



Fifteen Minutes a Day

By Diana Cormack

For the past five years children in Martin Infant School who need a kick start to their reading have been benefiting from a successful support scheme. It is structured to enable classroom assistants and parents to provide an individual programme of 15 minutes one-to-one support each day for a period of about a term. So you don't have to be a teacher, but you do have to attend a couple of training sessions and you definitely have to have a huge commitment.

Sue Mattocks, the teacher who introduced the scheme to the school, says that the support given by the adults involved has been fantastic. Parents whose children have left Martin Infants still come; some volunteers come before they go to work; one dad comes during his lunch break; a granny and a dinner lady do daily sessions. Initially they were recruited by letter but now it is by word of mouth and there are often returners keen to become involved again. Carol Masseron of Long Lane, who has a child in the infants and another in the juniors, said that taking part had taught her how to read effectively with her own children.

Training takes place every year on site with literacy

specialist Kate Grant, who devised the programme as an affordable and easy-to-implement way of helping those pupils who are slow to start independent reading. At this stage it is not for children with special needs.

Personal trainer

There is no stigma attached. Sue, who describes it as a bit like having a personal trainer, says that it does make a huge difference to the infant children's progress. In fact, Barnet has been taking an interest in the success of 15 Minutes a Day and has been asking the school for feedback. It may well be that the borough will decide to introduce this scheme, pioneered by Martin Infants, into more of their schools.



David Bell presents an award to Holy Trinity School staff. Photo by John Dearing

Holy Trinity School "A Real Beacon in the Community"

In a week when some of the country's primary schools were criticised, David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Schools, had nothing but praise for one in East Finchley. He came to Holy Trinity CE Primary School, Eagan's Close, to present children and staff with the Basic Skills Quality Mark, which is awarded to schools that meet a very high standard in the basic skills of reading, writing, spelling and number work.

Following on from last year's impressive OFSTED report, the staff participated in listing ways to meet and raise standards, an exercise which prompted new ideas but which also underlined present good practice. The government's Basic Skills Agency specifies ten areas of assessment for which evidence of achievement must be shown. This involved a lot of hard work not only by the teaching staff, but by all the support staff and, of course, the children! During a special assembly, deputy head teacher Alison Holding paid tribute to them as well as to the support given by parents and governors.

This was echoed by David Bell, who asked the youngsters to applaud the adults "who

make this such a great school for you." He described his tour round the classes to sit in on lessons, talk to staff and pupils and admire the wall displays as a pleasure and a privilege and thought the subsequent singing in the hall was "fantastic". The audience of parents, school governors, the Deputy Director of the London Diocesan Board for Schools, Dr Rudi Vis, Barnet Councillors and Education Officials agreed with him.

Afterwards, in praising

the high standards achieved by the quality of teaching and the high expectations of all the staff, the chief inspector said that good leadership and management was crucial and reminded us that head teacher Duncan Mills had been described by OFSTED as "outstanding."

He told *THE ARCHER*, "It has been a pleasure to visit this school and the children are a credit both to themselves and their parents. This is a real beacon in the community."

Swimming with Disabilities

A club meets every Monday at Park Road Muswell Hill Baths to enable children and adults of all ages with disabilities and special needs to enjoy swimming along with their family or friends in a safe club setting.

Members who need support with changing need to bring their own carers but otherwise the changing rooms are fully accessible at ground level and there is a chair hoist into the water. Helpers are available in the water for all swimming needs to improve confidence in a safe informal environment.

There are no membership fees and the club runs with a minimum of rules except safety must be observed at all times. Haringey lifeguards are also present at this time.

So whether it is MS, epilepsy, blindness, a false leg or any other incapacity, as long as your doctor gives permission,

you will be welcome.

It meets from 7.30-9 pm with drinks and biscuits afterwards until 9.30.

Make this a resolution for the New Year for you or someone you know. Any queries please contact Ian on 020 84448973.

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