Success Story
Godmanchester Community Primary School

"The NEO 2 has really inspired and motivated our boys to read and write."

With so many kids glued to their computers and TVs, books need a new image to compete! Lesley Fisher, Literacy Co-ordinator at Godmanchester, explains how NEO 2 and Accelerated Reader from Renaissance Learning have boosted reading at the school.

"As teachers we are all too aware of the worrying downturn of young people’s attitudes towards reading. It is becoming increasingly apparent that fewer school children enjoy reading for pleasure - instead our digital native generation have taken a liking to computer games and online social networking sites. The national trend of young boys disliking reading and also finding the task a difficult one compared with their female counterparts is a regular conversation in staff rooms nationwide.

Here at Godmanchester Community Primary School we are now using Accelerated Reader software on the NEO 2 handheld computer from Renaissance Learning. We are working avidly to ensure that our students reap the joys of reading and learning through discovery. We are highly aware of the positive relationship that exists between reading practice and academic achievement therefore we have implemented daily literacy practice that is relevant and targeted to the needs of the individual. We use regular feedback to inform students of their progress and also for our teaching staff to tailor their teaching methods to the needs of their classes.

As a community school based in rural Cambridgeshire, we cater for 420 four to 11 year olds. With a team of 17 teachers and 14 assistants we aim to make every effort to meet the individual needs of each student. We currently stand in the top quartile of schools with less than eight per cent of pupils having free school meals, special educational needs and English as a foreign language (EFL).

Previously it was evident at our school that many of our pupils lacked the motivation to read and write. They had no real concern for discovering new vocabulary or exploring their creativity through words. Too often we saw that our boys struggled with the skills of reading and writing. At times it was not due to a lack of academic talent or

School Background
Located in Cambridgeshire, Godmanchester Community Primary School is a semi-rural Primary School of approximately 382 students, 7.6% of which are eligible for Free School Meals. The school has been using Renaissance Learning’s Accelerated Reader (AR) and NEO 2 for over 12 years, and Accelerated Maths software for just over three years, to raise standards of literacy and numeracy amongst pupils of all abilities.

Renaissance Learning Success Stories
To qualify as a Success Story, a school must be able to demonstrate measurable ‘success’ with Renaissance Learning products, particularly in terms of the implementation of Best Classroom Practices to motivate students of all ages and abilities, improved academic achievement, development of a reading culture and other key criteria.

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intelligence, they just had too many thoughts and ideas in their minds and could not express them quickly enough on paper. This was causing personal frustration and exasperation in the classroom - something we needed to address for the good of our students’ long-term academic and personal success.

As a school that places great importance on providing stimulating and interesting activities to inform and challenge its pupils, we were looking for solutions that gave a truly personalised approach to learning whilst also providing teaching staff with feedback that could help them tailor their pedagogical delivery. Group work is a daily occurrence at Godmanchester, therefore we were looking for technologies that allowed for collaborative working - but also gave each student the opportunity to work individually.

Looking to advance literacy standards, we used Accelerated Reader as it allowed the children to practice their literacy skills at their own literacy level. Through the engaging quizzes offered by the reading software, students are able to test their knowledge and understanding of a book’s content. The reading software is highly appealing and caters for all ages at our school. Teachers benefit too - they can create customised reading schemes to suit the needs of each student. They can select books that are challenging, yet specific to the needs of each student so that frustration and monotony do not arise. Literacy skill development and range of vocabulary can also be effectively monitored.

Keen to optimise the school’s resources and ICT availability for the pupils, we purchased a number of NEO 2’s to place on each child’s desk. Prior to this, computer access in the classroom was limited and affected student work completion times. To be able to use ICT on a daily basis and not have to wait for the classroom’s computers allows each child a distinctly personalised approach to learning. With young children at our school we were also looking to ICT that suited their needs. Our pupils are able to participate in a number of writing tasks, be they group or individually based. They can move the NEO 2’s around the classroom with ease and work in groups if they wish. This has allowed for very productive lessons and the children have been eager to express their creativity. No longer do I hear moans in my classroom; my students are not scared to try and type their essays or answers amongst their peers, something they were anxious of when completing a pen and paper writing exercise.

Teaming AR with NEO 2 allows our students to read a book of their choice from the school library and then complete a quiz to assess their knowledge and comprehension of the book’s content. Including an array of styles of questions, the quizzes are fun and encourage enthusiasm to complete the task and results in enjoyment.

The school has reaped numerous benefits from adopting a whole school reading culture through modern technologies. Teaming our reading and writing strategies with new technologies have resulted in fantastic achievements: our students have been at the heart of this success.

The ability to be creative and transfer these thoughts onto the NEO 2 has really inspired and motivated our boys to read and write. Independent tasks such as writing a poem can be completed or they can work collaboratively with their peers through the Infrared link. Teaching has become increasingly efficient and student-focused.

No longer are we reliant on the use of paper and pens. Our lessons are totally tech-savvy. With new found confidence, our students often tell us their views on the reading and writing tasks they complete on a day-to-day basis. A nine-year-old student said: “At Godmanchester we read a book then take a test on it, and score points. There are higher levels for the more advanced reader and lower levels for people who struggle. We used to have to queue up to take tests on the computer, but now we can do them at our desks which minimises time wasting so we have more time to do what matters, such as reading or typing.”

1 **NEO 2** The ultimate writing tool; NEO 2 helps pupils of all ages and abilities become confident, enthusiastic writers and supports Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Maths Live and MathFacts in a Flash software – offering personalised practice both in and out of the classroom.

2 **Accelerated Reader** offers personalised reading practice for pupils of all ages and abilities with over 24,000 fun, motivational quizzes on popular books ranging from *The Hungry Caterpillar* to Roald Dahl, and the *Harry Potter* series to the Classics, which test a pupil’s understanding of what they have just read.

3 **Accelerated Maths** offers personalised maths practice for pupils of all ages and abilities that allows them to learn essential maths skills and progress at their own pace, without being left behind by the rest of the class.

4 **AR Best Practices** are research-based guiding principles for using Accelerated Reader to ensure fidelity of implementation.