

When pupils talk about their learning

At first, pupils are likely to offer us "thin" descriptions of their learning, along with an impoverished view of their own role in it¹. Teachers who have helped build a focus on learning, through supporting pupils in noticing more about their learning, talking with each other about their learning, reflecting on their learning journeys and experimenting with their learning² notice development in the following ways³.

Greater independence from teacher

"Ms X usually helps us learn a lot, but with this project it was different. A lot of the time I didn't even notice she was there. This has helped me learn that I don't need someone telling me what to do to learn well." (Kirsten, 13 yrs)

Greater number of sources for learning

"I have learnt from books and the TV and even toys. I have learnt from fresh air. I have learnt from other people at class time. I have learnt from Mrs Y. I have learnt from pictures and computers. I have learnt from writing". (Isabel aged 6)

Self more in control of learning, seeing it as active, collaborative and learner-driven

"When you ask questions you can learn more, but if you don't ask questions you stay in the same place that you were in." (Naheeda 10 years)

"You learn more because if you explain to people what to do you say things that you wouldn't say to yourself, really. So you learn things that you wouldn't know if you were just doing it by yourself". (Annie, 11 years)

"I enjoy making mistakes and learning from them" (Harry, 11 years)

"When I'm stuck, I go back and check instead of guessing" (Vikesh ,11 yrs)

Learning seen as a process and journey focusing on meaning and understanding, rather than on techniques

"finding out, exploring, opening your mind to new things, getting to know more stuff so you are open to more things and not closed down, experiencing different things" (Eileen, 12 years)

Learning more seen as a function of groups and communities

"I've learnt that you can learn from other people. I've learnt that you have different ideas than other people...." (Ruth aged 6)

"Even if you learn something perfectly, or are a pioneer in your area, all your work is useless if nobody else can understand you. You might as well have done no work at all. The point of learning is to share it with others. Lone learning is not enough." (Mary, 11 years)

Processes of clarifying and developing ideas through dialogue are emphasized

"It is better to learn with mates because it's good to get their opinions so that you can think about it and not think one way." (Isobel , 12 years)

Learning is seen as connected to "what I have to offer to the world".

"Learning is what I do as a human, to become a better human. How can exams test really important learning, like learning to love someone, or learning to cope when that person dies?" (Emma, 12 years)

¹ Carnell, E. (2005), 'Understanding and enriching young people's learning: issues, complexities and challenges'. *Improving Schools*, 8 (3) 269–284

² Four headings derived from a research review: Watkins, C (2001), *Learning about Learning enhances Performance*. London: Institute of Education School Improvement Network (Research Matters series No 13)

³ from the chapter "Learning about Learning" in Watkins C, Carnell E and Lodge C (2007), *Effective Learning in Classrooms*, London: Sage
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