



Top prep school invests in touch typing tuition.



Aysgarth is a well regarded traditional boys prep school in North Yorkshire. According to The Good Schools Guide, the school has a strong family feel, an excellent record of getting the boys into the top public schools and looks for prospective pupils who have a 'willingness to get stuck in'.

They cater for a wide range of ability and their current intake includes boys with dyslexia and dyspraxia, those with high potential and some who need extra support.

The school has invested in Chrome Books for the most senior two year groups. 'We want them to be more independent, to learn how to look after digital devices and use them in a responsible and acceptable way,' said Tom Vivian, head of IT and form three tutor.

He has introduced touch typing for the older boys and feels that this is a worthwhile investment of their time. He points out that much of their school work is done via Google apps or Google Classroom and as the boys move on to senior school they will

be doing even more work on computers. 'That is one of the reasons why we bought the Chrome Books and if they can touch type they will make more efficient use of the technology than if they are constantly looking at the keys.'

One of the challenges the school faces is that they have a packed timetable and so there is very little time for teaching touch typing, They generally introduce it in the summer term and might only be able to allocate four to six classes so they need a short intensive course. They tried various programs, including one produced by the BBC, and have settled on Kaz because' it works.'

The course promises to teach the basics in just 90 minutes and while this will not make them proficient typists, it means they use the right fingers for the letter keys and know about wrist position and posture.

'We do not have 100% success with touch typing at this age by any means,' said Mr Vivian. 'However in a year group of 30 we have four of five who use touch typing when they're sending emails home and for all the Internet work and another handful will be there by the end of term.'

This year Aysgarth is introducing touch typing a year before the boys start using Chrome Books to get them up to speed

They have also had success with pupils with dyslexia and dyspraxia who are allowed to use a computer in exams because their handwriting is so poor. These boys need to improve their keyboard skills as quickly as possible and have used the dyslexia version. Once pupils have mastered the basics the danger is that they want to type as fast as possible and then they get less accurate so they are encouraged to go back and revisit the modules.

'Looking at the stats I can see they have made better progress than the rest of the year group but I think this may be because they have had more exposure. We run a typing club, just for them, twice a week in the morning break. This makes sure they get regular practice and I encourage them to stick at it by rewarding them with 'brain food' ie sweets, if they have really worked hard!'

Mr Vivian is thinking of using KAZ himself: 'I regret the fact that I don't touch type, especially as the boys are always saying, 'Why don't you do it with us sir?' For this generation there are so many advantages to being able to touch type and I am delighted we have been able to get them started.'



KAZ's Mainstream and Neurodiverse typing tutor was shortlisted as a Bett Finalist 2019.

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