

RENAISSANCE®

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

West Lakes Academy,
Cumbria

Situated in West Cumbria, West Lakes Academy is an average-sized school of approximately 1,000 students aged between 11 and 18 years old. Many students travel in from rural locations, some from as far as 15 miles away. The number of students eligible for Pupil Premium funding is slightly above average. Gill Wharton, the school's librarian, describes the impact of Accelerated Reader on students' learning.



Find out more
renlearn.co.uk/partofthestory

“We have had an improvement in literacy in all subjects across the Academy”

We first implemented Accelerated Reader (AR) when our new Head Teacher suggested we try the scheme with 55 of our low ability students. The results gave us the encouragement to roll it out with the rest of the year. We now have every class in Years 7, 8 & 9 using the programme, as well as some of our lower Year 10s and 11s. This is over 650 students in total.

Our aim with the programme is to improve each of our students' reading ability and get them reading books that are right for their reading age.

To launch the programme, we had an inset day in which we explained to all the staff how Accelerated Reader worked and the benefits of the scheme and how literacy is important in every subject. For parents, we sent a letter explaining what AR is and what we hoped to achieve with it. I also go to the Year 5 and 6 open evening to explain the programme, and to the Year 7 parents evening to answer any questions parents may have.

The programme makes sure that every student has a reading book – this is now standard academy equipment. English lessons have been changed to make sure that time is given

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to improving reading skills (need highlighted by AR assessment levels) and there is structured targeted intervention for those that are struggling to make progress. We also have time to read in tutor periods.

We have each student's reading age on our SIMS programme so that every teacher can see it and plan their resources and lessons accordingly. All staff have received training on the reading ages of various texts to help with this, and they have all received phonics training to help them intervene effectively with weak readers.

Teachers will talk with any student they feel are not doing as well as they should be, and also talk to students who are progressing well. We also use the results from the STAR Reading assessment to identify the students we feel would benefit from doing paired reading with 6th Formers. This scheme was commended in our Ofsted report last year:

Sixth form students are especially committed to their studies... they are excellent role models for younger students and make a good contribution to the overall aims of the academy and its smooth running, for example, through their involvement in paired reading with younger students

OFSTED

Progress monitoring

Intervention

Motivation

The biggest change I have seen in students is the confidence AR has given them to pick up a book and know they will be able to read it. I have also seen an increase in the use of the library. Each English class has a lesson in the library once every two weeks, and students are reading more for pleasure.

The boys in particular love the sense of competition involved in passing tests and collecting points. Even reluctant male readers in Year 11, are now actively engaged in reading for pleasure and manage their own reading, swapping their books regularly even without staff having to tell them to!

When we were inspected by Ofsted, AR data helped us to demonstrate that we are aware of students' literacy abilities in fine detail. It showed that we are doing something to accelerate the progress of all readers, but particularly those whose reading ages are significantly below their chronological age. The report recognised this, saying:

Reading is widely encouraged and students who fall behind in their reading get the support they need to catch up.

AR has had a huge impact on reading in our Academy. Students are much better at reading (according to AR scores) than students who have not been on the programme. As a result, we have had an improvement in literacy in all subjects across the Academy as well as very good exam results.

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