

WHY I LOVE...

Katharine Beckett, associate director of English at the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, discusses the impact of Renaissance's reading practice and assessment solutions

ABOUT US:

Outwood Grange Academies Trust manages 41 primary, secondary and post-16 schools across the North of England, from Redcar to Nottinghamshire



TALKING ABOUT: RENAISSANCE ACCELERATED READER

“ How did you first hear about it? ”

We introduced Accelerated Reader (AR) to our secondary schools in 2010, after our executive team saw it being delivered in some of the schools it had sponsored. Sir Michael Wilkins, who founded our trust, had a strong ambition to change the life chances of our students. He realised that children reading at home was a concern nationally, and that this wasn't just affecting their literacy, but also their emotional awareness and ability to empathise with others. We decided we needed a reading programme to encourage all the good things that come with reading.

“ How has it been used? ”

We use AR at KS3. Students have 15-minute reading sessions three times a week in English lessons, plus form time reading sessions and a library lesson at least once a fortnight.

In Year 7, we start by using the Renaissance Star Reading assessment to determine a student's reading range. We take these tests very seriously to ensure we get accurate data to set the right reading goals for each student.

We focus on using AR to build a positive reading culture, by guiding their book selections to match both their reading range and interests. Students then take quizzes to check their understanding, and are rewarded with points and through events like reading competitions. As students move into Years 8 and 9, we adapt our approach. For example, we might offer more low-key rewards that don't single out older students.



Renaissance

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“ What has been the effect? ”

Academically, our schools consistently exceed the national average in the reading sections of their GCSE English papers – but the benefit of using AR extends much further than test scores. Our students have developed greater confidence in articulating their feelings. They've become more empathetic and understanding of differences. We're teaching our children to question what they read and make informed decisions, rather than believing everything they see on social media or in the news.

We still face challenges – particularly with encouraging reading at home, as some students claim that they find this difficult – but we're continuously looking for solutions to support these students. We're looking to provide more quiet spaces for reading within our schools, and also working to make reading a whole-school priority, with leadership teams actively engaging students in conversations about books.

Our goal is to create lifelong readers who will pass on a love of reading to their own children in the years to come. By doing this, we're giving our students the best chance at a better future.

WILL IT WORK FOR YOU?

- Accelerated Reader is simple: read a whole book, take a quiz and get feedback

- Accelerated Reader helps to monitor and manage independent reading practice

- Accelerated Reader provides a comprehensive set of reports that reveal student progress

- Accelerated Reader motivates students to improve their reading skills