



Does your school have a high proportion of EAL pupils? Find out how Reading Plus supported pupils at Whetley Academy

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Suzanna Morrison
WHETLEY ACADEMY

We caught up with Suzanna Morrison, Year 6 teacher, Assistant Principal and English Lead at Whetley Academy where we discuss: how Reading Plus works for pupils when English is not their first language; the intervention materials the programme provides for less able readers; how the Guided Window feature adjusts pupils reading pace to improve their understanding. been amazed with the impact on the children’s learning.

Why were your school looking for help with reading?

We have a high proportion of EAL at our school (98.4%) and because of this, our children always find reading the most challenging part of the curriculum. This is an area of the curriculum that we are constantly working to improve so that we ensure that when our children leave us and begin secondary school, they are able to access the whole curriculum and develop reading for pleasure.

What was the implementation process like?

It was very easy to implement. We scheduled time for each class to complete the baseline [assessment] and then it was a case of talking the children through how to use the website, which was done by logging on as a child and navigating the website together – me showing the students on the interactive whiteboard, and them using their device. Once they had been shown, they were confident to use it independently. Pupils need to complete three 30-minute sessions a week to see the full benefits of the programme, so we created a timetable for devices in the school.

Supporting good teaching first

Reading Plus is a programme that pulls together all the skills a child needs to be an efficient, confident, and fluent reader. Our KS2 pupils will all be using Reading Plus as part of their catch-up programme.

Efficient reading is a fundamental skill that children need to master in order to access the whole curriculum. Reading Plus is very intuitive; it reacts to the pupils reading needs. Used alongside your reading teaching, it is an excellent tool to support teachers in moving the children forward with their reading.

Achieving gains in reading fluency and stamina

Over the three months we have been using Reading Plus, the pupils in my class have made an average of 2.5 average comprehension gains in years and an average gain of 29 words per minute in their reading speed. On an individual basis, the level gain has been between 0.3 and 5.8 (depending on usage), with 17/22 children making more than two levels progress (one level is equivalent to one year).

Adjusting reading pace to improve comprehension

Having used the initial baseline assessment on Reading Plus, for some of our students the results were not a surprise as they matched their reading level assessed through PM Benchmark, it showed where they excelled in their understanding and confirmed where their gaps were.

However, it also showed that those who read at an age-related level and who perform reasonably well in assessments, were often reading too quickly and missing the subtle cues for deeper understanding, which was the reason they were losing marks with their 2 and 3 mark comprehension questions. After using the Guided Window on Reading Plus, they were reading at a slightly slower pace, which meant they didn't misinterpret or miss the information they were reading.

Additional resources for less confident readers

For my pupils who were reading well below age related expectations, the baseline assessment provided analysis on each aspect of reading that they were struggling with. In the skills tab on Reading Plus there is a section called teaching tools. This provides intervention materials that can be printed out to use with a small group or in a 1:1 session. These resources save precious time as a busy teacher and provide the students with exactly what they need to practice, reinforce, and consolidate skills that they lack. The pupils who have used these additional resources are making accelerated progress and have also commented on how good they feel about their reading skills.

Ongoing training and support for staff

The support from the Partner Plus team has been excellent and far superior to the support we have received from reading platforms we have used previously. Ian Turner (our dedicated Reading Development Consultant) provided all staff with an initial training session to get them started and a clear rationale behind the programme. He then offered additional training for staff to navigate the data the platform produces.

Do your class enjoy using Reading Plus?

The children enjoy using the programme as there is a lot of choice, especially with non-fiction texts. I asked my class what they liked about using it and they responded with the following comments:

“I feel more confident with my reading.”

“I like that there is lots of choice. I am learning lots of new things through the books.”

“My Mum says she can hear how my reading has improved.”

“It is fun. It feels a bit like a computer game, I like winning awards and moving up.”