

“RSP has been all about substance for us”

The Oldershaw Academy Merseyside

The Oldershaw Academy is a large mixed high school for students aged 11-18. It serves a wide geographical area in Merseyside with a mixed catchment. 65% of students are eligible for free school meals; an average number of students are statemented for special educational needs.

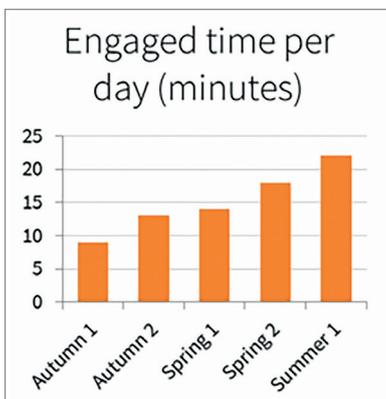
Data review

Progress monitoring

Staff engagement

Whole-school literacy

“We wouldn’t have been able to deliver the growth without the expertise of our programme manager”



Students are increasingly engaged with the programme, reading for an average of 22 minutes per day (up from 9 minutes at the beginning of the academic year).

Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) was first introduced at The Oldershaw Academy in 2011, but it was clear that the programme wasn’t being used to its full potential. A pilot study of more intensive work with a group of bottom-set Year 9 students showed a big impact, so staff were looking for a way to embed the programme more fully across the academy.

Paul Natton, the senior leader with responsibility for AR, immediately saw the opportunity when he heard about the Renaissance School Partnership at a workshop for AR users. “It struck me as an opportunity to accelerate what we were already doing,” he comments. “I had been asked to take on whole-school literacy and I wanted to achieve a high impact across the school, involving all students and all colleagues. RSP ticked a lot of boxes.”

Cultural shift

Paul’s whole-school literacy strategy was a response to the low reading ages many of the students had upon entry to the academy: a very high number were reading below their chronological age. Recognising that these students needed to make significant progress in order to acquire the skills necessary to access subject content across the curriculum, Oldershaw has made literacy a priority for teachers in every subject.

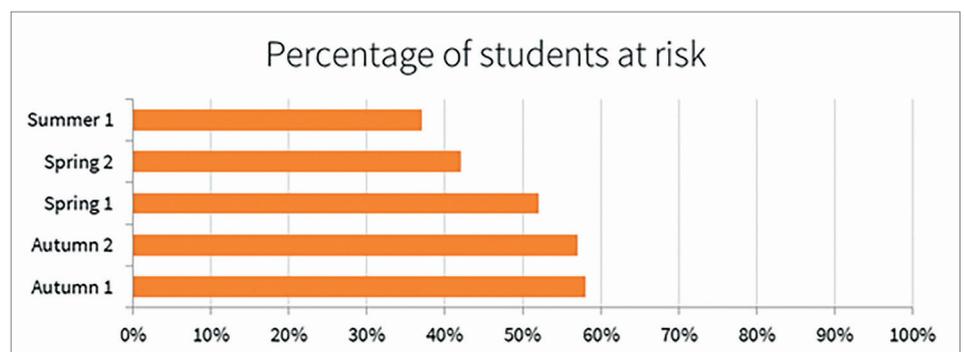
“There has been a cultural shift,” Paul remarks. Students have time to read every morning during their registration period, with additional tutor time during the week also being set aside for reading, taking quizzes and exchanging books.

Students’ attitudes have changed. Many students were often reluctant to read – “for them it felt like touching a raw wound”, Paul comments – but their self-esteem and confidence has improved dramatically as they have experienced success. “They can see the value in it,” Paul says. “It has improved aspirations across the academy because they can see that they can achieve.”

Non-English specialists

The staff team, too, has caught the vision for whole-school literacy. Form tutors are responsible for the programme at the level of individual classes, meaning that non-English specialists have needed training in best practices for an unfamiliar subject area. Of 26 classes using AR, only two are taught by English specialists.

Initially, some members of staff were overwhelmed by their new responsibility, but with the help of the training provided by the partnership programme and with the guiding hands of Paul and the Heads of Year, they have more than risen to the challenge.



The percentage of students at risk of not making expected progress has reduced every half term.

“We recognised that some members of staff were outside their comfort zones so we worked to address their concerns. We’ve appealed to their professionalism and built on existing strengths already in place in the school. They are skilled professionals; the programme is structured and supported, and they have had training so they will be successful.”

Substantial success

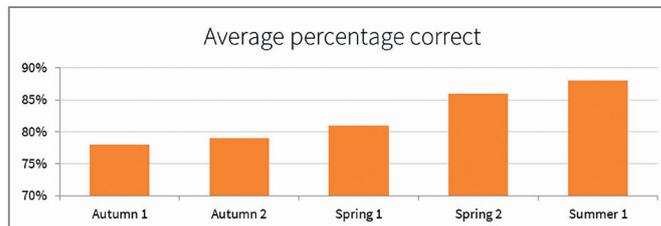
As well as equipping form tutors to support their students in the classroom, the training provided by the partnership programme has helped Paul and the other lead practitioners to use the data made available by AR more effectively.

The partnership programme provides schools with six on-site consultation days through the course of the year. Tailored to the school’s specific needs, the days allow a dedicated programme manager to address the circumstances of each school on an individual basis. “The quality and quantity of the consultation days is excellent, and the remote training has been phenomenal. The support of our programme manager has been highly valued: she has constantly given us tips and new resources to use, which have been of very high quality.”

“Before joining the RSP programme, we hadn’t fully understood how to interpret the data,” Paul says. “We had AR but we didn’t really know how to use it effectively. So RSP has been all about substance for us: substantial growth in reading ages is not a trivial success; it’s a significant academic achievement with profoundly positive whole-school implications. And we wouldn’t have been able to deliver the growth without the expertise of our programme manager.”

Paul says that he is a “huge advocate” of RSP. “It’s been transformational. RSP is a huge investment: as well as the cost of the

programme, we made a significant investment in our library stock and even had some minor building work done to make alterations to the library. However, in my view, it is the best value for money we could have spent.”



Students are passing their quizzes with increasing success, now averaging above the 85% benchmark recommended for optimal growth in reading age.



Engaging displays and noticeboards have helped to embed a culture of reading across the school.

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