Education exists to...

Thorp Academy rediscovers a passion for reading through MLS Reading Cloud

Thorp Academy is a secondary school in Ryton, Tyne and Wear. The Thorp School was originally founded in 1861 and has seen many changes, including becoming an academy in September 2014. The school's motto is 'Together we Achieve' and the school focuses on working with partner primary schools, students, their families and communities to drive progress.

Number of Students
954

Reading Cloud customer
Since 2012

"The senior leadership team were impressed with how Reading Cloud could be used virtually and instantly without students going to the library"
Beth Khalil, LRC Manager, Thorp Academy

When Beth Khalil began working at Thorp Academy as the school's Learning Resource Centre Manager, there was only an outdated library system in place. Having experienced Reading Cloud when working in other schools, Beth knew that the system could provide significant benefits for Thorp Academy and began working on a report to convince the senior leadership team that it was a worthwhile investment.

Here we find out how the Reading Cloud has proved extremely beneficial for students and staff at Thorp Academy.

Challenges
Thorp Academy's Learning Resource Centre Manager Beth Khalil started working at the school in 2011. She soon identified that the library's system was outdated and unable to inspire students to read or engage with the library.

There were also other challenges Beth was experiencing with the library system at the time including:

Merging library systems.
Thorp needed to incorporate the lower school library into the main library system, a task that involved integrating hundreds of books. Beth knew she needed to implement Reading Cloud before this work began – there was no point introducing all of these books onto a system that was not fit for purpose.

Lack of insight. The school had no way of telling if students were using the library or which books they were reading, and unless students went to the library they were unaware of the books available, and were less likely to read. There was no effective online facility for staff or students, making the system outdated and misaligned to the way students learn.

The solution
The Reading Cloud is a powerful library and resource management system that is easy for staff and students to use, supports the curriculum and provides an online reading community. It extends the reach of the library, bringing reading and awareness of the books available directly to students' mobile phones and computers, and improving library resource centre management. The system at Thorp also links to third party assessment software, Accelerated Reader from Renaissance Learning, providing quarterly tests and regular quizzes about the books, helping to measure progress.

"I like how you can write book reviews on your past loans and access the whole library without being in school. I like that you can write a biography about yourself and keep a blog about reading."
Kaitlyn, Student, Thorp Academy

Benefits
Beth has found that the Reading Cloud has completely transformed the way the school engages with reading. Students are far more likely to spend time in the library and Beth now has 18 enthusiastic librarian apprentices who can manage the system. There are sometimes over 100 students in the library using the system before 8.30am. Further benefits include:

Online and offline engagement
The Reading Cloud combines reading physical books with online features such as student accounts with avatars, biographies and profiles that students write themselves. The mix of online and offline learning is now perfectly suited to the way they learn today. Students can even create a home library by uploading their own books to the Reading Cloud. They can also write blogs, book reviews and recommendations for others to read, as well as listing their favourite books and engaging with others online in a secure environment.

The system recommends new books to students according to the types of books they have read and the books they need for their lessons. The Reading Cloud links to safe vetted websites that are relevant to the books students are reading, providing the perfect combination of online/offline learning. Users can also see trending books, add friends and watch author video clips.

Time savings and ease of use
Life is far easier for Beth, who saves hours of time through the system's ease of use and students becoming more independent in the library. Students can contact Beth with queries through the system so questions get answered quickly, and training the library apprentices takes just 30 minutes. Year 7 students get to grips with the system quickly and enjoy setting up their accounts and avatars.

Beth now regularly advises other schools on the benefits of the Reading Cloud. She summarises by saying: "I would highly recommend the Reading Cloud. Our learners are now far more independent, and my administrative work has been practically halved."

To find out more about the Reading Cloud, call 0161 449 9357 or email info@microlib.co.uk