the process Concerned with how students can be helped to help themselves Teachers themselves involved in becoming better learners Developmental and cumulative

from Claxton, 2004

Learning to Learn in Schools: Project Overview

4 year project (2003- 2007)

(Phases 1&2 - 2000-2003; Phase 4 - 2007-2011)

Schools: clusters of about 12 schools in Cheshire LEA, Enfield EAZ and Cornwall EAZ/LEA (34 total)

Local Project Co-ordinators

University research support

Advisory Board

Campaign for Learning: co-ordination, policy, promotion

Funding: DfES, Innovation Unit, Technology Group, LSC, NCSL, Accelerated Learning Systems, NferNelson,



Professional enquiry

- Teachers work together
- Try out *Learning to Learn* approaches and techniques
- Evaluate the impact on learners
- Communicate their findings to other teachers

YEAR ONE PROJECT 2003/2004

UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Using Formative Assessment Strategies to
Improve Children's Writing
or
'Nobody's Brain is Ever Full Up!'

CAMPAIGN
FOR LEARNING

Ann Mulcahy and Elaine Saini
Wilbury Primary School, Enfield

◆ PROJECT AIMS

Our project aims were two fold:

- to develop Reflective learners who would, through the application of formative assessment strategies, learn to assess and to improve their own writing.
- to develop Resourceful learners who, through peer assessment, can communicate with others to advance their learning.

◆ RESEARCH FOCUS

Our research focus was to explore the role of assessment in developing a learning environment. We hypothesised that the teaching and implementation of formative assessment strategies would raise standards of writing and support the development of confident and capable learners.

◆ DIMENSIONS OF THIS CASE STUDY

Wilbury is a large, four form entry, primary school situated in an area of high social and economic deprivation in North London. For this project 60 children from two Year 2 classes were chosen for intervention, with another two Year 2 classes to act as a comparison. With the intervention groups, it was decided to extend the school's normal formative assessment procedures. These groups would initially be taught to assess their own writing in terms of success criteria generated by the teacher, before applying success criteria to both their peers' and their own writing.

◆ SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The most important finding of this project for us was that the adoption of formative assessment techniques by the children themselves appears to lead to higher standards of writing. However, when children are involved in assessing work in this way, they have to be given, and acquire, other skills; specifically the ability to talk about this process, to use appropriate vocabulary and to begin to separate the 'what' from the 'how' in learning. This, for us, was another significant finding. Of fundamental importance for us as a school is the feeling of ownership of a research project. That a project conducted by our staff, with our children, has been validated so that it can serve as an inspirational model to be adopted throughout the school.

Focus in the 5Rs for Lifelong Learning:	
Resilience	<input type="radio"/>
Remembering	<input type="radio"/>
Resourcefulness	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Reflectiveness	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Readiness	<input type="radio"/>

Image of Wilbury Primary School, Enfield
(2004 report)

Project outcomes

85 case studies by teachers

33 in 2004

21 in 2005

31 in 2006

Two interim reports (Jan 2005 & 2006) Final report (May 2007)

Academic articles

Professional publications

Oakthorpe Primary School,
Enfield (2004 report)



Developing a language *for* learning

Explicit talk about how learning takes place in classrooms

A clear progression in the way learners think about their learning

A shared language for learning in schools

'Pepi the Clown' a puppet to from Hazelbury Infants, Enfield (2006 report)



Confidence and attitudes

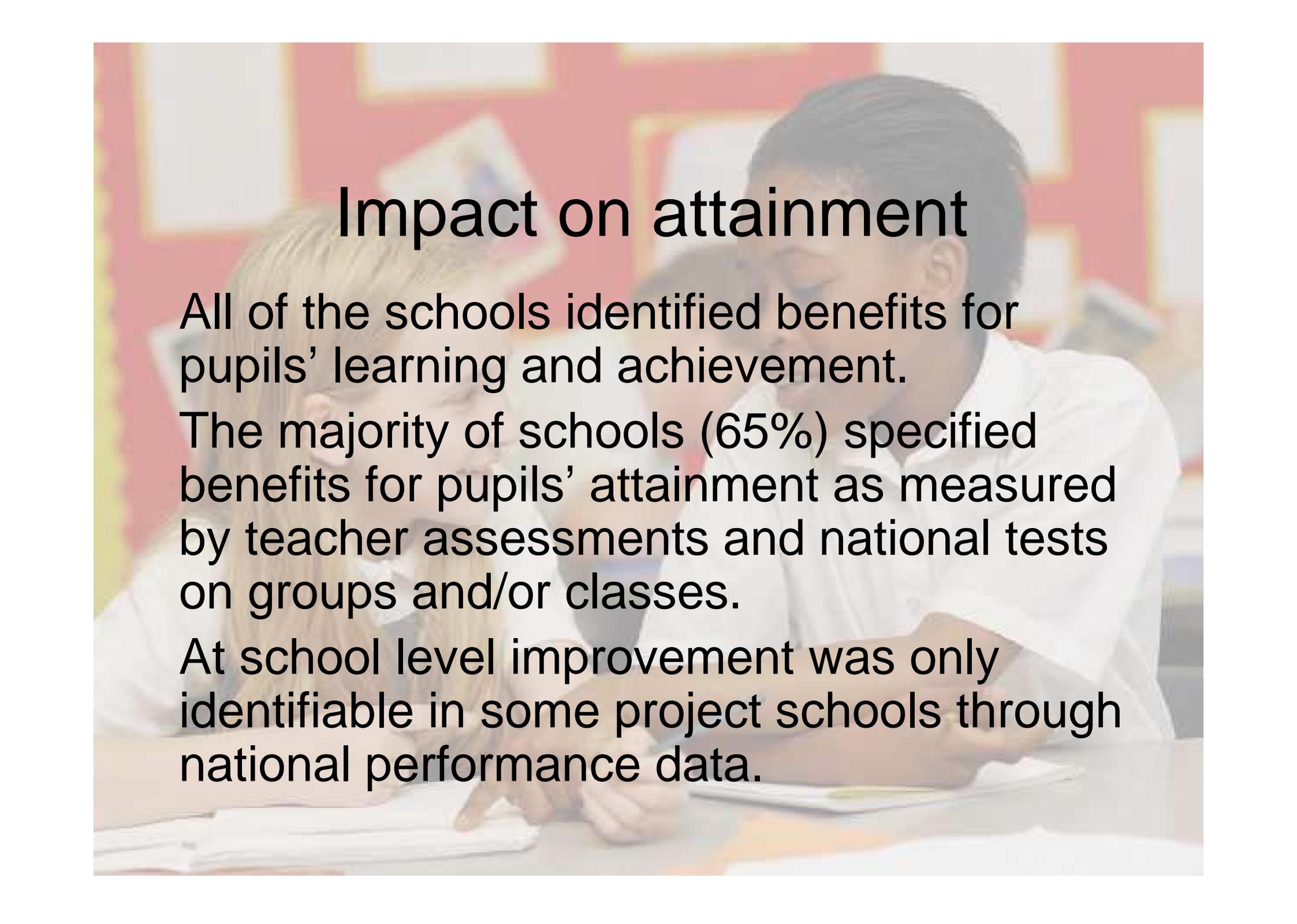
Clear evidence of improved confidence as learners

e.g. “When I was asked to improve my work at the start of the year I thought it was because it wasn’t very good. But now I know that we are asked to do it because it will help us get a better level or grade. So I don’t feel that my work is not good, but I know we are doing it to get a higher level.”

(Fallibroome High School, Cheshire)

**Image of role play and drama from
Kehelland Village School, Cornwall**





Impact on attainment

All of the schools identified benefits for pupils' learning and achievement.

The majority of schools (65%) specified benefits for pupils' attainment as measured by teacher assessments and national tests on groups and/or classes.

At school level improvement was only identifiable in some project schools through national performance data.

Impact on teachers and teaching

Learning to Learn supported teachers' professional development

It promoted autonomy and changes in professional practice through the systematic exploration of new approaches in the classroom.

Had a clear and positive impact on teachers' motivation and their capacity to manage change.

A photograph of two students, a young woman with long blonde hair and a young man with dark hair, sitting at a desk in a classroom. They are both looking down at papers on the desk. The woman is pointing at a paper with her right hand, and the man is holding a pen over a paper. The background is a classroom with red walls and framed pictures.

“Participating in this research project has emphasised the value of creating professional learning programmes, tightly focused on classroom practice, with sustained opportunities for dialogue and reflection. Furthermore, we believe that the lead learner model has contributed to building capacity within the school to take on new initiatives, particularly those concerned with teaching and learning.”

Fallibroome High School

Learning about *Learning to Learn*

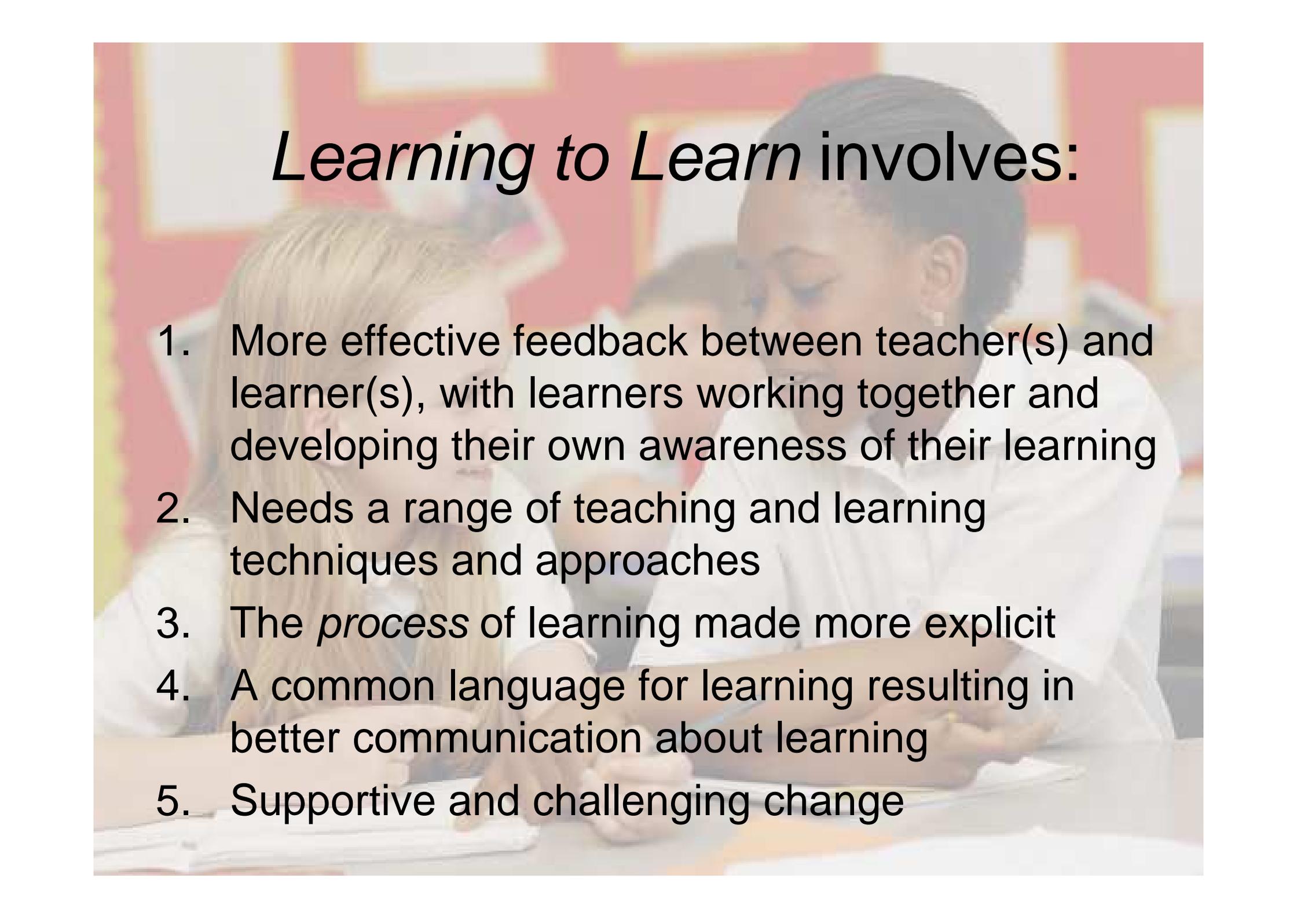
It is **not** a simple set of activities or techniques

A range of approaches can support more effective learning *habits* and *dispositions*

Collaborative professional enquiry by teachers using practical classroom strategies helps such development



Developing 'readiness' for learning Alverton Primary School, Cornwall (2006 report)



Learning to Learn involves:

1. More effective feedback between teacher(s) and learner(s), with learners working together and developing their own awareness of their learning
2. Needs a range of teaching and learning techniques and approaches
3. The *process* of learning made more explicit
4. A common language for learning resulting in better communication about learning
5. Supportive and challenging change

Transversal competences

- Change in emphasis
 - From knowledge.... to skills and attitudes
 - From curriculum input... to output for learners
 - Requires a pedagogy to support this
 - With supportive assessment of key features

**Learning to evaluate
learning at Raynham Primary
School, Enfield**



Transversal competences and learning

Equipping the next generation with skills and attitudes they need to learn, work and take part in society in the future

Teaching essential skills through the competences

Balancing short term and long term aims in education



Well I started off objecting to this, however now I have tried it I feel more confident in myself to contribute. I feel the single gender group is able to have a laugh, but can get on with the work as well.

(The Roseland School, Cornwall)

I don't worry as much now – I know my answer will be okay, I used to panic before and then worry but I think, hey, I can do this now.

(Kehelland Village School, Cornwall)

It helped me by allowing me to try different ways of learning and to find out what I am best at.

(Henbury High School, Cheshire)

It helps me to learn a lot when I learn something once and I teach someone it again. My brain records it more.

(Hazelbury Junior School, Enfield)