

“Renaissance School Partnership has changed the way we run AR.”

Gillbrook Academy Redcar & Cleveland

Gillbrook Academy is a small school for secondary-aged students in Redcar & Cleveland, staffed by a team dedicated to improving literacy standards.

Lynsey Wilkinson is the Assistant Principal with responsibility for Accelerated Reader™ (AR™).

Staff engagement

Data review

Progress monitoring

Library use

Professional development

There was no whole-school reading strategy in place at Gillbrook before we launched Accelerated Reader. There had been small-scale intervention in place, but it wasn't promoted by all subject areas.

We will be merging with another local school next academic year, and as part of our ethos for the new school we wanted to put reading at the heart of what we do. We are uniting the schools with a common structure for the day, and have put reading time at the heart of it. Joining the Renaissance School Partnership (RSP) was the obvious next step for us to make the most of AR at Gillbrook.

Our decisions are based on data: we have a problem and this is what we are doing to address it. We have a big AR display in the conference room showing the progress we are making with the programme: the data is there for all to see. We have given AR a high priority. Reading is being constantly monitored; it is having an impact.

“Tying everything together”

We've now got everybody in the school reading, from Year 7 to Year 11. The Year 11s only stop quizzing from April when they are focusing on their GCSEs. The tutors, too, are much more involved with the programme now. Some have been on board from the start, but it took a while to get going and not everyone was making the most of it at first. Now teachers are modelling good practice and carrying books around with them. They read the same books and have conversations with students about them, sharing recommendations.

RSP has helped to tie everything together. We established a Core Team to implement the programme, which has helped to share out the workload more evenly. People are responsible – if I'm not available, there are three people identifying problems and solving them. We have seen a massive increase in participation because AR hasn't been something just one teacher or librarian has wanted to do.

The SEN department is much more involved now. Prior to RSP, the students were reading books that interested them but were not quizzing on them. Now all of the intervention books are AR books – everything links in.

Reading has become routine: tutors read to students, or with students, or one-to-one. Reading is timetabled into the school day every afternoon and during two tutor mornings each week. Students keep track of their reading material in orange reading logs, which they use to note down how many books they are reading. During reading time, we use a traffic light system so students can show their tutors how ready they are to take a quiz, which means that students who are reading aren't disturbed when others start taking quizzes or selecting books to read.

“Training tailored specifically for our needs”

Our RSP Programme Manager has always been there when we have needed her. It has been really useful to have training tailored specifically for our needs. With RSP, we've been able to identify problems and then receive training to address them. We have been particularly helped by the remote sessions from our programme manager. In February she trained us on Certification, focusing on those tutors who were not engaged and reluctant to participate fully in the programme. Since then we have seen a huge improvement in engagement and reading time as

students have been motivated to work towards Model Class status. I wasn't sure about it at first, but the students really enjoy earning badges and wear them proudly.

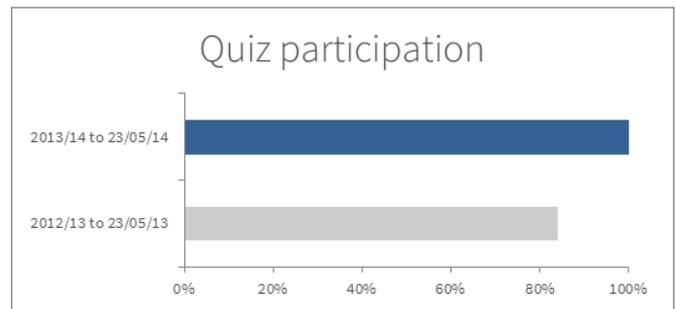
We have also benefitted from meeting with counterparts at other RSP schools and sharing ideas and best practices with them. We knew that we had a problem with parents being disengaged with their children's reading. Some students were reading at home but weren't quizzing on those books. We sought advice from another school, which helped us to introduce parents to AR more fully and use Home Connect more effectively.

Our programme manager supplied us with a World Book Day pack to help us make the most of the day. We used some of the ideas in the pack and combined them with many of our own to create a fun day focused around reading. We came in book character fancy dress (staff included!) and decorated our tutor room doors in the style of famous book covers. We also held competitions, a scavenger hunt, and other activities to celebrate reading.

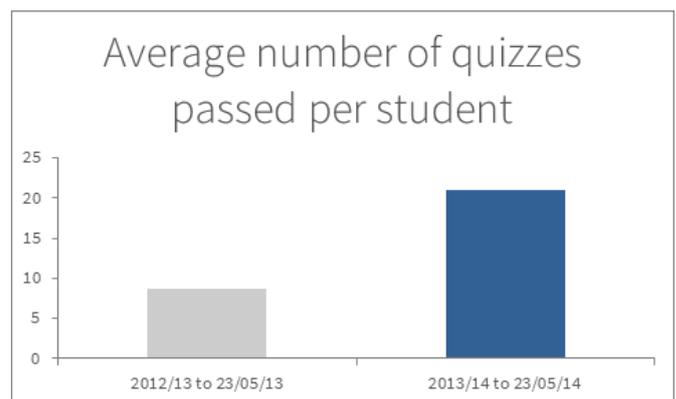
“We can see the reading ages going up”

The reports we receive as part of the RSP programme have helped us to identify problems quickly. The weekly reports show up specific points that I need to raise with particular people and year groups. The half-termly reports offer more in-depth information – they go back to the governors as part of our report on literacy. Because RSP is partly funded through Pupil Premium money, we need to demonstrate the value for money that it provides. We can see the reading ages going up, so the governors are really pleased.

RSP has changed the way we run AR at Gillbrook – staff are more co-operative and share good practice among themselves. But there has also been a transformation in the students. A lot of students – particularly girls – didn't think that reading was 'cool.' Now they are reading in the lunch hall and we have Year 10 students bringing recommendations to the library.



Quiz participation has risen from 84% to the excellence standard of 100% under the RSP programme.



Students at Gillbrook have passed on average over twice the number of quizzes since joining RSP.

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