

# “Students can now read to a higher level and are more able to access the curriculum”

## Saint George’s Church of England School Gravesend, Kent

Saint George’s Church of England School in Gravesend, Kent, is a large high school of approximately 1200 students. The school has a diverse population, both in demography and learning needs, which are reflected in the school motto ‘All Different, All Equal.’

**Gillian Charlton**, the Learning Resources Officer and Accelerated Reader (AR) Project Manager at St George’s, has over 30 years’ experience of working in school and public libraries.

“Lessons have improved as the students can read and understand instructions for themselves.”

Accelerated Reader, AR, Renaissance Place, STAR, STAR Reading, and Renaissance Learning are trademarks of are trademarks of Renaissance Learning, Inc. and its subsidiaries, registered, common law, or pending registration in the United Kingdom, United States and other countries. All other product and company names should be considered as the property of their respective companies and organisations.

Read more stories of success at:  
[renlearn.co.uk/success](https://renlearn.co.uk/success)

In the past, it had been assumed that students arriving at a high school would be fully able to read as they had been in primary education for at least six years. This is no longer the case. Many students still find reading difficult and have not been encouraged to learn the art and skills of just sitting and reading a book. Our Ofsted inspection back in 2010 gave us a rude awakening and we found that reading was a shortcoming in our school. This led us to look for help, so we implemented Accelerated Reader (AR).

We re-organised the library to accommodate classes and gave each student the right atmosphere and time to engage with the books and the competition of the quizzes. I have a timetable of 16 library lessons each week. The students also have their AR books in boxes to enable them to read during every English lesson; they then come into the library to take their quizzes. We are lucky to have extra helpers to listen to readers – our staff and 6th form are happy to give up some of their time to encourage and celebrate our successes with reading.

The students enjoy reading and quizzing, and the competition of getting a good score. I have lots of incentives to help with motivation. We have 100% boards to display students’ success and we award special points as a reward. We have a draw that runs for the whole school year, with each entry for a 100% score earning an entry to win a Kindle. For December we ran an extra competition where each 100% got a counter for a class jar; in the final week of school for the year the winning class received a special treat. We also praise each student for trying whatever their scores, as this leads to helping to boost their personal confidence.

I use the reports within AR to monitor students’ progress. I print the Diagnostic Reports for every library lesson and I highlight the codes for the teachers, which helps to identify students who are struggling and allow teachers to direct their time appropriately. I also create a termly spread sheet to monitor the attitude of the students and their reading as this helps those who are easily distracted and to establish the reasons why that’s the case.

We take part in the Carnegie Shadowing scheme. We’ve created a Reading Challenge with a list of good quality books for all Students to read as part of their homework for the year. This has proved to be very challenging for some as they are expected to read books that they may not have selected without encouragement and persuasion. However once they realise that classic fiction is not all fusty and old fashioned they soon develop a love for reading and their spelling and vocabulary improves as a result.

The English Department and the school management were fully behind the introduction of AR. It has taken a number of years to embed this new culture but now the students are reading and discussing books, and all of their lessons have improved as they can read and understand instructions for themselves. The other subject teachers are now benefiting from the reading culture and they are able to spend less time making work in simple language for the students as they can now read to a higher level and are more able to access the curriculum.