



Bellefield CofE Primary & Nursery School

Bellefield CofE Primary & Nursery School in Trowbridge uses the award-winning PM reading programme throughout the school – beginning with ‘non-level’ books followed by gradual progression up to Level 30 and on to ‘free reader’ – and the impact of its reading intervention system has been praised by Ofsted.

Ellen Campbell, the school’s Literacy and Phonics Lead and Reception teacher, is responsible for co-ordination of guided, shared and independent reading programmes alongside the Reading Pal Co-ordinator. This includes working with teachers, teaching assistants and reading pals, who come in to the school voluntarily to support pupils who are struggling with reading progression.

“The real value of PM is that it brings comprehension in line with reading,” she explained. “It’s not about phonics per se, it is about how the children use their other skills. They need to be able to answer comprehension questions about what they have read and apply their phonics knowledge to certain words.”

Ellen, who joined the school in 2008, said that PM was at the forefront of their initiatives to develop successful readers. “The real value of PM is that it brings comprehension in line with reading,” she explained. “It’s not about phonics per se, it is about how the children use their other skills. They need to be able to answer comprehension questions about what they have read and apply their phonics knowledge to certain words. Generally we find that if a child is picking up phonics quickly in school and also getting home support they can fly through the levels. Our data on PM and reading pals shows the correlation

between these and pupil progression. Ofsted really liked our reading intervention system and overall approach to phonics tracking.”

The PM benchmarking kits are essential for use in schools to help teachers understand what levels their pupils are reading at, Ellen said. “Assessment packs are used by teachers, reading pals and teaching assistants – children need to get x % of words correct to progress to the next level – and if a child is reading well but has not got the comprehension then we know where to focus,” she revealed. “We have in-school targets – by the end of reception we expect children to be around a Level 6 on PM and by the end of Year 1 around a Level 15. We are seeing more children reading at higher levels at Year 1, and more free readers at Year 2, as a result of PM and the high-quality systematic phonics being taught daily in each class.”

At Bellefield, however, the school also supports children with a range of needs. “Some children come in with low vocabulary levels and we have a high proportion of English as an Additional Language (EAL) children, but for us it all clicks with PM because it’s so easy to use,” Ellen said. “You see some readers, especially EAL children, getting stuck in the late Level 20s on PM due to the new vocabulary in those books. We therefore also use Fast Forward, part of PM, to support older children. Once children get to Level 27/28 and can see they only need to progress through a few more levels to become a free reader then this is extremely motivating.”

Ellen praised the hard work of colleagues in the implementation of PM. “Our system works really well because we train our staff who work really hard at using it well – we couldn’t make it successful without their dedication,” she said. “We’re able to get our PGCE students involved because PM is so easy to use, training is not teacher heavy, and they also use our system.”

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