



Success story

City of London Academy, London

School Profile

Number of pupils	798
EAL	tbc
Free School Meals	tbc

Building up high academic standards at a brand new school is a challenge that doesn't come the way of many people. However this was what faced staff at the City of London Academy in Southwark, which opened its doors to students for the first time in September 2003.

Founded under the Government's Academies programme, the school serves an inner city community and has a number of pupils with special needs, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia.

A key aspect of the school's development plan is to improve literacy and develop a habit of reading amongst its pupils. Students joining the school in Year 7 have widely differing levels of interest in reading, and some never read by themselves at all.

The school moved to its new premises in September 2005, and was able to open a library for the first time. Accelerated Reader was introduced at the same time to help develop a culture of reading in all the pupils.

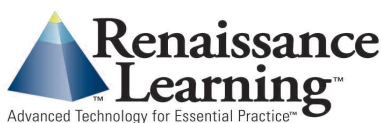
All English pupils in the school - Years 7-9 were signed onto the scheme. The first stage was to test everyone's reading level with STAR Reading, before introducing the books and quizzes half way through the Easter term.

Staff across the whole school, including the English department, library staff and form tutors, have been involved. In fact the scheme was launched through the PHSE (Personal, Social and Health Education) lessons, rather than English.

"We did this to show that reading was important in all aspects of life, not just something you did in English lessons," explains librarian Laura Taylor. "So the PE teacher spoke about the importance of reading in his career, and the Geography teacher, who's also one of the form tutors, talked about books he'd enjoyed. I think

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Success story

City of London Academy, London *continued...*

this really helped to put things in context and show why reading matters."

A merit system has been introduced, which has proved very popular. Pupils compete within their year group and also within their form, and a system that rewards the highest percentage of correct answers ensures that readers of different abilities can compete on an equal footing.

It is still early days, but english teacher Greg John is already positive about the impact. *"It has definitely created a buzz around the school,"* explains Greg. *"Boys in particular, have got much more involved than we expected, and I think it's the competitive element that has prompted them. If you look at the results board, there are a lot of boys' names towards the top of the list."*

"There are also more people walking around with books - there's definitely a culture of pupils having a reading book with them."

Accelerated Reader is also providing teachers with data that they can use in discussions with parents, such as how many books their child has read and how many quizzes they have taken successfully.

"It's hard to judge the impact on library use, as it only opened this year, but it's often overflowing at lunchtime, which is a good sign," adds Laura. *"It's definitely not seen as a 'nerdy' place to be, and in fact pupils are helping us manage the library, putting stickers on the books to show their levels, and so on."*

"We reward academic achievement and sporting achievement here. Now we are showing that reading is also valued and rewarded."

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