

THRASS Synthetic Phonics 'Centre of Excellence' rated as Outstanding by British Schools Inspectors

"I am impressed with the system by which they are teaching both the parents and the children reading, writing and spelling." These are the words of a parent quoted in the recent OFSTED report that has rated Oxley Park Primary School in Milton Keynes as an outstanding school. The system to which the parent was referring is the THRASS synthetic phonics programme, pioneered by British Educational Psychologist Alan Davies and used at Oxley Park and in thousands of schools in Europe and Africa.

Oxley Park Primary School is a THRASS 'Centre of Excellence' and, although it has only been open for just over a year, it has already established itself as an outstanding school. The OFSTED inspection found that progress made by the pupils was exceptional and that, although children are entering the school with standards below the national norm, they leave with standards well above. Their progress in reading and writing is well above average.

Oxley Park Primary School is also a multi-cultural school, where about one third of pupils speak English as an additional language and THRASS is particularly successful for teaching such children. The contribution that THRASS is making towards the school's success is readily acknowledged by the headteacher Cathy Higgins, "The children just love THRASS which is about so much more than just phonics and is used throughout the school, both in dedicated literacy sessions and integrated into other curriculum subjects."

And it is not just by coincidence that the OFSTED report includes a comment on the way in which parents, as well as children, are being taught. Oxley Park Primary School sees parents as children's first and continuing educators and aims to work in partnership with them. THRASS UK has in turn made it really easy for parents to learn with their children about its whole-school synthetic phonics programme by creating a dedicated website for them. Phonics 4 Parents contains videos, free software, and information about the THRASS-Tips free email course that helps parents to understand the principles of THRASS, how it is used to teach their children in school and how they can help their children at home, and the Accredited Certificate for Parents.

The free software that can be downloaded from the Phonics 4 Parents website is the THRASS Phoneme Machine, a groundbreaking computer programme that uses moving human lips and the International Phonetic Alphabet to teach children, and indeed learners of all ages and abilities, to read and spell in an entertaining and fun way. It can be downloaded free of charge in the countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve and thousands of people have already downloaded it since it was launched last year. Although it is suitable for learners of all ages and abilities, it has been found to be particularly suitable for parents of children starting to read, children finding reading difficult and those for whom English is not their first language.

Free Calendar Charts for early language learning that parents can use at home to help develop essential speaking and listening skills, including general knowledge, memory, intellect and social skills are also available (or will be shortly) in several European (English, Welsh, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Greek and Polish) and African (Afrikaans, Setswana and Zulu) languages. And the latest version of the Phoneme Machine includes an interactive version of the English Calendar Chart with children's voices saying the seven days, the thirty-one dates, the twelve months, the numbers from one to twenty, the ten main colours and the names of the twenty-six lower-case letters (and their associated capitals).

Other key partners have also recognised the value of THRASS, which is widely acknowledged as having the potential to more than double the normal rate of progress for learning reading and spelling for learners of all ages and abilities. They have, in particular, been impressed by the THRASS Phoneme Machine and last year SMART Technologies Inc joined with THRASS UK to launch the THRASS SMART project at Masibambane College in Orange Farm Township, South Africa. In addition, the Phoneme Machine has recently received software accreditation from SMART for use on its interactive whiteboards in the countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve. And just this week Alan Davies has been asked to present the THRASS Phoneme Machine at Microsoft's African Schools Technology Innovation Centre.

THRASS was also identified as the 'Course of the Week' in the 15 December 2006 edition of the Times Educational Supplement where it was once again identified as being "particularly helpful when teaching children who don't have English as their first language; they find it logical and uncomplicated".

Oxley Park Primary School and THRASS: an outstanding school working with an outstanding phonics programme to deliver excellence.

For a summary of the main features of THRASS and the benefits of using THRASS, (including further comments from teachers and parents of pupils at Oxley Park), visit www.thrass.co.uk/keyfacts.htm

For more information about the THRASS Phoneme Machine Version 4.13 and to register for a free download of the software, visit www.phonememachine.com

To obtain copies of the free THRASS Calendar Charts, visit www.thrass.co.uk/cart/cc.htm

Visit www.phonics4parents.co.uk, the dedicate website for parents, to learn about the THRASS Phoneme Machine, the THRASS-Tips free email course, the THRASS Accredited Certificate for Parents and much more.

To see videos of the pioneering work being done with children and parents at Oxley Park Primary School and THRASS open days, visit www.thrass.co.uk/thrass_school.htm

Demonstration lessons using THRASS at Oxley Park Primary School and elsewhere can be viewed as videostreams or downloaded from THRASS Video Clips at www.thrass.co.uk/tvc.htm

For details of the full range of THRASS resources for parents and schools, including picturechart, picturebook, picturecards and CD, visit www.thrass.co.uk/resources.htm

The countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve are shown in blue on the world map at www.thrass.co.uk/worldmap.htm

For details of THRASS Professional Development Courses that are held regularly in the UK, Europe, West and Southern Africa, visit www.thrass.co.uk/courses.htm

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