

“RSP has given us a clear evidence trail of what is working and what is not.”

Everest Community Academy

Basingstoke, Hampshire

Everest Community Academy is a medium-sized school with capacity for 750 students. It converted to academy status in 2011 under sponsorship of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). Approximately one third of students are eligible for Pupil Premium funding and 28% have special educational needs.

Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) has been established in Everest Community Academy since 2007, when **Julie Rose** became the Principal. Initially used with Years 7 and 8 as a catch-up intervention, it was later extended to all students up to Year 10. The impact of this school-wide focus on reading was significant.

Data review

Intervention

Motivation

Progress monitoring

Professional development

Staff engagement

“When we wanted to continue students reading into Year 10,” Julie explains, “we discussed with curriculum leaders the best way to accommodate this and their preference was to take 5 minutes off every lesson to create a designated DEAR (drop everything and read) time.” This change improved staff accountability and interventions as students now read in tutor groups for 25 minutes after lunch, and form tutors have much greater involvement.”

Adam Rosser, the curriculum leader for PE, was appointed as the Accelerated Reader Coordinator with responsibility for monitoring and quality assuring DEAR time with tutors. “This was a radical restructuring of the programme,” he explains. “It meant that every form tutor became responsible and accountable for the reading progress of their tutor group.”

“A clear evidence trail”

This new structure and commitment to make reading a central focus of the academy created the right conditions for joining the Renaissance School Partnership (RSP). RSP is a professional services programme tailored to each school’s particular needs. It provides the services of a dedicated Programme Manager to support the successful implementation of AR and provide training and resources to meet school’s needs.

“It is important to maintain the momentum,” Adam continues. “As the school has had a number of changes in staff since we first introduced AR in 2007, RSP was an opportunity to revisit and relaunch AR with a more bespoke focus to increase participation and success.”

Since joining RSP in 2012, staff have received training and support in utilising the data available to them in AR in order to lead students into accelerated success. “The finer monitoring of AR data has allowed us to analyse in more depth the impact of target periods and interventions. It has given us a clear evidence trail of what is working and what is not and enabled us to change delivery where necessary.”

This has been particularly important from Julie’s perspective as the Principal: “Having the data analysed in weekly and half-termly reports has proved to be extremely useful for the librarian and AR Coordinator to direct, challenge and support staff in implementing the programme. It has proved a useful tool for discussion with the SLT and curriculum leaders, and for presenting to governors to keep them informed.”

“Staff are more confident”

This more directed focus on student data has been aided by on-site training from Everest’s RSP Programme Manager. One training day focused particularly on building confidence among tutors, developing their knowledge and understanding of AR. Adam has seen the impact of the training on how tutors approach reading time. “Staff are more confident accessing the site and looking for individual students’ current and past progress. They use the information to set individual targets and closely monitor progress. As a result, more students have been targeted for intervention through the effective analysis of data and now fewer students are at risk of not achieving their targets. Tutors are also sharing good practice with one another, and celebrating their success as well as that of the students.”

The impact of RSP has also been felt in the Learning Resources Centre. Upon joining RSP, one of the first tasks for Kris Mower, the LRC Manager, was to fill some gaps that had been identified in

library stock. Ongoing support and advice for library stock is offered with weekly book recommendations and ideas for resources and activities to highlight selected books and broaden the range of books being borrowed.

“The reading culture has been further embedded by the quantity and quality of the 14-19 books provided for the older students to read. Author recommendations from our Programme Manager have further assisted with this. Most students using the 14-19 section now choose their own books and only ask for recommendations when they want a change of author or genre.”

Kris was involved in training provided by the Programme Manager for Year 10 students who have become reading partners for younger students. “We have encouraged these students to read in small groups and encourage mini book clubs. The training for Year 10 students by our Programme Manager was excellent and has enabled them to gain confidence in helping younger students with AR. The older students are now assisting the Year 7 students with their selection of books and reading.”

“A fantastic experience”

RSP schools are invited to scheduled events and training days. Sometimes these are dedicated to particular areas of focus for schools like creating whole-school initiatives for World Book Day; at other times they offer students the chance to hear from leading authors. A group of Year 10 students from Everest was invited to the Renaissance Learning™ offices to meet *Morganville Vampires* author Rachel Caine, who spoke to them about the inspiration behind her books and answered their questions about life as an author.

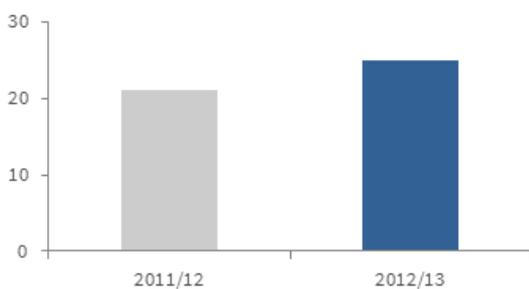
“It was a fantastic experience for the Year 10 girls to come to the Renaissance Learning offices to meet Rachel Caine,” Kris notes. “Listening to Rachel Caine in a small group was a special experience as they had previously only listened to authors in the school hall and book shop, not in such a personal way. Julie accompanied me with the girls on the trip and we were both overwhelmed with pride as they were sat on the train back to Basingstoke discussing their experience and the books they were reading. The faces of the other passengers showed they were clearly impressed!”

“HMI and lead inspectors have been impressed”

Examination results for 2013 included the first cohort that had continued with AR from Year 7 through to the end of Year 10. Results showed a significant increase in student attainment, with 74% achieving A*-C grades in English, an increase of 40% on the previous year.

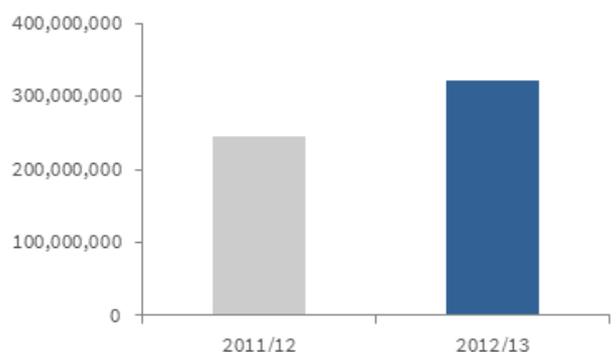
The impact has not gone unnoticed by Ofsted inspectors, either. “HMI and lead inspectors have been impressed with the quality and rigour AR gives,” Julie explains. “The data of student progress has been immensely helpful.” The academy’s success with reading was summed up in the final report for their most recent inspection, which drew attention to the particularly strong gains made in reading at the academy: “Students’ progress in reading has improved significantly during the past year because of the daily reading programme and the approach given to reading. Most students read widely for pleasure.”

Engaged time per day (minutes)



Engaged time has increased to 25 minutes per day since the introduction of RSP.

Words Read



Since the introduction of RSP the number of words read has increased significantly

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