

Hillcrest Early Years Academy

CASE STUDY

INTENT

Hillcrest Eary Years Academy, located in Gainsborough, is in the West Lindsey District of Lincolnshire. We are an Infant Academy which specialises in providing high - quality Early Years Education to give children the best possible foundations for their future educational journey. The school sits in a high area of deprivation with 20% SEND and 60% of our pupils eligible for Pupil Premium. There are currently 233 children on roll with a two-form entry class structure.
Due to the demographics of the catchment area, children at Hillcrest Early Years Academy have traditionally low starting points, particularly with their Communication and Language. As a school, we started our Little Wandle journey in February 2022 after exploring DfE validated SSP programmes.

IMPLEMENTATION

Following outcomes that were significantly below national for PSC in 2022 (50%) we were contacted by the DfE initially advising us to have an audit carried out by our local English Hub. We were then contacted by Witham Hughs English Hub and had an audit carried out in February 2023. Following the audit, we were given funding that significantly improved our resources thus improving delivery of daily lessons and the ability to have fidelity to the Little Wandle SSP.
Following this initial audit, we applied to become a Partner School to engage with ongoing support from the English Hub because we wanted to embed a consistently high standard of the teaching of phonics across the Academy and ensure that all children, regardless of backgrounds or ability, experience the best start possible during their time with us.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- Drop Everything And Read sessions every Wednesday afternoon.
- Teachers reading class stories to children every day.
- Reading for Pleasure books sent home every week alongside full decodable reading books.
- Weekly practice sessions for the teaching of phonics for teachers and TA's.
- Corridor Libraries for each Year group.
- Each class having their own class library.
- Informal book talk has become a part of each classroom.
- Whole school training centered around reading for pleasure.
- Recommended Reads display boards in the hall.
- Reading Evenings for children to share their love of reading with their parents and a variety of activities.
- Dedicated spot in the termly newsletter.
- Diverse and exciting collection of books for reading for pleasure.



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IMPACT

In 2022, the PSC for Hillcrest was 50%, this increased to 69% in 2023 and we are predicting outcomes of 90% for 2024. Phonics and Early Reading are the absolute priority and heartbeat of the Academy. All staff share high expectations, including the Board of Trustees, that every child, regardless of starting points, will achieve the skill of reading because we know that this will give them the best possible foundations for future learning thus improving their life chances. The support days have had significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning within phonics lessons. Through developing positive relationships with both our Literacy Specialist and the English Hub team, staff have been able to access a wide range of CPD alongside more personalised approaches for their development, thus having a positive impact on their confidence to teach Early Reading to a high standard.

We have loved the bespoke approach and understanding from our Literacy Specialist around our journey and our context. Through the support to plan practice sessions and through the use of live coaching during support, it has been transformational in terms of the quality of delivery. We really feel that there is a good balance between challenge and support and this is another reason that staff have flourished under the model of becoming a Partner School. Now that Little Wandle has been in place for two years, children's progress against assessments has increased significantly and children make rapid progress from day one. We use the Little Wandle 'Foundation for Phonics' Nursery resources to ensure that children move into their Reception year with the skills needed to access daily phonics lessons.

From working in partnership with the English Hub, assessments are carried out termly but also more frequently for our first priority children therefore highlighting next steps. As these are shared with staff, there is a real 'can do' culture and all staff have risen to the challenge to ensure that children 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'. Staff regularly approach the Phonics Lead to celebrate the achievements and progress of the children that they work with in both whole class and small groups sessions.

EYFS child: "I like learning new sounds and then I can read."

Year 1 child: "I like doing the new tricky words, it's fun!"

Year 2 child: "I like writing the words now."





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QUOTES

TA delivering SEND programme “The English Hub support is non-judgmental and supportive. I like the strategies provided and the passion of our Literacy Specialist. The support provides me with a varied toolkit and more confidence - I can pass that on to the children.”

EYFS teacher “I like the in the moment, targeted support to improve on areas of development. I enjoy receiving feedback and have more confidence to talk to the Phonics Lead when I need support.”

Year 2 teacher “ I have a better grasp of phonics and reading since we have started receiving support. The support provides clear structure and areas to develop with good communication. There has never been a point where I have felt uncomfortable with the advice, it felt positive.”

Phonics Lead “I look forward to our English Hub support days and enjoy having dedicated support from our specialist (Susie) who understands our school’s journey and has incredible knowledge surrounding early reading. I have increased in confidence teaching phonics since the English Hub reached out to us. The progress I have seen throughout the school has blown me away and we couldn’t have done it without Susie’s consistent, passionate, and positive support. We all aim to support children to read and have a strong start to their reading so they can develop their imaginations and have a window to the world.”

Headteacher “The support we have received from the English Hub and our Literacy Specialist, Susie, has been invaluable to the standards of education at Hillcrest Early Years Academy in terms of Phonics and Early Reading. The fine balance between challenge and support has really enabled us to drive forward change in a safe, supportive environment where staff feel confident to take risks and try something new. It has been incredible to see the growth of the children and staff and has been a pleasure to be a partner school. I would highly recommend starting the Partner School journey as it has not only developed our wider staff team’s knowledge, confidence, expertise and delivery but also that of our Phonics Lead and Senior Leadership Team.”





