

# RENAISSANCE NEWS

SUMMER 2015

27,000<sup>TH</sup> AR QUIZ GOES LIVE

STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THIRTY SCHOOLS  
ACHIEVE HONOUR ROLL STATUS

HOW GOOD IS YOUR STUDENTS' GROWTH?

“INCREDIBLE IMPACT” OF ACCELERATED READER  
AT SHEPPEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

RSP IS “TRANSFORMATIONAL”  
AT MERSEYSIDE ACADEMY



## Quizzing for Nepal

Children in 2,746 schools across the UK & Ireland took Accelerated Reader quizzes on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May as part of our **Quizzing for Nepal** fundraiser. Between them, they completed **96,993 AR quizzes** – a record number of quizzes taken in a single day.



As a result of reaching almost 100,000 quizzes, we were pleased to donate £1,000 to Médecins Sans Frontières in support of its work in the region. Furthermore, our friends at Laburnum House Educational kindly donated £1,000 worth of books to both a Primary and a Secondary school that had participated in the fundraising activity – the lucky winners were Pipers Corner School in High Wycombe and St John's School in Wiltshire. We would also like to thank the schools that took the time to contact us on Twitter (@AccReader) to show their support during the day.

# Welcome

As the school year draws to an end, I am pleased to update you with the latest news from Renaissance Learning™.

We passed two significant milestones for Accelerated Reader™ last month. We had a record number of AR™ quizzes taken in a single day as part of our Quizzing for Nepal fundraising initiative. Later, we released our 27,000<sup>th</sup> AR quiz.

Several schools have shared success stories with us in recent weeks. Two particularly successful schools – a primary school in Kent and a secondary school in Merseyside – are featured in this newsletter. You will find many more on our website at [www.renlearn.co.uk/success](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/success).

Also on our website is a host of useful resources and a regularly-updated blog: please visit [www.renlearn.co.uk/blog](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/blog) to keep abreast of the latest news.



**Dirk Foch,**  
Managing Director,  
Renaissance Learning UK Ltd.

## We're here to help you set up next year's term dates in Renaissance Place

Your Renaissance Place site (which hosts Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Maths™ and STAR™) must be prepared for the upcoming school year with term dates.

**[Our team is on hand to help prepare your site](#)** on your behalf. If you complete the form at [www.renlearn.co.uk/newschoolyear](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/newschoolyear) with your 2015/16 term dates and return it to us by **30<sup>th</sup> July**, a member of our Customer Services team will prepare your RP site on your behalf. Email completed forms to [support@renlearn.co.uk](mailto:support@renlearn.co.uk), or fax to **+44 (0)20 7538 2625**.

Alternatively, you can download a useful guide and watch a video on how you can set up your new term dates yourself from the link below.

[www.renlearn.co.uk/newschoolyear](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/newschoolyear)



# 27,000 AR

As we celebrate the release of our 27,000<sup>th</sup> Reading Practice quiz for AR, Managing Editor Cecelia Powell takes the opportunity to explain the way books are selected and classified for quizzing purposes.



**Did you know that we quiz books from any and every publisher?**

*There are currently over 300 publishers and imprints represented on our quiz list with more being added all the time. Everything from best-sellers to specialist titles like High Interest / Low Level books finds a home on AR.*



### Discerning but not discriminating

Since launching in the UK & Ireland 15 years ago, we have added hundreds of quizzes to the programme every month – around 2,000 every year – meaning that we are continually broadening the range of books students can enjoy reading and enjoy quizzing with AR.



**Have you used the ATOS Analyser?**

*Available from the Books and Quizzes section of our website, the ATOS Analyser can be used to determine the ATOS Level for text – this works best for sentences, stories, magazine and newspaper articles, test items and other classroom materials – or the ATOS Level for books.*



[www.renlearn.co.uk/atos](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/atos)

We are discerning but not discriminating with what we quiz. Our first priority is to provide quizzes on the books our customers have requested online at our website. We keep a close eye on initiatives like Bookbuzz and the CILIP Carnegie and

Do all this and more at  
[www.renlearn.co.uk/booksandquizzes](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/booksandquizzes)





# quizzes and counting!

Kate Greenaway Medal shortlists, and in recent years we've had the World Book Day quizzes live on the big day itself.

## The long and the short of it

Among the 27,000 books we have quizzed for AR, there are plenty of titles appropriate for children of every ability. Over 600 low-level books have **Recorded Voice quizzes** attached to them, meaning that pupils can listen to the quiz being read to them with a professionally-recorded voice over. Emerging readers now have access to over 150 three-question quizzes on books with very limited text. And some books do indeed have very limited text. At the lowest end of the scale, the **shortest book** we have for AR is Becca Heddle's *In the Forest* in the Collins Big Cat reading scheme, which is an economic 29 words long.



### Did you know about Book Discovery with AR?

*This recently enhanced feature of AR introduces students to books they might not otherwise have considered reading, unconcerned by the publisher or platform on which they might read them. The feature can also be configured to identify books available within your school – speak to a member of our Customer Services team for more information.*



At the other end of the scale, the **longest book** we have quizzed is (unsurprisingly) *War and Peace*. Tolstoy's classic is an exhausting 587,287 words long (equivalent to reading *In the Forest* roughly 20,000 times). Other hefty tomes for older readers include classics of British and European literature from Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo, as well as contemporary fantasy epics like Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* and George RR Martin's *Song of Fire and Ice*. The average length of an AR-quizzed book is just over 20,000 words.



## Searching high and low

Every AR-quizzed book can be located using **AR BookFinder**, our public search engine of quizzed titles. [www.arbookfind.co.uk](http://www.arbookfind.co.uk) is free to use, and we actively encourage students, teachers, librarians and parents to make it their go-to web page for finding interesting and appropriate books for students to read.

Because younger children have less stamina for reading, and books for older students tend to be longer, about half of all our quizzes are on Middle Years titles.

Books with adult content and more mature themes will be designated Upper Years, and the **summary** will flag any content that will be unsuitable for younger readers. Summaries are a pithy overview of a book's plot to help pique students' interest, as well as to give teachers, librarians and parents some background information as they begin conversations about the books children are reading.

Using the **Advanced Search** tab, you can use AR BookFinder to locate books of the appropriate complexity level and interest level. With dozens of topics to search by, you can find quizzed books on specific subjects for cross-curricular learning or simply to follow hobbies and interests, such as the Romans or football.

### Have you tried AR BookFind?



*AR BookFinder lists the Book Level (a measure of text complexity and the length of the book), along with other useful metrics like the publisher and ISBN. It also shows the Interest Level, which is an indication of the age of the students the book will appeal to. Lower Years titles are appropriate for those in the early years of primary school; Middle Years for older primary and younger secondary school children; and Upper Years for teenagers.*

[www.arbookfind.co.uk](http://www.arbookfind.co.uk)



- Request a book to be quizzed
- Download quiz lists
- View our Reading Blog
- Access the ATOS Analyser
- See special offers from selected partners

# Staff and students at thirty schools have been named on our Honour Roll

Classes are awarded badges and a certificate when they become a "Model Class," achieving stringent research-based criteria to accelerate their reading skills. A total of 180 Model Classes have been awarded this academic year, 33 of which have additionally achieved the even more rigorous Master Class status.

The record number of classes awarded prizes this year represents a diverse profile of schools using AR. Primary schools and Secondary schools; Community Schools and Academies; schools local to our London office and as far-flung as Kenya – all reading successfully and making impressive progress with the programme.

Particular congratulations are due to the eleven Model Project Managers who have worked to get over 50% of their classes onto the Honour Roll. Five Model Schools have achieved this for over 75% of their classes. They have each been presented with an engraved plaque as a permanent record of their success.



## A simpler way to Honour Roll success for 2015/16 school year

The Honour Roll criteria will be simplified in the coming academic year. The standards required to get on the Honour Roll will be as rigorous as ever, but the criteria will be clearer and schools will find it easier to check if they have met all the requirements. For more details on the criteria, visit [www.renlearn.co.uk/honourroll](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/honourroll)

180  
Model Classes

33  
Master Classes

11  
Model Project Managers

5  
Model Schools

Every class and school recognised this year appears on the Honour Roll at [www.renlearn.co.uk/honourroll](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/honourroll)

## How good is your students' growth?

If you have administered the STAR test two or more times this year, the new Reading Dashboard on your Renaissance Place™ site will be populated with a brand new score – the Student Growth Percentile.

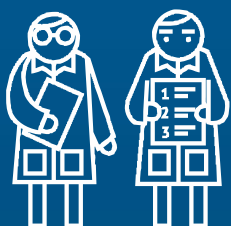


STAR™  
Assessments



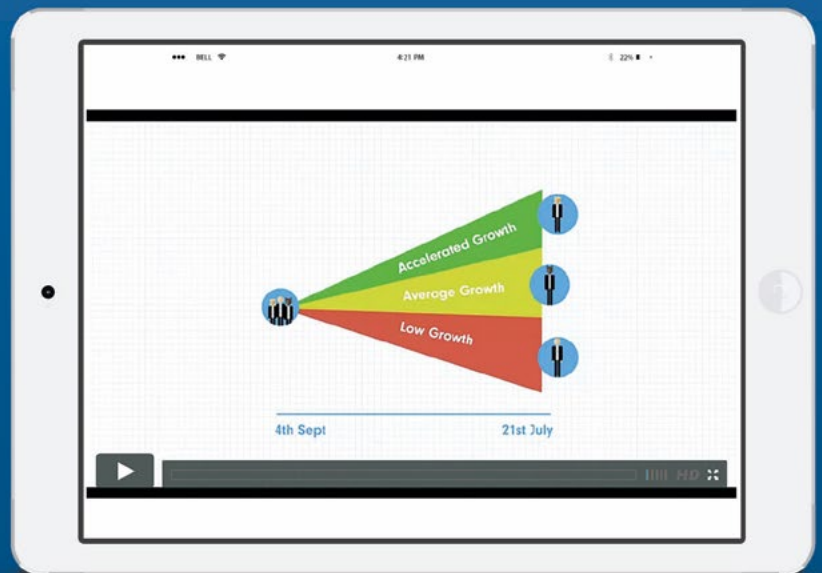
### Diagnosis

Gain an insight into every student's progress during the school year: has their growth been below average, average or above average?



### Prognosis

Set and review ambitious but reasonable targets for student performance during the course of the school year.

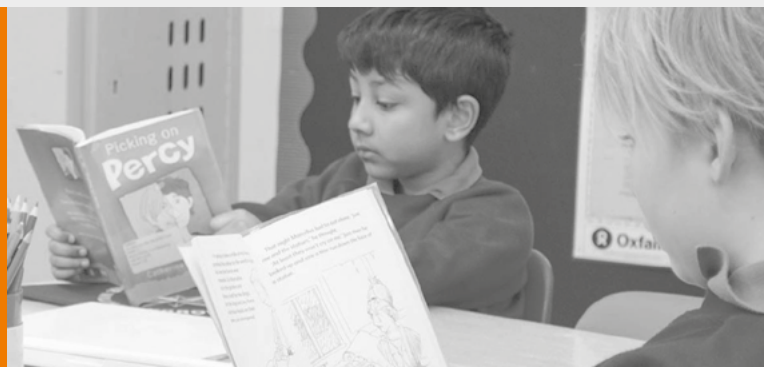


**TOPICS COVERED**

- Library use
- Motivation
- OFSTED
- Progress monitoring

Minster in Sheppey Primary School is a much larger than average primary school with 520 pupils on roll. It serves a mixed community. The percentage of pupils eligible for FSM is higher than average. The proportion of pupils on the SEN register is much higher than average with the school being in the top 20% nationally for both indicators. Attainment on entry is generally below to well below average. Michelle Jeffery is the school's Literacy Leader.

# “Reading levels have been on an upward trend” since implementing Accelerated Reader



In 2011 our data indicated that pupils were not progressing with their reading as we hoped. In particular there was a gap in our pupils' comprehension skills. We felt that with a rigorous drive on improving the teaching of reading, a revised approach to the teaching of phonics and an overhaul of home reading, much more could be achieved.

To address this, our Head Teacher decided to implement AR so we could encourage and monitor their progress. We felt that attainment in reading needed to rise and that a whole school drive was essential to achieve this.

### An incredibly well resourced library

Our library is the hub of our school and as such is incredibly well resourced. It is busy throughout the day: children are constantly in and out exchanging books after taking their quizzes. There are also six laptops in every classroom so pupils have the opportunity to quiz at appropriate times throughout the school day.

We use a large number of rewards and challenges to ensure that motivation remains high. There is a 'league table' display, which shows the number of quizzes taken and passed for each class. Weekly assemblies recognise the success of individual students, while termly assemblies recognise the child in each year group who has achieved the most over the term.

'Champion' readers are awarded with a school polo shirt that has our own design of 'AR Champion' sewn underneath the school emblem. In KS2 the children wear shirts, so they are awarded our school tie with the 'AR Champion' logo on it. The children wear their rewards with pride.

### Upward trend in reading levels

Class teachers use AR data alongside termly formative assessment to identify those children who are not reading at age-related expectations, so they can be placed on a daily 1:1 reading support. The focus of this intervention is to help with reading skills. By asking questions about books before children take the quizzes, we have seen them improve their success rate, confidence and progress.

Reading levels have been on an upward trend over the last three years, and children's motivation to read and take quizzes is evident. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage Two has risen significantly over the past three years; the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 and Level 5 in reading is now much higher than the percentage nationally. Similarly, attainment at the end of KS1 has also dramatically improved with it now being significantly higher than the national level.

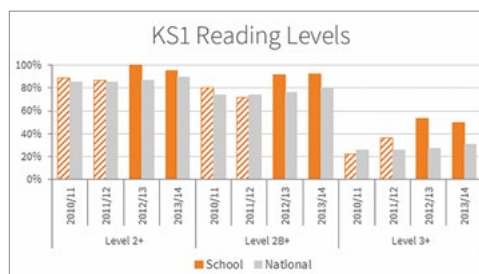
The 2014 Value Added scores for overall KS2 progress in reading show that progress for this cohort is significantly higher than expectations, based on the cohort's KS1 prior attainment. In reading we are performing in line with the top 15% of schools nationally.

### A positive response from inspectors

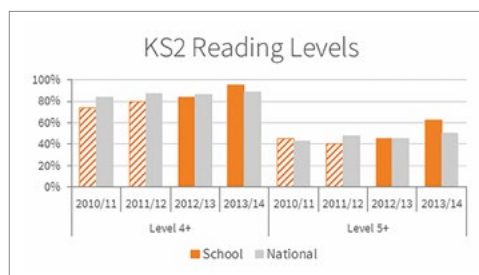
When OFSTED visited in 2012, the inspectors noticed the buzz of reading. Prior to the visit, STAR Reading™ data was useful for teachers to show that they are monitoring levels and supporting consistency across the school. During their visit, the inspectors commented on the high profile of reading across our school and reported reading as one of the school's strengths:

Pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) and their skills in reading and writing are better now than in the past. This is because the school has successfully employed a more structured approach to reading across the school.

The overall impact AR has had on our school has been incredible. Reading is now a visible high priority. Through choice, children stay in at break times and lunchtime to read and quiz. We are a school with a firmly embedded approach to reading, a tangible reading buzz and an established reading culture.



Attainment levels for Reading in Key Stage 1 in were close to national averages (grey) before implementing AR (striped orange), and have been much higher since the programme was put in place (solid orange).



Key Stage 2 Reading levels were a cause for concern for staff (striped orange), prompting the introduction of AR. Since then (solid orange), standards have improved and the school is now out-performing national trends (grey).



## TOPICS COVERED

Data review

Progress monitoring

Staff engagement

Whole-school literacy

# “RSP has been all about substance for us”



Accelerated Reader was first introduced at The Oldershaw Academy in 2011, but it was clear that the programme wasn't being used to its full potential. A pilot study of more intensive work with a group of bottom-set Year 9 students showed a big impact, so staff were looking for a way to embed the programme more fully across the academy.

Paul Nutton, the senior leader with responsibility for AR, immediately saw the opportunity when he heard about the Renaissance School Partnership at a workshop for AR users. “It struck me as an opportunity to accelerate what we were already doing,” he comments. “I had been asked to take on whole-school literacy and I wanted to achieve a high impact across the school, involving all students and all colleagues. RSP ticked a lot of boxes.”

## Cultural shift

Paul's whole-school literacy strategy was a response to the low reading ages many of the students had upon entry to the academy: a very high number were reading below their chronological age. Recognising that these students needed to make significant progress in order to acquire the skills necessary to access subject content across the curriculum, Oldershaw has made literacy a priority for teachers in every subject.

“There has been a cultural shift,” Paul remarks. Students have time to read every morning during their registration period, with additional tutor time during the week also being set aside for reading, taking quizzes and exchanging books.

Students' attitudes have changed. Many students were often reluctant to read – “for them it felt like touching a raw wound”, Paul comments – but their self-esteem and confidence has improved dramatically as they have experienced success. “They can see the value in it,” Paul says. “It has improved aspirations across the academy because they can see that they can achieve.”

## Non-English specialists

The staff team, too, has caught the vision for whole-school literacy. Form tutors are responsible for the programme at the level of individual classes, meaning that non-English specialists have needed training in best practices for an unfamiliar subject area. Of 26 classes using AR, only two are taught by English specialists.

Initially, some members of staff were overwhelmed by their new responsibility, but with the help of the training provided by the partnership programme and with the guiding hands of Paul and the Heads of Year, they have more than risen to the challenge.

The Oldershaw Academy is a large mixed high school for students aged 11-18. It serves a wide geographical area in Merseyside with a mixed catchment. 65% of students are eligible for free school meals; an average number of students are statemented for special educational needs.

“We recognised that some members of staff were outside their comfort zones so we worked to address their concerns. We've appealed to their professionalism and built on existing strengths already in place in the school. They are skilled professionals; the programme is structured and supported, and they have had training so they will be successful.”

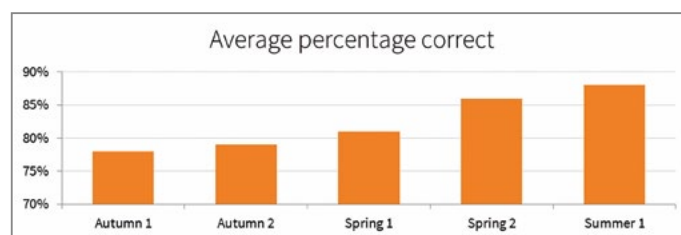
## Substantial success

As well as equipping form tutors to support their students in the classroom, the training provided by the partnership programme has helped Paul and the other lead practitioners to use the data made available by AR more effectively.

The partnership programme provides schools with six on-site consultation days through the course of the year. Tailored to the school's specific needs, the days allow a dedicated programme manager to address the circumstances of each school on an individual basis. “The quality and quantity of the consultation days is excellent, and the remote training has been phenomenal. The support of our programme manager has been highly valued: she has constantly given us tips and new resources to use, which have been of very high quality.”

“Before joining the RSP programme, we hadn't fully understood how to interpret the data,” Paul says. “We had AR but we didn't really know how to use it effectively. So RSP has been all about substance for us: substantial growth in reading ages is not a trivial success; it's a significant academic achievement with profoundly positive whole-school implications. And we wouldn't have been able to deliver the growth without the expertise of our programme manager.”

Paul says that he is a “huge advocate” of RSP. “It's been transformational. RSP is a huge investment: as well as the cost of the programme, we made a significant investment in our library stock and even had some minor building work done to make alterations to the library. However, in my view, it is the best value for money we could have spent.”



Students are passing their quizzes with increasing success, now averaging above the 85% benchmark recommended for optimal growth in reading age.

# “Comprehensive training session with lots of practical suggestions and useful info on data and progress”

Literacy Co-ordinator,  
Corpus Christi College,  
Leeds



Over the past year, dozens of customer workshops have been held across the UK and Ireland.

These one-day events are free to attend, and are held in regional locations to make them as easy to attend as possible.

The workshops are hosted by James Bell, Director of Professional Services at Renaissance Learning. James has been working with Accelerated Reader and STAR Assessments™ for 15 years and has an unrivalled knowledge of the programmes and how they are best used in the classroom.

Workshops introduce the Reading Dashboard, Core Progress learning progressions and Student Growth Percentiles – the new measure for student growth recently introduced in the new STAR Assessments. Developed for the new national curriculum in collaboration with NFER, learning progressions help forge a clear link between assessment and instruction. Other topics covered include raising student

engagement with AR and tips on developing a culture of reading through a combination of AR and other initiatives.

Feedback from previous workshops suggests delegates enjoy networking with other local schools that are using the programmes, and sharing best practices with them. They also have the chance to speak to James and get one-to-one support in an informal setting. Because a significant part of the training covers the STAR Assessments, we recommend that a two-person team should attend: the AR Coordinator and a colleague responsible for assessment.

For details of upcoming workshops visit [www.renlearn.co.uk/events](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/events)

## Did you know you can purchase additional licences for STAR Assessments?



**STAR**  
Assessments

### Increase your STAR capacity from just **£3.25** per licence

STAR assessments typically take about 20 minutes to administer and yield valid and reliable results with skill-based feedback. The tests and reports have been developed for the new national curriculum.



#### Benefits for schools include:

- One licence can be used as many times as required at no additional cost.
- Reports identify skills from the national curriculum students have yet to master and those they are ready to learn next.
- Consistent reporting and progress monitoring.
- Licences cost £3.25 for a year.



Browse the full range at [www.renlearn.co.uk/incentives](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/incentives)

# Celebrate success with our range of student incentives!



**AR Book Light**  
 £1.80  
 Classroom set (x 30): **£41.00**

You'll never be left in the dark about a story again with this 'AR lights up your life!' book light. A robust but flexible metal clip fastens the light to any book, while at the push of a button a bulb pops out on an extended arm to shine light down onto the page you are reading.

Dimensions: 12cm x 3.5cm x 2cm

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The latest news from Renaissance Learning