

Success story

Warblington School, Havant

School Profile

Number of pupils	800
EAL	tbc
Free School Meals	tbc

A six-week pilot exercise in the use of Accelerated Reader Advantage, the innovative software-based literacy program created by Renaissance Learning, has produced "exceptional" results at Warblington School in Havant.

The study was part of a nationwide project organised by Renaissance Learning, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and the National Federation for Educational Research (NFER), and showed marked progress in the rate at which the pupils involved not only improved their reading skills but their comprehension as well.

70 of the 800 pupils at the Hampshire secondary school, which has special status in Science and Mathematics, were chosen from Year 7 to participate.

As well as being assessed before the start of the pilot by the program's diagnostic STAR Reading Test to establish their reading level, they also undertook an NFER assessment.

Some children scored 15, the top level recorded, so their reading age could not increase, however their ZPD did improve.

Assessments at the end of the six weeks showed that the majority of children had progressed by at least one level on the NFER reading scale and a small number had even achieved a remarkable three levels.

As a result, the program, which features online quizzes that probe understanding and comprehension, and awards points to recognise progress, is being rolled out to the rest of the school - beginning with the start of Years 7 and 8.

Head Teacher Julie Rose says: "For the majority of students to advance one level, let alone three, at the end of such a short period is quite exceptional."

Continued overleaf

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Success story

Warblington School, Havant *continued...*

"It clearly shows how effective the program is in accelerating the rate at which children not only enhance reading ability, but comprehension and retention. This increased ability to understand more fully what is being read has had a distinct knock-on effect across the whole curriculum."

She continues: *"The children have been better enabled to access their learning; with the result that teachers have been telling me they need to re-visit what they are putting before them and to review their own teaching resources."*

The exercise was conducted entirely in the school library, with 70 students of a wide range of ability and mixed groups. They were given half-hour reading sessions with a support team up to 10 strong: the Head Teacher, Project Manager Julie Hodge, three Form Tutors, the School Librarian and further help from Teaching Assistants and senior pupils.

Meanwhile, Julie Rose invested £2,000 in new library books chosen from the Accelerated Reader list - she wanted to ensure pupils always had "a book in the bag" - and laid strong emphasis on keeping staff and parents fully informed throughout.

"The staff involved were thoroughly dedicated, because setting up the pilot was quite intensive and they gave up a lot of their own time," she says. "They were open to new ideas and initiatives, and that is what you must be - in fact interest throughout the school has been such that by July next year all 50 teachers at Warblington will be fully acquainted with the system."

She adds: *"The feedback from parents was good too, and with very few exceptions all the children found it involving and enjoyable."*

One pupil comments: *"The program was really enjoyable...it encouraged me to read more books and to read at home. In Year 8 I will be doing the program for a second year, and I am excited to think how much I will improve by then."*

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