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Five minutes a day keeps the gremlins away.....

I guess one Education Show is much the same as another, with similar types of products appearing each year. Just occasionally though something new emerges that stands out from the crowd, demanding attention. For me last year it was a small red plastic case – the **Five Minute Box**.

The name intrigued me and I stopped to find out more from the creator of this multi-sensory 1:1 system for teaching early literacy skills. The contents are simple enough: 26 plastic letters in a miniature red plastic case, a Sounds Board, Keyword Boards, sets of Keywords Cards, Handwriting Formation Boards, a Number Formation Board, a whiteboard and pen, photocopiable Record of Achievement booklets and an Instruction Guide. A demonstration video is also included.

The programme is designed to help children acquire and develop:

visual and auditory perception

visual, auditory and sequential memory

left-to-right hand/eye tracking

fine motor skill for handwriting, and

organisational skills.

It is also useful in assessing children for potential learning difficulties.

The five minute 1:1 sessions need to be regular and frequent. They allow children to progress at their own rate, encouraging them to develop as independent learners. The process caters for different learning styles, involving visual, auditory and kinaesthetic stimuli – matching plastic letters, hearing and repeating sounds, feeling letters behind the back, finger tracing to establish accurate formation of letter shapes, copying and then writing letters and words from memory.

I have introduced it as a Wave 3 intervention to a number of schools for those children who need additional help in acquiring basic literacy skills. From Foundation to Year 6, all have experienced success and made progress. The ‘little and often’ five minute sessions are particularly helpful for children with ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) and ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) as the variety of activities prevents boredom and helps keep them on task. The teachers and teaching assistants who have been using it are ‘converted’ and the children excited, keen to work with it and gaining in confidence and self-esteem daily.

For more details, see www.fiveminutebox.com, e-mail: info@fiveminutebox.com or call 01442 878629. Article written by Geraldine Everett, PAT Chairman Emeritus and special educational needs teacher.