

## Assessing the value of the Brain Gym Balance in the classroom.

We decided to test the value of the Brain Gym Balance as we had noticed that while some children benefit from Brain Gym exercises done with the whole class others, despite participating fully, have failed to make much progress. By using the Balance the child would be given exercises tailored for his/her individual needs.

Although I had completed the **Brain Gym Foundation Course** in May 2005, I had only completed a handful of Balances prior to embarking on this research. As a result of this activity I now feel much more confident about facilitating the Balances particularly in the Laterality dimension. I feel I would now be more quickly able to identify the possible reasons behind a child's difficulties and so be able to choose the right balance and exercises for that child.

The children all felt that there had been an improvement in their performance in the curricular area they had chosen for their Brain Gym Balance. The classroom assistant who has been working with a statemented child for two years was so impressed with the amount he had written a few days after his balance that she drew it to my attention. His goal had been "*to be able to write a lot easily*". As a result of their Balance children were more aware of how their brain worked and of what they could do to help themselves to learn. This understanding of how they learn and the attitude of taking responsibility for their own learning is very much in keeping with the Revised Curriculum. The children all enjoyed their Brain Gym Balances.

I used oral and written feedback from the teachers and parents of the children who took part in the study as well as from the children themselves to evaluate the success of the activity. Where it was relevant to the child's goal we looked at the child's performance in standardised tests. Results were pleasing.

The knowledge I gained about the pupils involved and the exercises recommended were discussed with the relevant

teacher on the day. These teachers now have a greater understanding of how the brain works and of specific help they can give to the child. I plan to survey the children involved in the study in October. Following this I expect to make a formal presentation to a full staff meeting and I expect that this will provide the school with another tool which will help our pupils become independent and proficient learners

The CPD Bursary has enabled me to enhance my skills as a Brain Gym facilitator. I am convinced that all the children in the study showed some improvement and that their confidence was boosted by taking part. A crucial factor seemed to be the child's level of motivation. The child who pestered me in the playground to be included in the study made much greater progress than the child who told me at the end of the study that he had never wanted to do it but his mum had put him forward for it. In retrospect I realise that I should have offered the children the opportunity to take part in the study and only then sought parental permission.

I plan to do further balances with selected children during the next academic year. These would concentrate on the Focus and Centering Dimensions. I will also be using the Brain Gym exercises regularly with my class.