

Success story

Churchgate C.E. Primary, Harlow

School Profile

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|-------------------|-----|
| Number of pupils | 204 |
| EAL | tbc |
| Free School Meals | tbc |

Most primary school pupils are more interested in talking to each other about the latest computer games and TV programmes than discussing what books they've read lately. Some pupils hardly read books at all, spending their leisure time in front of the TV or surfing the net.

Churchgate C.E. Primary School in Harlow had the same issues - until the school introduced Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader program that has generated a new interest in reading among its pupils.

Now boys and girls alike can be heard comparing notes on what they've read and recommending books to one another. They corner members of staff to tell them how many books they've read, and are constantly demanding new books in the classroom.

Churchgate, on the outskirts of Harlow in Essex, bought Accelerated Reader from Renaissance Learning over four years ago. Teaching assistant Margaret De'Ath had just joined the school, and she was asked to introduce the new reading system in Year 3.

Children choose and read books of their choice, then complete a computer-based quiz to test their comprehension and reading level. They score points and are directed to more books at increasingly higher levels as their reading improves.

The system proved so popular that after a term it was rolled out across the school. *"All the children in the school were asking when they were going to use it,"* explains Margaret. *"So we bought more books and extended it - first to one class, and then to the rest of the school. We now use it in Years 2 to 6, which is about 180 children."*

To ensure the books are easy for the children to access, a range is kept in each

Continued overleaf

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0800 917 4447 or visit www.renlearn.co.uk

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Churchgate C.E. Primary School Harlow *continued...*

classroom appropriate to the reading skills of that year group. Pupils who are particularly strong readers can then choose books from a higher year group, and for those who are struggling, the teaching assistants quietly select suitable books from a lower group and give them to the pupils concerned.

According to Margaret, the pupils at Churchgate enjoyed the system from the moment it was introduced.

"Both boys and girls were really keen," she says. "It has definitely brought the reading skills and interest of boys up to those of girls. I think the boys in particular really liked the fact that, once they'd read a book, they went onto the computer to do a quiz."

She adds: *"Pupils were asking each other if they'd done a particular quiz, yet as it was really good, talking about the books they'd read and recommending them to friends - there was a real buzz around the classroom, and constant requests for more books."*

This increased interest in reading has led to noticeable improvements in pupils' reading and comprehension skills. Teachers have found it easy to link the system with class reading, and keep track of each individual's progress.

They have also found that pupils are more confident when taking their SATs, as the tests use a similar process to Accelerated Reader - an unexpected and very welcome benefit. Other local schools have visited Margaret and her colleagues to see the system in action. Churchgate has also involved parents in the reading system, encouraging them to sponsor a book to increase the stock available within the school.

At Open Evenings, computers are set up and pupils demonstrate how the quizzes work. Some parents have even tried them out, as the quizzes cover books of all types, including children's classics as well as modern authors.

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