

Modern learning environments that align better with what we know about the brain and student learning can facilitate traditional pedagogies such as direct instruction if needed, but they typically offer students and teachers much more:

- **Flexibility:** the ability to combine two classes into one for team-teaching, split a class into small groups and spread them over a wider area or combine different classes studying complementary learning areas.
- **Openness:** modern learning environments traditionally have fewer walls, more glass and often use the idea of a learning common (or hub) which is a central teaching and learning space that can be shared by several classes. They provide opportunities to observe and learn from the teaching of others and be observed in return.
- **Access to resources** (including technology): typically a learning common is surrounded by breakout spaces allowing a range of different activities, such as reading, group work, project space, wet areas, reflection, and presenting. There is often a mixture of wireless and wired technology offering access as and when students need it, within the flow of their learning.

### **Where are all the tables (or desks) and chairs?**

Modern Learning Environments (MLEs) cater for the differing needs of our children. You will see furniture that is of different heights e.g. kneeling benches, tables with stools, wobble stools etc. There are designated areas to better facilitate the learning and activities that students are engaged in.

### **Without a desk, won't it be bad for their posture?**

What is bad for children's posture is sitting at an uncomfortable desk all day in the same position. By having a wide range of furniture at different levels, children can choose what suits them best. Instead of sitting for long periods of time, children get up and move around a lot more. They work in groups, in pairs and individually. Children love having a choice of areas to work in and to find areas that help them learn best depending on what they are doing. I

### **With the more open spaces – won't it be noisy?**

Naturally it would be easy to assume that more students = more noise, but this has not necessarily been the case!

MLE's are designed with new building materials and new technologies specifically to reduce noise. Our classes have been upgraded with acoustic wall linings, speaker systems, smaller "breakout spaces" etc.

Studies involving decibel readings have shown that the noise levels are no different to a single cell classroom environment.

It is also important to point out that learning is socially constructed, and enhanced by discussion, collaboration and group work. No longer is a class working in silence said to be "highly effective" (because for many students the work is either too hard or too easy). We have also noticed far higher levels of engagement and enjoyment within these environments.

### **Won't my child get lost with all the children in the environment?**

We believe it is less likely the children's learning needs will be missed. As there is more than one teacher caring for each child in each learning environment, it is more likely that all the needs will be supported and catered for. No longer do the children have to rely on only having access to one teacher. In addition the ratios of child/teacher are the same as a single cell environment, often it is more complementary.

### **I hear these learning environment are all a bit 'loose', my child needs structure?**

While the spaces provide an element of flexibility, the designed learning programme is purposeful, needs based and has much structure to them. We believe creativity comes from constraint, so we know the importance of ensuring the learning programme has structure, routine and is designed in way that caters to students needs and fosters their unique gifts and talents.