

IT'S A SIGN OF THE TIMES

USA-style teaching method is given the thumbs-up



TRADITIONAL teaching methods will soon be a thing of the past at four Bransholme primary schools that are adopting a radical transatlantic learning scheme.

Biggin Hill Primary, Biggin Avenue; Broadacre Primary, Wawne Road; Dorchester Primary, Dorchester Road and Bude Park Primary, Cockbury Close, will be introducing the American-born Success for All scheme from September.

Success for All is a learning scheme which, under the simple premise that all children should achieve their potential, has seen basic skills attainment rocket in the black ghettos of America.

Focused on boosting pupils' basic skills in reading and writing, Success for All has several strands.

The most fun and unusual of these is hand signals and actions which have been designed to engage pupils' attention throughout their literacy lessons.

Because children must look out for their teachers next commands throughout their lessons, the hand signals mean they must pay attention.

Some of the signals, like "thumbs up", are also designed to boost self-esteem, by encouraging classmates to silently applaud each other.

Success for All also sees staff monitoring every pupil very closely from reception classes. Any which fail to keep up with their classmates are given daily one-to-one tuition.

Pupils also reaffirm what the teacher has taught them by spending part of their lessons on intensive group work.

The four Bransholme primaries - which are all part of the Education Action Zone - went through a rigorous selection process before being picked by the Success for All charity, which runs the learning scheme and supports schools wishing to take advantage of it.

Because the programme is so intensive, it will only succeed with 100 per cent commitment.

Therefore any school applying to take part must take a formal vote among its staff. Only those with 90 per cent or more staff agreeing to take part are accepted.

Now they have been accepted onto the scheme, the EAZ will invest £50,000 on implementing Success for All across the four primaries, to pay for additional staff and specialist resources and training.

This will be supplemented with £50,000 from the Department for Education and Employment.

The first British schools to try Success for All were in Nottingham, where attainment increased dramatically.

Hull has now been selected by the Government as a pilot area with a view to rolling out the lessons learned here across the country as part of the National Literacy Strategy.

Biggin Primary head teacher Jack Harrison explained why he decided to get involved.

He said: "Our staff had been working so hard and putting so much effort in we felt we were doing as much as we could with our traditional methods and needed to try something different.

"A group of heads went to Nottingham, where children are succeeding at a high level, to see the scheme in action.

"I was sold on it straightaway because I saw a school with children just like mine succeeding at a much higher level."

July 2000