

Pupils have achieved two years' improvement in one year!

WALNUT TREE WALK PRIMARY SCHOOL, LONDON

Scale of the challenge

Jeanne Carabine, Headteacher at Walnut Tree Primary School in Kennington, South London, found that many children weren't finishing the books they had chosen to read. Walnut Tree Walk receives money from the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) and focused reading is seen as an important way of improving classroom behaviour. Jeanne wanted to find a way to quickly spark more enthusiasm, motivation and passion for reading and to get pupils to take a real interest in finishing books and completing assignments.

Implementation

BIP provided funding for Walnut Tree to purchase the Accelerated Reader software, developed by Renaissance Learning, after a study of the program showed that the individualised learning format of quizzes and point scores which AR provides, helped pupils to concentrate, to develop a genuine interest in what they were reading, and to see books through to their conclusions.

The program was first launched for Year 6 (10-11) but now covers 150 pupils aged six to 11, meaning that more than half Walnut Tree Walk's roll are currently taking part. The seven teachers involved all received intensive on-site coaching from Renaissance as well as online guidance. Meanwhile, parents were informed by letter of the introduction of Accelerated Reader and how it works, and asked to encourage their children's further reading at home.

Results

"The combination of computers, quizzes and points targets has," says Jeanne, "proved an irresistible combination, with staff reporting that the upsurge in enthusiasm for literature has been phenomenal."

Using SATS results as a yardstick, pupils have achieved two years' improvement in one year and teachers report that interest in literature has rocketed, with turnover of books in the school library described as little short of remarkable. One class is currently averaging an 80 per cent success rate in the online quizzes, just short of the 85 per cent needed for the class to achieve Renaissance's "model classroom" certification.

What the teachers say...

"There has been a huge increase in the sense of fulfilment in my job. Pupils' enhanced keenness to learn makes teaching far more enjoyable and rewarding."

"Working together on the program means I develop a much closer relationship with my pupils, and the instant feedback on screen makes it far easier to monitor progress."

What the pupils say...

"Reading is fun now, especially the quizzes, which tell me straight away how well I am doing and make me want to do better."

"I like being able to use computers and being allowed to select my own books, which means I can make sure they don't bore me like they used to do."