

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Sir William Burrough Primary School,
East London

Sir William Burrough is a state-funded academy in Tower Hamlets, East London, serving a catchment with very high proportion of EAL students. Approximately half of all students are eligible for free school meals. SATs results from 2013 show that Sir William Burrough is in the top 10 per cent of schools nationally for: overall attainment (achievement); faster-than-expected growth for all students ("valueadded"); and faster-than-expected growth for disadvantaged students ("Pupil Premium impact").



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Assessment

Personalised practice

EAL

Progress monitoring

Reading culture

Reading lays foundation for success in East London school

At Sir William Burrough Primary School in East London, there are conscious efforts to make each day bright for students in Years 1–6. Students in Year 2 wear a jumper in a different primary colour every day, so each morning offers a colourful start. All students end their days on a cheery note, singing in the hall together. And each morning and afternoon, everyone gets lost in the joy of reading a book for 30 minutes.

The decision to dedicate a full hour to daily reading stems from a strong belief in literacy as a foundation to success, combined with the fact that most Sir William Burrough students don't have the opportunity to read in a quiet, focused environment at home. The school is located in one of East London's most socioeconomically deprived areas, and these students would be without the luxury of their treasured home libraries if it weren't for the books they proudly earn as rewards for reaching their Accelerated Reader targets. Some have collected more than 100 books.

"All students who achieve success in AR are personally congratulated by the senior leadership team and receive a book signed and dated by Head Teacher Avril Newman," said Deputy Head Teacher Anthony Wilson. "Reading is not about school; it's about life, which is why we celebrate the concept of reading at every opportunity."

*AR works incredibly well at motivating
reluctant readers, particularly boys*

School prevails despite demographic hurdles

Wilson and Head Teacher Avril Newman say the value of this reading focus is proven in the school's success. Sir William Burrough consistently produces English and maths exam results that equal or exceed national trends— even though more than 75 percent of students have home languages other than English and around 20 percent are in the early stages of learning English at this very ethnically diverse school. SATs results from 2013 show that the school is in the top 10 percent of schools nationally for overall attainment, top 10 percent for demonstrating faster-than expected growth, and top 10 percent for demonstrating faster-than-expected growth in its disadvantaged students.

"The increased levels of literacy and noticeable improvement in writing standards as a result of using AR are a wonder to behold," Wilson said. "AR works incredibly well at motivating reluctant readers, particularly boys, largely because of the instant feedback on quiz results. This channels a competitive spirit in the right way to make children literate, whilst instilling a love of reading."

Building on reading and evolving with the programmes

Sir William Burrough implemented AR and STAR Reading in 1999 to monitor student progress and provide personalised practice to raise and sustain literacy levels. Newman, present from the beginning, has witnessed the positive effects of programme and technological advances over the years. It's easier than ever to get the latest book releases and quizzes so children can read what they're most excited about, and the program "nearly runs itself" with the addition of iPads for student testing.

Reading, says Head Teacher Avril Newman, is part of the school's "You Can Do It" ethos, which centers on persistence, organisation, confidence, and getting along. Student persistence comes from reading ever-more challenging texts and widening their experience with the written word, and confidence comes from their AR achievements and progress. "To be able to read fluently and well is the most freeing thing we can offer any of the children," Newman said.

In recent years, Newman and her team especially value the addition of Core Progress learning progressions in STAR, which direct teachers' lessons more effectively. "Core Progress breaks down the progress of learning reading comprehension into smaller-scale, focused tasks," said Helen Green, Years 5 and 6 teacher. "This allows us to help children focus on developing and perfecting one particular skill, rather than merely touching on several skills and not allowing a full understanding to develop."

The ability to drill down to an individual skill and identify an exact area of student struggle is also what Sir William Burrough appreciates about Accelerated Maths, implemented in 2011. Newman said the programme's high degree of differentiation was initially more challenging to manage. Wilson responded by designing two separate strands—a class-based strand that all children would do at the expected level of the class, and an individualised learning programme strand that supported the less able and pushed the more able.

As a result, Wilson noted, "We knew more about every child within three weeks of using AM and STAR Maths than we ever did before."

In 2013, after two years of working with AM, 98 percent of students attained Level 4, including 100 per cent of all EAL (English as an additional language) children. One hundred per cent of children achieved two or more levels of progress, which is considered "value-added" or above the average expected rate of growth; more than 50 per cent achieved Level 5, and more than 10 per cent achieved Level 6—levels which are considered rare because they often demonstrate an understanding two or three years beyond chronological age.



Reliable data sets the stage for ownership

STAR Reading and STAR Maths assessments, conducted each half term, provide the main, cross-school data that school leaders monitor. Simply put, they're looking to see that scaled scores have gone up, and providing necessary support if the scores are down. STAR data helps support Ofsted's requirements to monitor progress not just of individuals, but of groups of socioeconomic disadvantage, ethnicity, gender, and more.

While children's overall progress is accountable through STAR, teachers take ownership of class data and make decisions for students. Head Teacher Avril Newman says a key to success at Sir William Burrough is to put the right teachers in the classroom, keep the paperwork burden to a minimum, and then get out of the way.

"If you over-monitor and demand a certain standard, you will get precisely that standard and nothing more," Newman said. "If you trust, and simply ask that, say, a Year 4 teacher's job is to convert Year 3s into Year 5s, the sky is the limit and people will give you far more than if you simply give them a checklist of 'things that you must do.'"

"Not surprisingly, everyone—adults and children—seems to thrive in our culture of high expectations and unconditional hope for their success," Newman said.

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