

Teaching computer-savvy children to value reading

Reviewed by: **John Dabell**

Why Bug Club?

Teaching computer savvy children to value reading as an activity, to find pleasure in books of all kinds and become real readers is crucial but far from easy, but I think I know where to start. Bug Club from Pearson is a whole-school, phonically-based 24/7 reading programme which connects online eBooks with printed books to teach and inspire children to read. It's easily the best reading programme I've seen in 15 years of teaching and the perfect marriage of print and digital resources. I accessed the free 90-day trial at the Bug Club website. This is a no holds barred full access offer, so pass the word and make the most of it.

Pupil eBooks

The Pupil Area of Bug Club is very easy to use. In 'My Books' pupils can select an eBook they want to read or have read to them. Some pages in the books contain hotspots which link to questions which children answer to earn points. This is a nice feature as it gives children an incentive to read with a purpose. This also doubles up for assessing children's comprehension. Children can zoom-in on the words and pictures for closer inspection and dip into another book if they choose. The accompanying hard copy books contain before and during tips for assessing understanding, checking vocabulary and reading the story. There are also after reading ideas and follow-up activities to consider. The books come as colour-coded bands from Reception to Y2, and there are stacks of phonic phase and reading recovery titles to choose from – a mixture of fiction and non-fiction titles with over 200 books thoroughly and appropriately graded. With big names such as *Wallace and Gromit*, *Dr Who* and *Angelina Ballerina* on board, the odds of engagement are stacked in our favour.

Teacher resources

The Teacher's Area is similarly simple to use and comes with extra annotation tools for highlighting, writing and, in some cases, editing text onscreen. These can't be saved, but are useful to have. Tracking and assessment has never been easier. There are quiz questions linked to Assessment Focuses which feed directly into ready-made reports, levelling guidance charts which allow you to use specific titles as benchmark books for one-to-one reading and guided reading cards for structuring lessons. At a glance you can get an idea of pupil strengths and weaknesses. Real-time parental reports can be printed off for meetings about pupil progress. The Teacher's section contains an excellent facility for creating and managing classes and groups and a facility for searching and allocating books.

Whole-class teaching

Teaching Tools comprise a range of pupil games, a magnetic alphabet board, teaching guides, photocopy masters and graphemes. The lessons contain video clips linked to the BBC to practise sounds, and the writing tools are superb for practising letter formation. The Teaching and Assessment guides are written by Johnston and Watson, so we're in safe hands. I do have a couple of bugbears with Bug Club.

The eBooks can be read to the children at the click of a button, but it would have been great to see individual words highlighted as they were read. Also, the magnetic board in the whole class teaching software section might not suit children with visual learning impairments, and the letters on the magnetic board cannot change size or colour.

The verdict – join the club

Bug Club deserves gushing praise for its design and innovation. This is a programme destined to lead the market and transform the way we teach reading from Reception to Y2. It will help children get the best possible start in their reading journey and enjoy page after page of reading success. This resource will make you glad you became a teacher and if you aren't teaching Reception, Y1 or Y2, you'll wish you were. It's not cheap, but you get what you pay for and this would represent a canny investment.

Bug Club was reviewed by John Dabell for Teach Primary. Read the full article at www.teachprimary.com/trying_and_tested/view/pearson-bug-club

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