

# Just three weeks to achieve two years and two months reading progress using Tutoring with Alphie at Applegarth Academy



Written by Susan Burton, June 2020

## The Challenge

When Richard, a White British boy, joined Year 6 at Applegarth Academy in September 2019 he had a problem. His reading was only at the expected level for a Year 1 child. Richard is very able, but his phonics skills were minimal, so he had no strategies for decoding words and relied only on recognising the few sight words he had memorised. Richard had become very good at hiding his problem. His comprehension was excellent, and he listened intently in class and could provide excellent answers when questioned by the teacher. But he couldn't read!

## How the SfA Programme addresses these challenges

Applegarth Academy implemented the *Success for All* programme in 2015. In January 2020 they joined a trial using the SfA online tutoring programme *Tutoring with Alphie* (TWA). This was part of The Apex Project, funded by the Fischer Family Trust, designed to address early literacy failure by providing tutoring to Year 1 children reading below age-expected levels. Target children normally receive a daily 30-minute tutoring session in addition to their 90-minute SfA lesson.

When Year 6 returned to school in early June after the Covid-19 shutdown, the school decided to use TWA intensively with Richard to try to improve his reading.

## The Impact of Tutoring with Alphie

A child's initial session with TWA consists of a detailed assessment of all their reading skills so that the online programme can set tasks at exactly the right level. TWA then takes this information and systematically fills all the gaps in phonics and early reading skills. Richard's initial assessment gave him a reading age of just **5 years and 8 months**.

**School Name:** Applegarth Academy

**Location:** Croydon

**Ofsted Rating:** Good

**Age Group:** 3-11

**FSM:** 56.8%

**Pupils on roll:** 451

**EAL:** 32.8%

**Pupil Premium:** 75%

Richard's actual age was 11 years and 5 months, so his reading age was 5 years and 9 months below this, and he could only identify 17 sounds.

Richard worked intensively with a highly experienced HLTA, Ashleigh Todd, for one and a half hours every day for three weeks. After this short time, Richard could read books with a reading age of **7 years and 10 months**, a gain of 2 years and 2 months and was reading *The Hodgeheg* by Dick King Smith!

TWA helped Richard because he systematically worked through phonics and reading tasks. His improving skills were constantly assessed, with the level of work automatically readjusted by the tutoring programme. Ashleigh's skill in fine tuning TWA accelerated Richard's learning and she ensured that he read hard copies of the SfA texts as well as the online versions.

Richard's future is bright. He continues to improve his phonics skills, reads enthusiastically at home and is determined to improve his fluency and to achieve two goals; to complete a Year 6 reading test on the last day of school; and to read Harry Potter books by himself. We wish him well!

*"TWA was really good for the initial levelling. It was very effective for teaching phonics and the reading progressed very quickly."* Ashleigh Todd

*"I'm enjoying it. It helped me to read mentally. I'm working to be more fluent."* Richard