

“The RSP programme is running at a success; we now have real focus. We all know what is expected and are working towards it.”

Eston Park Academy Middlesborough

Eston Park Academy in Middlesborough is an average sized secondary school, where an above-average number of students are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) was implemented in September 2012, and in 2013 the academy joined the Renaissance School Partnership (RSP) programme.

Certification

Data review

Motivation

Progress monitoring

Professional development

Staff engagement

“RSP has changed how we do things enormously”

When Eston Park first implemented Accelerated Reader, librarian Suzanne Strathern reorganised the LRC to accommodate AR and began introducing initiatives to embed reading more fully into school life. “We started raising the profile of reading by using assemblies to award students with trophies and other prizes for reading achievements. For the first year, though, we were really just getting to grips with the programme, and students did not make as much progress as they could have. We felt we needed more support so we decided to join RSP.”

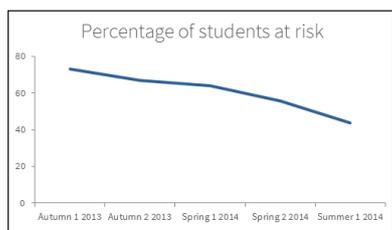
Renaissance School Partnership is a professional services programme designed to help schools maximise the impact of AR. Tailored to each school’s particular needs, RSP provides professional services to train and support the core team responsible for AR with on-site and remote sessions, as well as regular reports identifying areas for particular focus.

“RSP has changed how we do things enormously,” Suzanne remarks. 20 minutes of reading time has been enshrined in the timetable after lunch every day, overseen by tutors. “It’s not just English teachers who are using the programme now. We have teachers from every department doing fantastic work with their tutor groups; science, PE, and others. The tutors are now identifying why students aren’t doing as well as they should be, using the reports to troubleshoot where things are going wrong and having conversations with them about how they can make better progress.”

Students have been more engaged with and informed about the library stock available since joining RSP, partly as a result of ideas and recommendations shared in the weekly emails from the Programme Manager. “Our book budget is limited so we have had to find ways of making the most of the books we’ve got available to us. We have used the weekly book recommendations as inspiration for new titles to buy and feature on our displays. Increasingly, our new titles are coming from recommendations from students of what they would like to see stocked in the LRC.”

“It really helped to have a Programme Manager on hand”

The RSP programme provides ongoing training and professional development tailored to each school’s individual needs. Eston Park has used on-site training days to support both staff and students in using AR more effectively. “Previously,” Suzanne explains, “not all of the tutors had



The percentage of students deemed at risk has dropped significantly since the introduction of RSP.



On World Book Day, teachers joined the students in dressing up as fictional characters for the day.



A prominent display board uses the shows the progress each house and tutor group is making with AR.

been completely engaged with the programme. They were struggling to help their students to meet their targets. We arranged for our Programme Manager to provide training for the tutors, particularly those who were struggling, by pairing them up with those who were using the programme well. She has also provided training on the diagnostic codes in the AR reports, and using the STAR Reading™ Growth Report, highlighting what to look for when students aren't making the progress we would expect. It really helped to have her on hand as a professional to answer all the questions we couldn't."

Students, too, have received training through the RSP programme. The Duolog paired reading scheme has been established as a way of supporting struggling and reluctant readers in Year 7 and 8 with help from high-achievers in Year 9 and 10. A handful of these older students in each house group have been trained in paired reading and are now reading with younger ones to develop their skills. "The paired reading is helping struggling readers to focus on difficult words and make real progress in comprehension. Above all it's a confidence-booster for them." The scheme will be extended more widely next year.

"Everyone wants to achieve"

One of the most noticeable changes seen at Eston Park since joining RSP has been the enthusiasm around Certification. Classes achieving the research-based excellence standards for making accelerated growth in reading are awarded Model Class status, followed by the even more stringent Master Class. Students gain badges to wear on their uniforms when their classes gain Certification status; teachers gain a mug and a certificate to mark their success.

"Model and Master Classes have had a massive impact on the academy," Suzanne comments. "Everyone wants to achieve – they want the badges, and when they are close they get really excited. Our Programme Manager's support has been huge. She has emailed us to keep track of our classes' progress towards Model and Master Class; it's helped us to motivate them to seek progress. Because so many of our classes have achieved success, we expect to become a Model School very soon – we couldn't have done it without our Programme Manager."

The house that has made the most progress with reading has been the most prolific with Certification success. Every class in Durham house has achieved Model Class, two of which have since become Master Classes. Suzanne explains how they have achieved this: "The tutors are watching the Diagnostic Reports closely to identify any problems students might be having as quickly as possible. They know their students' reading habits inside out, so that the students are now coming to them to ask for recommendations." This house is now sharing ideas with others to help spur them on to greater success.

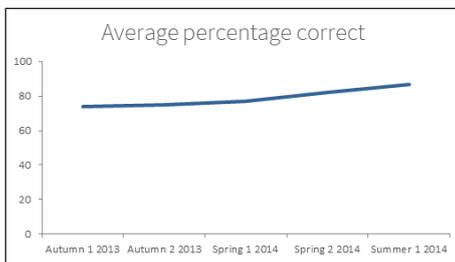
"There was a real buzz about the place"

The reading highlight of the past school year at Eston Park was World Book Day, where Suzanne helped to co-ordinate a school-wide celebration of reading. Activities included decorating classroom doors in the style of popular children's books, and both staff and students dressed up as their favourite book characters. "We wanted to go the whole hog, linking everything up to reading for the whole day. We had never done anything like it before. Everything was student-led – the student effort was fantastic. There was a real buzz about the place."

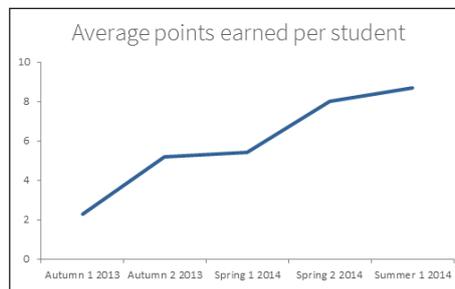
While the school-wide impact of RSP has been significant, Suzanne has been particularly impressed with how individual students have responded to the increased focus the programme has brought to Eston Park.

"Some of the students we've seen the biggest improvements with are those who are long-term absentees. We have STAR™ tested them to find out their ZPD, and have been lending them books from the library to read and quiz on at home [under controlled conditions]. Their reading ages have gone up by as much as 5 years because they have still been reading and quizzing even though they have been off school."

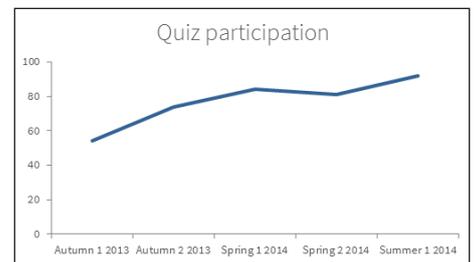
"The whole programme is running at a success; we now have real focus. We all know what is expected and are working towards it – and students and tutors know we'll be on their case if they aren't!"



The average percentage correct on AR quizzes has risen to the excellence standards of 85%.



The average number of points earned per student has risen substantially over the course of the year with RSP.



Quiz participation has increased almost to the 100% excellence standard.

Renaissance Learning opens the Renaissance School Partnership (RSP) programme to applications each academic year, carefully selecting a small number of schools to work with over the course of the year. Amongst other benefits, RSP schools have a dedicated Programme Manager who works directly with the school's leadership and AR teams, and an extensive training programme tailored specifically to the school's needs, including unlimited access to remote training. Read more at: renlearn.co.uk/rsp

Read more stories of success at: renlearn.co.uk/success