



## **TutorMate in East Sussex: Project Update March 2022**

Since late 2021, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and the Anjoli Stewart Trust have been supporting the roll-out of an innovative reading scheme to help improve the reading skills of pupils in three primary schools in Hastings, Eastbourne and Newhaven.

Sixty 5- to 7-year-olds at Ore Village, Oakwood and Harbour primary schools are now receiving weekly online reading sessions as part of the UK-wide TutorMate programme, which is run by the charity Innovations for Learning UK. 318 reading sessions have taken place since January.

Children from each school have been matched with volunteers from the council and local and national companies. Using the bespoke, web-based TutorMate platform and a voice connection, the volunteers link with their 'reading buddy' for 30 minutes each week, during the school day. Together they read stories and play games that build fluency, comprehension and phonics skills. TutorMate has been proven to improve the literacy outcomes and reading enjoyment of young children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Local companies supporting the programme with volunteers and funding include Jacobs, The Body Shop, Wates Group and MetLife.

Councillor Bob Standley, ESCC lead member for education and inclusion, special educational needs and disability, said: *"We are proud to be the first council to support this new initiative, aimed at helping children in East Sussex who might need additional support to improve their reading skills. Bringing in local and national employers as the reading buddies for these children is a unique and potentially rewarding approach for all. By supporting this initiative organisations can help to improve the educational achievement and employability of local children, whilst improving the wellbeing and engagement of their own employees."*

Jo Campbell, Headteacher at Ore Village Primary School in Hastings, can already see the benefit of the programme for her pupils, and said: *"I know our pupils are not only enjoying their sessions, but really benefiting from the 1-1 reading time."*

As shared by one of the volunteers from Wates Residential, the reading sessions can be a joyous experience: *I have found the TutorMate programme massively rewarding and it is already my favourite half-hour of my working week. The software is easy to use and the student I have been paired with is so engaged and clearly enjoys our weekly session too. He even said last week that "we're so lucky to be doing this" and "I love this". I'm already looking forward to next week!*

### **About Innovations for Learning and TutorMate**

Innovations for Learning UK (IfL) is a registered charity (no. 1179625) which believes in the power of literacy to transform lives. TutorMate, its flagship volunteer remote reading programme, innovatively combines corporate volunteering, expert staff and technology to enable the meaningful human interaction that improves reading outcomes for young children. IfL has over 70 corporate partners whose employees are now reading online weekly with 1,500 children in deprived areas of London, Leeds, Bradford, Doncaster, Middlesbrough, Peterborough and East Sussex. TutorMate is launching in Scotland from August 2022.

**Info for schools:** TutorMate reading volunteers commit 30 minutes a week to help 8-10 pupils per class practise their reading using a bespoke online platform containing levelled, decodable stories and fun word activities. Each child works with the same volunteer each week for the entire academic year. The focus is on reading enjoyment, fluency and comprehension. Since the sessions are all online, TutorMate removes the need for any volunteers to visit your school physically.

The programme is free for the first year and we provide schools with all the necessary equipment (laptop, headphones etc) and training. Participation in subsequent years is subject to a minimal cost. We also ensure all volunteers are trained in Safeguarding and have an enhanced DBS check in place.

More information on Innovations for Learning and the Tutormate programme is available on our [website](#) or by viewing this short [video](#). Details of our impact can be found [here](#).