

# 'It's like re-wiring a computer'

ONE year ago, it would have been unlikely that Katie Milton, 12, would have posed for a photograph in the newspaper.

But thanks to her part in the research of a less conventional treatment for dyslexia and learning difficulties, Katie is now a published poet and keen actress.

She has been an inspiration to many children in the area. The Sunflower Method, which was developed

by Guildford practitioner Mark Matthews 13 years ago, and now has 16 qualified practitioners across the country.

Mark explained how he has worked with Katie to transform her from a quiet, confused girl into the outgoing poetess she is today.

"The first time I met her, she was very nervous and was struggling to read. She had a very low self-esteem and was very forgetful and quiet. Now she loves getting out there and giving things a go - she is really into acting now and has had a poem published."

ment," he said.

"When she first came in to see me, she had low self-esteem, and was very forgetful and quiet. Now she loves getting out there and giving things a go - she is really into acting now and has had a poem published."

Katie's mother, Anna, also benefited from the treatment. She said: "When my daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia, I was very nervous and was struggling to read. Now she is really into acting and has had a poem published."

aren't confident, and the Sunflower Method really has given Katie confidence. She is a member of the Angel Theatre School at Busbridge Village Hall. When she joined she said to me: 'I won't be able to do anything', but now she loves it! She is in their production this February and she has quite a big part."

The Sunflower Method works on the theory that children who are described as having learning difficulties have 'blockages' in their bodies that stop them from performing as well as they might.

Mark explains how the Sunflower Method assesses the way in which the young system works. He says: "Children are like a computer. If it isn't wired correctly, it won't work properly. We find that many children have negative blockages that stop them from performing as well as they might."

Mark has located the source of the problem, and then is able to use

complimentary therapy - including respiratory exercises and diet patterns - to 're-train' the body.

For Katie, this included cutting out different food groups ranging from baked beans to chocolate.

Allena Milton said: "First of all there was an evaluation, where Mark studied things like Katie's spine alignment. The next step was to go on a strict diet of elimination, which included cutting out cheese and chocolate - quite tough for a child of that age!"

And although the treatment seemed a little strange to Katie, she has remained dedicated to it throughout.

"She thought it was a bit weird and wacky at first, but she was very determined and stuck to it," said Allena.

"It's not like Mark is saying 'I can cure dyslexia', but he gets the body to function the best it can. Katie is inspired - a lot more confident and willing to have a go at things. She has more co-ordination and her school work has come on - she had her SATS before some of the treatment and it gave her

a whole new outlook on them!"

Further research into the Sunflower Method is now under way at the University of Surrey, Roehampton, funded by the Sunflower Trust, the charity Mark Matthews set up five years ago.

Research co-ordinator Leona Bull, who will be working with 70 children over the next few months, is hoping that she will be able to help more children like Katie Milton.

She said: "Originally I looked at about 12 families for a year, including the Miltons. The last time I saw Katie, they seemed to be very pleased with the treatment - there had been improvements in her self-confidence and well-being."

"The work the Sunflower Trust do is very unique, and that is why it is so interesting from a research point of view. It is a great opportunity to be part of something that has the potential for such a positive impact on the lives of children affected by learning difficulties," she added.

For more information

Jennifer Stallard reports on an unconventional treatment, The Sunflower Method, which has had remarkable results in helping children with dyslexia and learning difficulties.



Success Story: Katie Milton, 12, whose life has been transformed thanks to the Sunflower Method.

The  
Surrey  
Advertiser