Professor Peter Barrett
Author of the Clever Classrooms Report

Top 10 ways to innovate the classroom

Along with the more detailed advice and suggestions illustrated here, the key questions to be considered are:

Stimulation: Does your classroom use colour and visual complexity to stimulate without creating confusion?

Individualisation: Through flexibility and ownership can the children interact and resonate with their classroom base?

Naturalness: Does your classroom offer the quality and control of light, heat and fresh air to create a comfortable learning environment?

Ask yourself:

Flexibility
- Can different Learning Zones be created?
- Is there a quiet zone?
- Can different arrangements of furniture be created?
- Is there a variety of furniture?

Ownership
- Do the classrooms have an individual colour theme?
- Is there adequate space for pupils to display work?
- Is there personalised storage space for the pupils?
- Is there good quality, age appropriate furniture?

Connectivity
- Are there class displays in the circulation areas?
- Are the classroom entrances distinctive?
- Can the circulation spaces be multi use/libraries?

Complexity
- Are the class displays on walls too busy or too plain?
- Is the class display material covering too much area (80% or more)?

Colour
- Is the main wall colour calm?
- Has colour been used on the walls to focus attention to the learning wall?
- Are brighter colours used to highlight andstimulate eg furniture/carpets/ blinds?

Light
- Is there sufficient natural lighting?
- Is there sufficient artificial lighting?
- Are the light fittings clean and working?
- Are the window areas clear?
- Are there displays on the windows blocking light and views?
- Do the blinds all work?

Temperature
- Does the class overheat?
- Can the heating be controlled from the classroom?
- Is the natural ventilation adequate?
- Can additional external shading be provided?

Air Quality
- Is there a CO2 monitor in the class?
- Do the windows open?
- Do the blinds obstruct the ventilation?

Sound
- Are there any external noise issues?
- Are the floors carpeted?
- Does the furniture have rubber feet?

Links to Nature
- Can the children view/access the outside?
- Can planting be provided in or outside of the classroom?
- Is there an external teaching space adjacent?

Tip 1: Provide plenty of daylight, but without glare

Tip 2: Ensure adequate ventilation

Tip 3: Control the temperature

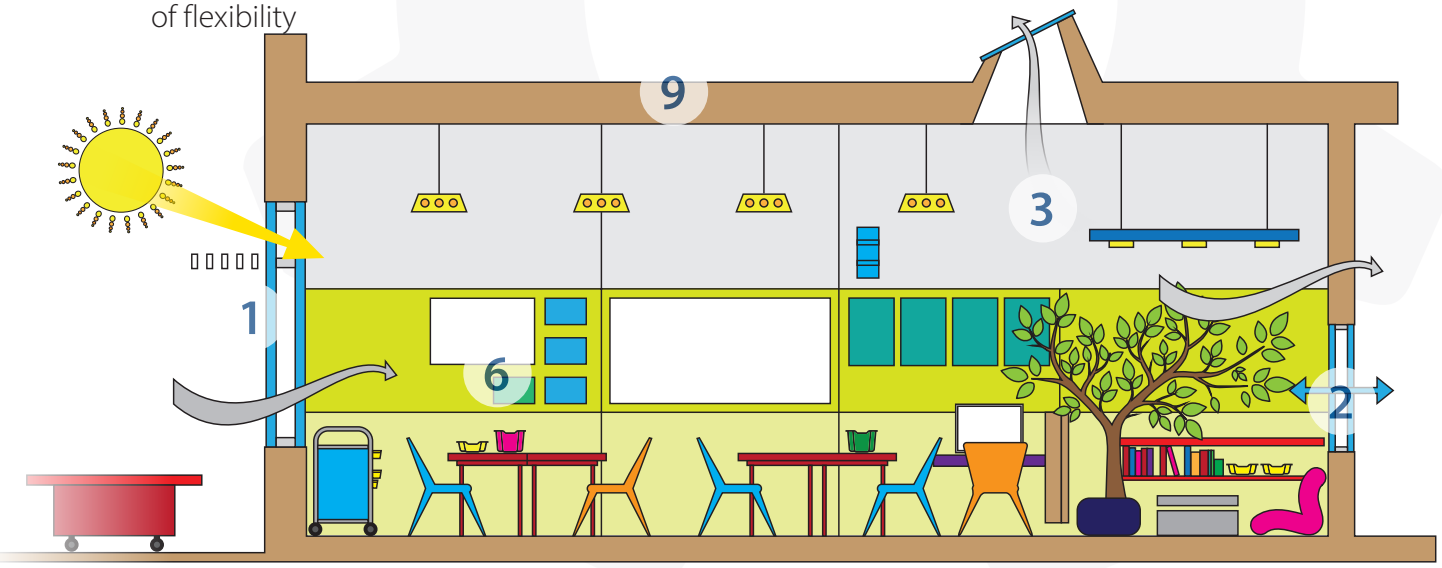
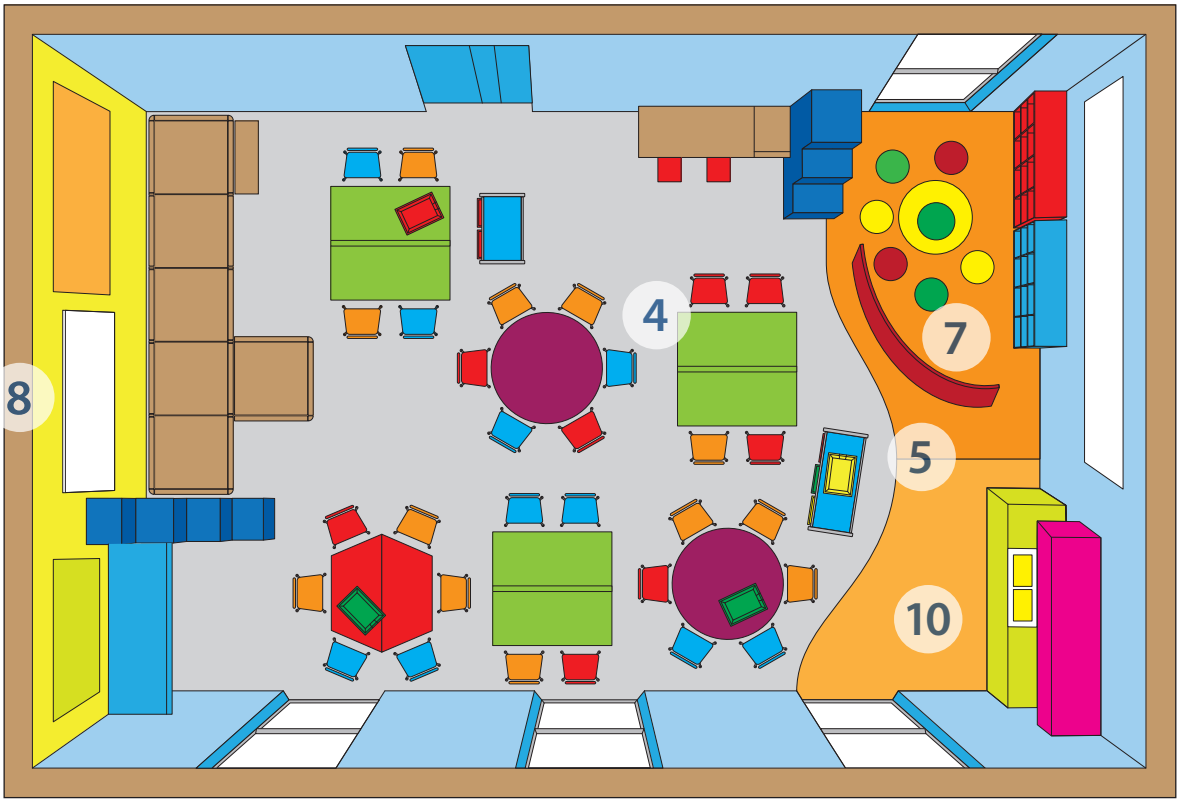
Tip 4: Choose the right level of flexibility

Tip 5: Engender ownership

Tip 6: Manage the visual complexity

Tip 7: Use colour carefully

Tip 8: Attack on all fronts!

Tip 9: Don't assume a 'good' school means a 'good' classroom

Tip 10: Remember to see the classroom as another teaching tool