

RENAISSANCE®

## Literacy success in Merseyside

### Prescot Primary School

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Customers since: 2012



[renlearn.co.uk/success-story](http://renlearn.co.uk/success-story)

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## The Merseyside primary school with the complete literacy solution

Prescot Primary School is a primary school of around 420 children in Prescot, Merseyside. Their percentage of EAL students is very low at only 5.7%, but they were still seeing low reading scores in their students. The school implemented Accelerated Reader in 2012 and are doing incredible work with the programme: in fact, they’ve seen so much success so far that in April 2019, they decided to add myON by Renaissance to their package.

### How it began: the perfect timing

We first heard about Accelerated Reader from a local high school. The timing actually coincided perfectly with a couple of big changes at the school: the opening of our new school library and a scheme to provide every child with an iPad. Every child in KS2, as well as the odd Year 2 showing signs of strong reading, is now using the full literacy package from Renaissance – Accelerated Reader, Star Reading, and myON.

### Making lives easier

Now the programme is embedded at school we carry out Star Reading tests at least once per half term. More often than not, the data from Star Reading proves what the teacher already suspected. For example, it can be used as weight behind an argument to say that a group of pupils need more work in a certain area. The teacher can then tailor a 3-week programme to work on that particular skill, and at the end they can retest pupils with Star to see precisely what difference it’s made. At the other end of the spectrum, teachers can also use the Star data to pick out the children who are furthest ahead and challenge them.

Star Reading has massively reduced our teachers' workload. If you look back at what we used to be doing – a paper-based, tickbox assessment for every single child in every single subject – the contrast is huge! Now, all reading testing is done for a whole class within a half-hour slot. No marking required! The children are used to the format of the Star tests now too so they run through them fluently. The data is there instantly – we can pull off summary reports and rank them in whichever order we want, then see who's on track. It allows us to say "Ok, this is what we expect to see by the end of KS2."

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### Plenty of choice

Our school is in Knowsley, the second poorest local authority in the country. Our students are primarily from white working-class backgrounds: only 5% of our students have English as an additional language [the national average is 21%]. And so, it's vital to keep our library stock as varied as we can, stocking books by a variety of authors and with diverse casts of characters. There are so many brilliant children's books that aren't David Walliams or Jacqueline Wilson! We follow the book of the week posted on the

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Renaissance social media channels and try to get those in the library, as well as other social media recommendations like #primaryschoolbookclub. And, of course, we use the AR book levels to make sure that we have books to cover every reading ability. Our book selection is so wide now that often teachers will borrow books from our school library to take home and read over the holidays! We offset the cost of new books with fundraising and donations – we're currently running a fundraising scheme to install furniture in the library.

Despite all this, we don't make a huge song and dance about our new books all the time. I'm a big believer in the value of choosing books independently. It's like finding a record in a record shop and discovering that song for the first time yourself: it just seems to mean so much more than if someone else had found it for you. Some of our children could be put off by a teacher recommendation, but by using AR as a guide they find their own books and love them the more for it.

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## And that's just the physical books...

Yes, we have a great library now. But the next big barrier is reading at home! Without having the right books – or in many cases, any books – to read at home, reading progress is hindered. This is where myON comes in! With myON, each child has nearly 6,000 books to access on any device from home or at school. We only started using myON this year, but we're hoping for big things...

As well as the reading at home aspect, we found the amount of non-fiction offered on myON very appealing. Our library is predominantly made up of fiction books (as I'm sure many primary school libraries are) so access to more non-fiction texts is really valuable.

In the simplest terms, what myON offers is another way to read. Each child's myON account is linked to Accelerated Reader, which means that they're recommended books within their ZPD. Boys in particular love the blend of reading and technology. We're already seeing lots of children who we wouldn't think of as keen readers putting miles in their reading: and if they keep it up, it's going to be great! As we work more closely with children encouraging them to take their love of reading home with them,

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we're had some great parent feedback. One parent told us:

“The programme has massively increased my daughter's love of reading! As a parent I find the process extremely engaging and feel I understand how she is making progress through regular quizzing. She is always eager to share her scores with me and talks about how her 'ZPD' helps her to find books that she is able to read and understand.”

### Value for money

The whole package from Renaissance is absolutely value for money. I'd hate to lose it. It's a must for our school going forward – and that's only based on what we know so far. We can't wait to see how it will grow and develop in our school!

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- Parent of pupil at Prescott Primary School

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