



HEART
EDUCATION TRUST

HEART Education Trust

The HEART Education Trust – comprising of Heartsease, Lingwood, Henderson Green and Valley primary academies – is a Norfolk-based Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) that was established in 2013. The purpose of the Trust is to support its academies by building upon their strengths so that they can work together to achieve rapid educational transformation. It is absolutely committed to improving the life chances of children and young people through excellence in education, so that no child is held back through external or self-imposed barriers.

HEART has over 1,000 children on its roll and, as part of its strategic ambitions, aspires to further develop and implement a Trust-wide curriculum strategy and centralised CPD programme in order to advance teaching and learning across the Trust. It also has six objectives, one being that all academies secure good or better outcomes for pupils, and a target for rapidly improving standards in reading, writing and maths so that all children achieve well in line with Trust and national expectations.

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“In many ways this direction encapsulates why the time was absolutely right for us to undertake the Scholastic Reading Audit,” explained HEART’s Chief Executive Officer Christina Kenna. “We are working hard to improve reading across the Trust, taking a MAT-wide approach to development. Phonics has been generally good, but comprehension is an area we can still improve, so we needed to innovate. We have some new Headteachers in place and appointed a Trust-wide literacy lead, as well as looking at staff CPD and supporting resources. When I found out about the reading audit I was keen to begin a conversation with

Scholastic about how it could inform our work.” HEART commissioned the online audit, which looks at every type of instructional reading as well as assessment, reading for pleasure, library usage, home-school links and book events, following a meeting with Scholastic at the Trust’s Norwich base in September 2019. Responses to the audit were analysed and edited by independent literacy consultants and all schools received a report with a simple ‘red, amber, green’ rating system and supporting commentary highlighting reading strengths and opportunities for development. Christina also received a MAT-wide pedagogic development report which includes a summary of research for each reading type and a report into their teaching of reading, giving her a picture of reading across all of their schools in one single document.

“Whilst each school completed the audit individually, a common theme that emerged was the need for more training on guided reading and higher order reading skills, as well as having more effective resources available for our teachers,” Christina said. “The MAT Audit Report has given me personally a clear understanding of the issues across the Trust, underpinned by a supporting evidence base for undertaking CPD and investing in resources, rather than a haphazard approach to supporting the needs of individual schools. It has also helped our headteachers and teachers to comprehend the issues in their schools more clearly. It has enabled much more co-ordination across the Trust, and allowed to us to take a tailor-made approach to each school’s specific requirements.”

Scholastic met with Christina and the Trust’s literacy lead in November 2019 to explore the findings and recommendations around resources. As a result, an action plan around guided reading and related teacher training has been developed. “The overall process has been very good,” Christina said. “Scholastic has been really supportive and the insight they have provided has been comprehensive. The MAT Audit report gives us information that is generally hard to draw together in one document – it is straight to the point, colour-coded for ease, and clear in its recommendations which helps us to see exactly where we are as a Trust. I would definitely recommend it to other MAT leaders because it has been really useful for understanding our approach to the teaching and learning of reading, and we are using it as an evidence base for CPD and investing in resources.”

Having completed the Scholastic Reading Audit, which is completely free for MATs and schools, HEART has received a model reading policy around instructional reading and reading for pleasure developed by independent reading experts and links to best practice research and resources. The audit is supported by the NAHT headteachers' union and accompanied by a Reading Charter - backed by the prestigious International Literacy Centre at the Institute for Education, part of University College London.

"Our mission is to prepare our pupils not just for the next stage of their education but for life," Christina revealed. "Within that mission is an ambition for every child to leave here able to read and support their next phase. We will also not let disadvantaged children become further disadvantaged by not being able to read and are therefore concentrating our efforts on SEN and pupil premium children. We will continually refer back to the Scholastic Reading Audit to ensure that we are moving in the right direction."

Case study developed: March 2020