

# Therapy that helps children blossom

Osteopath Mark Mathews has pioneered a new treatment called Sunflower Therapy which has helped children who are struggling to learn or concentrate. Kerry Ruse reports

TRUBLED by the frustrations of trying to learn while coping with a learning, behavioural or health difficulty, children can find themselves struggling with the simplest of tasks.

For many, the constant confusion, lack of concentration, inability to understand and answer questions can earn them the label of being naughty or disobedient.

However Guildford osteopath Mark Mathews strongly believes there is more under a child's skin than plain naughtiness and with this belief and his own experience of being dyslexic, he pioneered a treatment known as Sunflower Therapy.

For the past 10 years, he has treated more than 1,000 children through a series of holistic treatments. He assesses a child's structural, chemical and neurological system, and in his words "resets the computer inside". Individual nutrition programmes are drawn up for each child and sessions are arranged to give each element time to work.

Mark said: "Some of the children I've treated have now got degrees, successful careers and a number are millionaires but before they had any treatment they were falling behind and suffered from a variety of learning difficulties.

"I believe that if you are in synch with yourself, you can do better in life. Everything we do, we measure and we measure against what is the normal for each child.

"No two cases are the same and I would say all the children I've treated over the years have improved although they do not improve in the same way.

"We are never going to make them all into Einsteins. It is about making the most of everything they have got."

A three-year study into Sunflower Therapy carried out by the University of Surrey found 61 children diagnosed with dyslexia all made improvements

following a series of five 40-minute sessions.

Some did not reach the nutritional stage but after correcting structural problems, each nutritional assessment showed signs of improvement.

In the case of eight-year-old Robert Brown, dyslexia has started to cause problems in his everyday life.

At Robert's second session, Mark identified immediately that his body was out of alignment.

A number of key areas including hips, spine, neck and feet were lifted, twisted and tested during the session.

Any weak areas were treated further using equipment such as wedges placed under or on the body as well as more traditional chiropractic methods.

Robert's inability to focus on more than one instruction at a time was evident throughout the session. According to Mark, this demonstrated clearly how Robert struggled with absorbing information and retaining it.

A vitamin B12 deficiency was also identified and Robert walked away with instructions to take supplements for a month.

His mother Kathy said: "Robert has a high IQ but has a processing problem. I started

to become concerned about him when he was about two. He was an easy baby but when he was sleeping you had to keep contact with him until he fell into a deep sleep.

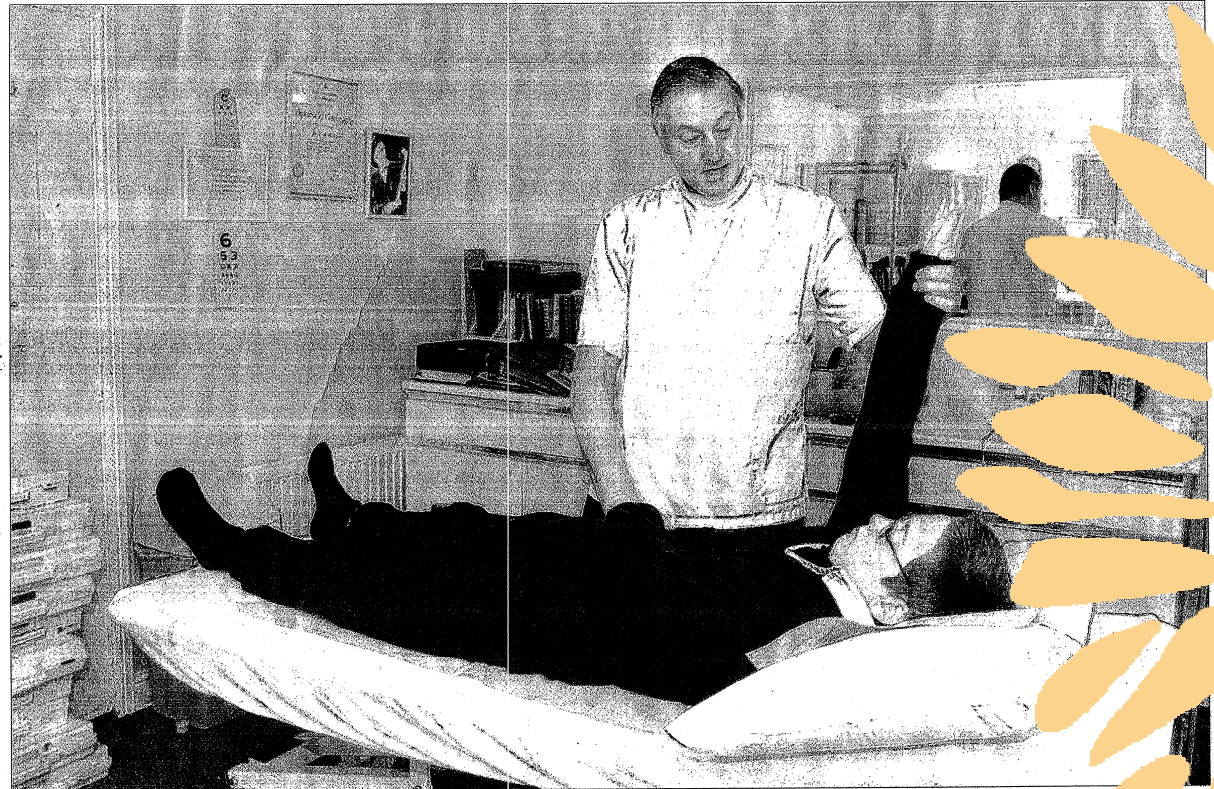
"I could see Robert had potential but one example of how his mind works was when I was asking him a lot of questions at once and he replied 'Mum you're making my brain boil'. It showed that he could not process what I was bombarding him with.

"It is going to take a number of treatments. It will not be a quick fix. We have to peel off the layers until we can find out what is wrong."

Robert will undergo a year-long series of sessions which will include examining and testing his reflexes, reading, writing and numeracy skills as well as developing his confidence to deal with situations positively.

The clinic, based in Guildford Park Road, forms a part of Mark's natural health clinic, The Reve Pavilion.

Mark has trained 90 practitioners worldwide and is behind the setting up of 11 clinics in the UK. The Sunflower Trust hopes a further 10 centres will be opened in the UK this year.



Mark Mathews treats a patient with Sunflower Therapy at the The Reve Pavilion, Guildford. Picture: Terry Habgood.

## Treatment can be free of charge

PARENTS who have children with learning difficulties can take advantage of the Sunflower Trust's bursary scheme.

Its latest assisted funding programme is due to be launched in the summer and schools and families are able to apply to access Sunflower Therapy free of charge.

Trust co-ordinator, Patricia Murray-Cox, whose dyslexic son was successfully treated through the programme and saw his IQ rise by 12 points, described that in the past 18 months, around 25 children have benefited from the scheme.

She said: "We have been lucky to

receive support from local businesses who have all given around £1,000 each which covers one child's full treatment which takes about a year to complete.

"The bursary scheme has been running for 10 years or so and we carry out a number of fundraising activities to supplement the fund.

"We want to increase the number of children we can help to 60 but need more support to be able to do that.

"To be able to screen every child would be lovely and we are keen to extend our work within schools to be able to achieve that. The ideal age for a child to be screened is between seven and eight.

"When the tests were first devised we were just dealing with learning difficulties but over the years, particularly in the last eight years or so, there has been a huge increase in children receiving Sunflower Therapy who have behavioural difficulties.

"We have been astonished by the condition of some of the children that come through here.

"I do believe that now class sizes are so big that teachers are only able to deal with one thing at a time. It is not a difficult choice for parents to think about alternative, drug-free treatments."

An opportunity to learn more

about the trust takes place at its spring party at Henley Barn, Pirbright Road, Normandy on February 16.

Tickets for the dinner dance cost £15 and all monies raised go to fundraising pot.

A magazine offering advertising space is to be produced by the trust with all monies raised going to the charity. The magazine will be distributed in schools, libraries and other organisations and will be launched in March.

For more information on fundraising or volunteer opportunities call 01483 531498.

### Fact box

■ MORE than 1,000 children have been treated since the Sunflower Trust opened its doors in 1995.

■ CHILDREN treated include those with dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, ADD, Asperger's Syndrome and autism as well as children who are simply underachieving at school with no reason for their problems.

■ ALL Sunflower practitioners have a minimum four years medical background.

■ THEY aim to raise IQ by 12 points on average, improve behaviour and study skills by 60% on average and improve health by 60% on average.

■ FIGURES show people living with autism are more likely to be male than female.

■ CHILDREN with learning difficulties are significantly more likely to have poor health and are more likely to live in poverty.

■ The cost of bringing up a child with a disability is three times more than raising a non-disabled child.

■ EVERY week, 200 babies are born with a learning disability.

■ HALF of all people raising children with a learning disability live just below the poverty line.