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SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT: ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, ISLINGTON

## ACTIVE KIDS DO BETTER: HOW SHORT BURSTS OF DAILY ACTIVITY HELP PUPILS FOCUS AND ACHIEVE

St Joseph's Catholic Primary is a vibrant and happy community in Islington, North London. Teachers have been using Active Kids Do Better since 2018 and are impressed with the results. Teacher Krystell Lopez explains how the programme supports the schools' wider efforts to get kids moving and delivers academic and social benefits for everyone.

### ACTIVE IN EVERY LESSON

We use Active Kids Do Better every day at St Joseph's. The programme gives us lots of short burst activities which are easy to slot into class or break time. They are also good for encouraging movement in between lessons, for example when we have wet play. As the school's Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, I've played a key role in promoting Active Kids Do Better across the school. My colleagues now use it regularly and enjoy it very much.

### EASY TO USE

The activities are linked to the primary curriculum, which makes it easy to introduce movement into lessons. Recently in English I was teaching about instructions. I played an Active Kids Do Better video to bring the concept to life and help them write their own set of commands. The website has a whole range of activities to combine movement with learning. The 'Spell Check' game builds literacy skills in the playground, while 'Compass Jumps' teaches children about positional language.

### HELPING CHILDREN TO FOCUS

Movement helps children to focus and this is a clear benefit of Active Kids Do Better. I've definitely seen an increase in our pupils' concentration since using the programme. Sometimes I use the activities during a lesson, particularly if I sense that the children aren't responding. A short burst of movement gives them a break.

Recently I was teaching long multiplication in maths. At St Joseph's we have a system where the children use green, yellow and red cards to signal their understanding. The whole class went to red and I could see that they were struggling. There were some very sad faces, and I realised that we needed to stop. Taking a movement break using Active Kids Do Better really worked. The children were re-energised and ready to learn.

### ACTIVE KIDS AT HOME

One of the great things about Active Kids Do Better is that it can be used at home. There are lots of

Active Kids Do Better is available for free to all primary schools in the UK.

[www.activekidsdobetter.co.uk](http://www.activekidsdobetter.co.uk)

family-friendly activities which our pupils enjoy. They particularly like creating their own sequence of movements to music, and some have brought these routines into school to show their classmates. I'd say that more girls than boys use it at home, but I've recently discovered lots of games which I know the boys will enjoy.

### BOOSTING SELF-ESTEEM

Many children lack self-esteem. How they feel emotionally can be a very real obstacle to learning. When they get up and move with Active Kids Do Better, they instantly feel better. It's something they know and are familiar with. And because we do it together as a class, it helps everyone to feel confident and take part.

### LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

Active Kids Do Better can be accessed equally by every child. Our pupils are familiar with the activities and find the moves fun and achievable. It's something they look forward to and enjoy, and they're all equally good at. There's no pressure or stress around it. Having enjoyed the movement, they return to work feeling calm. They've got their energy out and are ready to concentrate.

### HELPING CHILDREN WITH ADHD

Regular movement breaks are especially important for pupils with ADHD. Active Kids Do Better allows these children to take breaks alongside their classmates without feeling different. Everyone else is moving so they don't feel left out or worry that what they are doing is wrong. The programme has made a huge difference for these pupils. It means they can release their energy with other children around them. It also teaches sensible moves they can use independently, for example in the corridor.

### MADE TO PLAY

The Active Kids Do Better playground games are fantastic, and pupils love them. Sometimes children don't know what to do at playtime. Perhaps they spend a lot of time indoors and aren't used to playing outside. Active Kids Do Better has really helped them in this respect. We've noticed that

children who don't usually play together enjoy sharing the different games at lunchtimes and breaktime. The programme has real social benefits as well as the obvious physical ones.

### INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN SPORT

Active Kids Do Better has changed the way some of the children feel about PE. I've encouraged them to see the links between our movements in class and those we make in PE lessons. This has particularly helped children who lack confidence in sport. At St Joseph's we have a lot of pupils who are very good at sport, but this programme creates opportunities for everyone. I think it works because the activities are low threshold, high ceiling. They allow everyone to have a go and feel involved. Active Kids Do Better also helps children to lose their embarrassment. We all laugh together, and when it comes to doing dance or gymnastics in PE, they've got over it.

### A PROGRAMME WITH IMPACT

I can honestly say that Active Kids Do Better has really worked for our school. It's had a big impact on my pupils. It's great to see how it benefits their focus and concentration and helps them to make new friends. Here's what they say about it:

*"It's good because some children fidget, and it helps them so that they stop."*

*"It's fun to plan our own workouts at home."*

*"It's really good because sometimes I find it hard to focus, and I call things out. When my teacher takes a break, it means that I can get all of my silliness out and come back and focus."*

Until last year I possibly wasn't aware of the benefits of a programme like this. Before using Active Kids Do Better, I would take my pupils outside for exercise at random points during the day, simply because they needed to move. Active Kids Do Better makes it easier to give them a movement break, without even leaving the classroom. It also allows me to bond with the children and have fun while motivating them. Active Kids Do Better has really made a difference at St Joseph's. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to other schools.