

Most innovative intervention

Kings Hill School



What the Judges Said

There is evidence of a high level of CPD. We love the fact that children want to read with the dog, what happens next? There is clear evidence of a system embedded over a number of years.

Context

Kings Hill School is a two form entry primary school with two bulge years of three form. It has 476 children on role with only 11% SEN. Whilst our percentage of SEN is relatively low, our number of complex needs pupils is high due to our reputation of high quality support and inclusive ethos. We currently have 10 children on role with an Education and Health Care Plan and two more due to start with us in September, the families of which we have already begun to work with to aid transition. Eighteen of our pupils are in receipt of High Needs Funding, resulting in a high level of targeted, individualised support.

At Kings Hill School every class has a teacher and TA and where necessary 1:1 support is implemented to enable our more complex children to access the curriculum, playground and school events. Our policy is clear that independence is vital and our staff work tirelessly to enable children to transition to juniors and then on to secondary school with an ability to work at a certain level of independence to give them the confidence and ability to succeed as learners.

Within Kent we are known for our inclusive support of children with Special Educational Needs and work closely with local special schools as well as other mainstream schools to share good practice and draw on local resources and

expertise. We access the Specialist Teaching Service, paediatrics, school nursing team and physiotherapists through referral and work closely with parents to ensure they are aware of how agencies can support us and them with their child's development. We buy in Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy to ensure assessments of children are regularly updated and our staff are fully aware of what needs to be put in place to support the children in their class.

At Kings Hill School our partnership with parents is vital and starts before the children join us. Often we begin working with families up to 5 months before the children start at school, arranging visits to the home and pre-school setting, working with the agencies already involved, helping access additional funding, supporting early application for EHCP where necessary but most importantly preparing the child to feel at ease and ready to transition into primary school.

Our motto 'Inspired to believe, Inspired to achieve' is at the root of everything we do and we ensure this underpins the support, nurture and education that we provide for everyone regardless of barriers, differences or difficulties.

Entry

At Kings Hill School between 2011-2014 we saw a steady increase in the number of children being diagnosed with Dyslexia. Our belief isn't that more children were joining us with Dyslexia but more that our ever-increasing awareness and ability to recognise children's barriers resulted in early diagnosis and more importantly early intervention.

We use a variety of methods to enable us to understand a child's literacy and numeracy difficulties, this includes working with parents and outside agencies, book scrutinies, formative and summative assessment, interventions and observations. If we feel a child may have Dyslexia we also use the GL Assessment Dyslexia Portfolio Screener alongside the British Picture Vocabulary Scale, Wide Range Intelligence Test and Colorimetry Assessment to give us a clearer picture of specific areas of need within the dyslexia spectrum. We have accessed a high level of training in the delivery and understanding of cognitive assessments to ensure we have a clear picture of what each assessment is telling us, thus resulting in more targeted, personalised support, understanding and intervention.

At Kings Hill School we pride ourselves in a whole school approach to supporting Dyslexia. Clear differentiation through personalised resources, use of adult support

and manipulatives enables children to access learning in the classroom more easily. Visual support is a key part of differentiation and can be seen in every classroom on displays, in books and in personalised resources. We send home visual key-vocabulary for parents to help pre-teach children more complex terms to give children, giving them a head-start in class and the confidence to answer questions when we come to new topics. Our work, where possible is copied on to yellow or pale blue paper and enlarged to make it easier to read. Children are given word mats, vocabulary sheets, privacy stations, sloping boards, pencil grips and even overlays where the child feels it is of benefit. Teachers have all been trained in supporting children with Dyslexia and a shared belief in the fact that children learn best in the classroom rather than being taken out of class for specific literacy interventions, underpins our inclusive approach to supporting children with SEND.

Perhaps the main reason behind our initial research into reading interventions was not due to a drop in reading attainment or progress as such but the ever increasing message from parents and teachers that their child didn't want to read. Children were beginning to see reading as something they had to do, something that they wanted to get done as quickly as they could in order that they could then do what they wanted. We had a shared belief amongst staff that learning to read for pleasure was perhaps the most important thing for a primary school child to do. This led us to research the use of a Reading Dog.

We were already aware of research showing the impact of animals on children with Autism and began to research the impact of dogs on encouraging children to read for pleasure. We surveyed parents and pupils to find out their views of having a dog in school, conscious of phobias and allergies. Whilst the Reading Dog intervention was met with some scepticism, all stakeholders seemed open to the idea of using a dog to support a child's reading. Duke, our original reading dog, who still visits for two afternoons a week, was assessed in 2014 by a Reading Dogs Charity Trust.



He has a very mild temperament, never jumps up or licks, doesn't malt and most importantly loves children. We had to ensure he wouldn't respond negatively to loud noises, sudden movement or been stroked for hours on end! He passed with flying colours and we wrote to parents to gain permission for a number of children to pilot the program.

One of our experienced TAs began working with Duke and took him to collect children one by one from the classroom. As they sat and read in the comfort of our library, Duke didn't correct the words they read, or encourage them to sound out or tell them to try again- he simply listened. In return for cuddles, strokes and lots of love, Duke sat back and listened intently to the child, no matter how well they read, how fast they finished the page or how many words they mis-pronounced- Duke loved it, and because of that- the children loved it too.



We surveyed the children and parents of our pilot group before and after the Reading Dog intervention started and found that just 38% of our selected pupils enjoyed reading, after the 10 week program this increased to 86%. Further still 75% of our parents said they battled with their child to read every night, this decreased to just 6% following our intervention. We have continued to see similar figures since we began running the program in 2014.

Needless to say this increased joy of reading, which led to an increase in how often the child read, resulted in increased reading attainment and progress for children accessing the Reading Dogs Intervention (INSERT DATA). What we were perhaps not prepared for was the number of children who now asked to read to, some of even our most capable readers were keen to read more- especially if it was to Duke.

Not wanting to discourage, we arranged for able readers to read in groups to Duke and those struggling to access reading to read on a 1:1 basis. Some even bought pieces of writing to share with Duke, or maths program that their teacher wanted them to explain their reasoning behind. We gradually saw Reading Dogs have an

impact not only on reading and in some ways writing and maths, but on the ability and confidence to speak freely without judgement.

We now have three reading dogs in school and they are very much part of our team, we often joke that their excitement to come into school and see the children is infectious.

One of the things lost in a society so focussed on data and outcomes is the long term impact of a child finding pleasure in picking up a book. At Kings Hill School this is something we are delighted that our children now have, regardless of their ability.