





Pearson

# Creating strong readers and reducing workload with Pearson Primary products

ActiveLearn

School name:  St. Mary's C of E Infants and Junior School

Region:  Milbank, Calderdale

Area type:  Semi-rural town

Number of pupils:  105

School type:  Infants and Juniors

Ofsted rating:  Outstanding 2017

Pupil premium %:  5.25%

EAL %:  0%

## Key points to take away

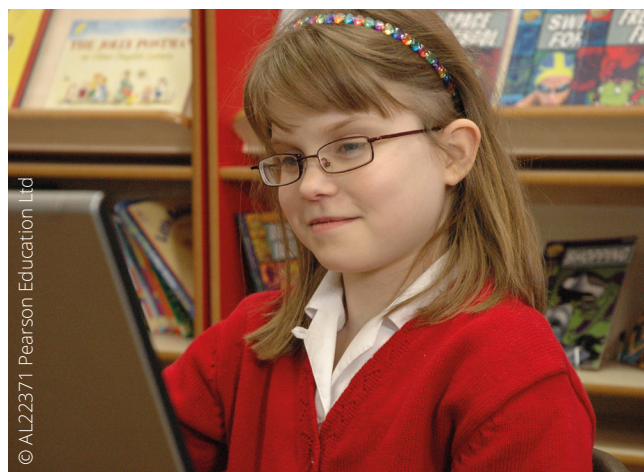
- **ActiveLearn resources** such as **Bug Club**, **Grammar & Spelling Bug** and **Abacus** are most effective when there is parental engagement.
- The ready-made planning resources in **Wordsmith** and **Abacus** may need tweaking for the needs of individual pupils in individual classes, but offer huge time-savings nonetheless. This lifts the burden on the teacher.
- The built-in assessment in **Abacus** and **Bug Club** helps children to become confident with the format of SATs tests as well as offering actionable insight into children's progress. These assessments align well to the standard of the actual national tests.

## A reputation for creating good, strong readers

St. Mary's has high achievement in reading. Their reading results in the KS2 SATs have been very high for the last 4 years, and they anticipate over 80% to achieve age-related expectations this year.

What's more, they have achieved 100% success in the Phonics screening check over the same time period. Ofsted's glowing report in 2017 states that:

'Teaching of reading is most effective and instils in pupils a thirst for reading. From the Reception class onwards, books are readily available, and reading is encouraged and enjoyed.'



Headteacher, Matthew Hopkins, credits much of this success to the school's implementation of Bug Club and Phonics Bug, which they have been using in the school for over 5 years. Bug Club forms the core of their whole-school reading scheme – through which children are allocated an eBook weekly to access from home. In tandem to this, children have half an hour a day allocated to private reading, with small groups using Bug Club online in Guided Reading carousels. St. Mary's is a small school that has excellent home-school relationships, enabling teachers to work closely with parents to ensure that ActiveLearn is used at home and activities are completed.

Very early on in Reception, children are taught how to log on to ActiveLearn, using simple usernames and passwords. In Class 1 (a mixed-age class of Reception and Year 1) the teacher uses Phonics Bug activities in class to enhance her teaching and is then able to allocate follow-up activities via ActiveLearn for consolidation at home. Good learning behaviours are encouraged from the outset through positive reinforcement for children who are reading lots of books online. This also gets the competitive juices flowing! Even at the very beginning of their reading journey, children are motivated by the Read to Me function in the eBooks, which allows them to turn the pages while being read to, giving them the feeling of becoming readers.

## Value for money

Like most schools, St. Mary's has to prioritise budget spending in a climate of squeezed funding, but analysis of Bug Club usage combined with the tangible results and the labour saved for staff, has convinced Matthew that the resource is a valuable asset. "The products from Pearson are the things I won't scrimp on," he says, "because I know that they are well used and that they're having an impact on children's performance."

Throughout the school, teachers use Bug Club for Guided Reading and love the fact that the embedded comprehension questions in each book give the children opportunities to practise comprehension questions independently, building their confidence in tackling questions they will encounter in the national tests. Indeed, Matthew tells us that teachers view Bug Club as a key tool in their arsenal to achieve national expectations.

For some children, Phonics Bug has been a lifesaver: "A few years ago we had a boy in Year 2 who presented as though he had an additional learning need. Eventually it was discovered that he had in fact suffered from chronic glue ear for quite some time and had been partially deaf. This had a big impact on his language and communication skills of course – but a knock-on effect on reading as he couldn't hear the sounds properly. He's now in Year 6 and on track to reach expected standard. We were able to help him catch up using Phonics Bug. We couldn't do things like that if we didn't have the resources at our disposal. Creating those resources from scratch would have been a huge amount of extra work for a member of staff."

## The ActiveLearn family

Workload management is a key priority for Matthew. "I encourage all my staff to ask why they are doing something," he says. "I think back to my days teaching and ask myself how would I feel about this? And that's my line in the sand." Workload management is a big draw for the other ActiveLearn services to which the school subscribes. The planning in Abacus (for maths) and Wordsmith (for writing) takes away a lot of the burden of lesson planning and resource creation. "While we know that we may have to tweak the plans to fit the needs of individual children in our class, much of the thinking has been done; worksheets and other resources are available to print at the click of a button and the interactive activities are all there, ready to be called up on the whiteboard – it's wonderful."

In addition, the staff at St. Mary's really like the half-termly tests in Abacus, which give children experience of reasoning questions that offer a realistic level of challenge. Matthew reports that, in his experience, items in the Abacus Progress & Assess tests are well aligned to the standard of the national tests and therefore offer a reliable indicator of pupil performance.



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### Find out more

Find out more about the independent Bug Club study at

[www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/bugclubstudy](http://www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/bugclubstudy)

See more case studies like this at

[www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/impact](http://www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/impact)