

## LITERACY: Pompey star and others inspire youngsters to develop a lifelong skill



Linvoy Primus with Charles Dickens Infant School pupils who are taking part in the reading scheme

PICTURE: WILL CADDY (061140-3)

# Linvoy helps pupils get reading message

by Si n Donovan  
Education reporter

THRILLED infants were rewarded for their reading efforts when Pompey star Linvoy Primus went to see them in school.

The Portsmouth defender visited Charles Dickens Infant School in Portsmouth to see how the pupils were getting on with a reading scheme designed by his charity Faith and Football.

The Extra Time literacy scheme encourages children to read poems, comics and Bible stories such as David and Goliath and Noah's Ark.

The children read for half an hour a week in a one-to-one session with a volunteer mentor, followed by group reading session.

Mentors also talk to the children about life skills such as how to deal with anger.

### FAITH AND FOOTBALL

■ Established in 2002, Christian charity Faith and Football works with Christian footballers like Linvoy Primus. The charity aims to serve needy youngsters and their families in cities in the UK and provide sup-

port for Christian projects abroad.

■ The charity's Enterprise Challenge sees school pupils form businesses to develop their entrepreneurial skills and raise funds for orphans in India.

■ In May last year the Faith and Football team took on The Sinal Desert Trek Challenge, a sponsored trek to raise funds following on from the successful 2005 Great Wall of China sponsored challenge.

The pilot scheme has been running since September with 18 pupils at Charles Dickens Infants and 10 at Miltoncross School.

Test results for primary school pupils show reading standards in the city are still just below the national average, despite a vast improvement last year.

But early signs show the Extra

Time scheme is also making an impact. Year 2 pupil Harry Silver, six, said: 'It's really good because it helps you read. I didn't like reading before but I like the Bible stories and I read at home as well.'

Headteacher Charlotte McLeod said: 'The main focus for doing it is to raise attainment in reading, and it has helped make an improvement.

But the biggest impact has been to increase pupils' enjoyment of reading. And the mentors have made a real difference coming in week after week as the pupils want to do well to please them.'

Linvoy Primus visited the school on Wednesday to encourage the children to keep up their good work.

He said: 'I really think it's important. Reading is a fundamental skill for life. There are a few exceptions of people getting through school without it but for the majority it's essential to have a good chance in life.'

'It's good to come in and see who the guys are who are benefiting from it.'

The scheme's manager, Naomi Hargreaves, added: 'They've definitely improved their reading, and the children love it when Linvoy comes in to see them.'

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