

Reading Project Success

The founding author of a national reading scheme visited Toot Hill School, Bingham, to mark ten years of it using the system and improving the reading ability of more than 130 pupils. The *Toe by Toe* reading scheme, created by Mrs Keda Cowling, works on the sounds within a word by dividing it into syllables. Around 25 pupils at Toot Hill School are using the scheme, working on a one-to-one basis with teachers and assistants in 20-minute sessions.

Mrs Cowling and her son, Mr Frank Cowling, also involved with the scheme, visit schools to see teaching methods and present certificates to children taking part in the scheme. Mr Cowling said: "We were so impressed with what Toot Hill School is doing. It was well worth the effort to visit the school today. "The *Toe by Toe* scheme is so simple that anyone can use it. You don't have to be a teacher."

Mrs Sue Bird, a senior teaching assistant, recruits, trains and co-ordinates a team of volunteers including members of the community, parents, ex-parents and Toot Hill College students.

She said: "We have been using it for over ten years. It is a very structured reading scheme that allows us to get right back to basics.



Author Mrs Keda Cowling works with a pupil, Marcus Hargreaves (13)

"It works with sounds and moves in tiny steps which very gradually moves on and helps children to progress. It works very well.

"I think any child would improve with *Toe By Toe* but particularly dyslexic children because it gives them structure."

Mrs Bird said the scheme was a challenge and many children took 12 months to complete it. When children start at Toot Hill they are given a reading test and those who could benefit from the scheme are chosen. Marcus Hargreaves (13) has been studying the reading scheme for around a year and is now helping to teach it to his younger sister.

He said: "It helps a lot. I think my spelling is much better too."

Mrs Cowling has also produced two more literacy schemes, *Stride Ahead* and *Stareway to Spelling*, onto which the children progress.