

# You Can... Appeal to a range of learning styles

*As teachers we instinctively know that different children prefer to learn in different ways. Some pupils can listen really well, some respond enthusiastically to visual activities, whilst others are far more keen on active, movement-based tasks.*

## Thinking points

- The idea that children have different preferred 'styles' of learning has become increasingly fashionable and popular.
- There is currently some debate about the scientific basis for 'learning styles' theories.
- With large numbers of children in a class, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to differentiate each task for visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners.
- However, the children will certainly benefit where the teacher uses a variety of teaching approaches in his or her lessons. This outcome is perhaps the main advantage of the current focus on 'learning styles' theories.



## Tips, ideas and activities

- When planning, include a range of approaches, so that the children are seeing, hearing and doing during each lesson. When teaching from previously written schemes of work, check that these include different learning styles.
- Suggestions for auditory learning:
  - Use a short extract of music as the children enter in the morning, or as they come in after break
  - Gradually fade the music, challenging the children to be sitting ready to learn the moment it stops
  - Match the music to the lesson you are going to teach. Talk with the children about the mood or feelings it has created and how that might relate to the learning
  - Use lots of short vocal activities: chanting word or letter sounds, singing nursery rhymes, saying tongue twisters
  - Use a wide range of tones in your voice and, if you can, incorporate different accents or funny voices.
- Suggestions for visual approaches:
  - Incorporate pictures, symbols, photographs and short video clips into lessons
  - Use flash cards, encouraging the children to make image cards for different subjects
  - Show the class a flash card with the image partly covered up and gradually reveal the picture. Ask the children to identify the image as soon as possible, talking afterwards about how they did this
  - Use coloured cards to get your children talking about their moods and emotions.
- Suggestions for activities involving movement and practical approaches to learning:
  - Break up your lessons with some short exercises. For example, ask the children to draw some 'lazy 8s' in the air (the number 8 on its side)
  - Whenever you do work involving verbs, make a point of getting the children to actually 'do' the actions
  - Involve the children as volunteers and in physical demonstrations; in counting activities or making letter shapes with their bodies
  - Find interesting and imaginative ways for your children to move around the room; for example, move as though there is glue on the floor or in zero gravity.