

Crag Community School, Rotherham

YST TOP START

“Using TOP Start to adopt a new approach to developing children’s physical literacy”

Overview

Crag Community School is a primary school with approximately 480 students, based in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. They are a Youth Sport Trust member at the ‘school’ level.

The TOP Start resources were recently introduced to the school in the final few months of 2017/18 academic year and the programme was initially rolled out to teachers in the Foundation and early years, and then subsequently to children ages 4-7.

PE teaching assistant Reece Goodwin, has been with the school for two years, and explains how TOP Start was introduced to the school to develop children’s physical literacy.

Objectives

Physical Education was high on the agenda at the school, however, teachers agreed they needed further understanding of its importance and the value it could bring. Staff also felt they needed a boost in confidence levels when teaching PE to ensure it was delivered in a way that matched its priority level and was consistent across the school.

Another observation made was that teachers across the school had noticed some children were distracted when confronted with difficult problems in other core subjects. They agreed it would be beneficial to their learning if they were more active during lesson time as this would allow the children to burn more energy and would therefore increase attainment.

It became clear there was a need to introduce some training to help teachers develop their confidence and better understand the importance and benefits of physical literacy for the children. TOP Start was introduced

earlier this year to develop teachers’ skillset and to improve engagement by getting the children more active.

The challenge was to support teachers to adopt a new approach when teaching PE, which could help children to develop skills to be transferred to other areas of school life. Not just this, there were added benefits to staff as well, with the school recognising it was important to change the approach to teaching PE to invest in teachers’ own professional development.

Action

The programme came to the school’s attention through the Yorkshire Sport Foundation. After exploring the content of the training, this provided an opportunity to fill the knowledge gap and upskill school staff. The responsibility for delivering PE lessons primarily sits with the team of four PE specialists in the school, however, other teachers support lessons occasionally as well. The PE department were responsible for conducting a team teach with teachers across the school, to show how the resource would be incorporated into PE lessons, and further demonstrate how the principles of TOP Start could be incorporated beyond this as well. Eventually, all teachers had access to the training, so they could understand the importance of physical activity on a child’s development and provide them with the tools to deliver a high-quality PE lesson, and apply the principles to other areas of the curriculum. Once the teachers had access to the training and resources, it increased their confidence and ability in delivering PE and developing physical literacy of children across the school.

Impact

Adopting TOP Start was initially challenging for the teachers, with some finding it difficult to adapt their approach. However, a few months on and the teachers have started using it more comfortably and using the principles to apply to their own approach. The teachers are enjoying an alternative way of teaching PE and attitudes have changed a great deal, becoming much more positive once results were demonstrable. Overall, the teachers are also more engaged for PE lessons and their attitudes towards teaching the subject have changed.

The impact on pupils has also been noticed by teachers and parents. The children are finding it exciting and their attitudes towards PE has changed, with their engagement being the most notable change. The children are becoming more confident in PE lessons and with the skills being transferred across additional areas of school life, engagement in the classroom has also increased. For the children, their learning has become much more interactive and parents have noticed the children are more willing to talk about school which has been communicated to the school. The children’s physical development has improved, and they show much greater enjoyment of play and sport during school time.

Advice

If you’re considering using the TOP Start programme, my advice would be to try the resources, to assess how you can embed the programme in your own school as it has worked best for us getting all our staff involved. For us, it has worked wonders!

If you would like to learn more about Top Start, head to www.youthsporttrust.org/TOPStart

