



LEIGH  
Academies Trust



## Oaks Primary Academy

part of Leigh Academies Trust

Georgina Rawling is a Year 1 class teacher and English Lead at Oaks Primary Academy, part of Leigh Academies Trust. She is also an Improvement Officer at the Trust which encompasses 15,000 students aged 2–19 in 23 primary, secondary and special academies including one all-through and one grammar school.

Having joined Maidstone-based Oaks Primary from another school in the Trust in summer 2018, Georgina decided to audit the school's reading provision. "I needed to understand what we have, where we are at, and set up a baseline for progress – and, following a simple Google search, I came across the Scholastic Reading Audit which helps teachers to evaluate their school's reading performance across 12 types of reading," she said. "It is all online, so we were able to start straight away, and was very thorough. It sought different perspectives: staff, pupil and parent, and identified where can improve."

Having completed the audit in October 2018, Georgina met with Scholastic to discuss the findings and explore different intervention strategies. "Whilst our strengths were found to be in one-to-one and close reading, the follow-on report highlighted community and parental involvement in reading as areas for development," she said. "We talked through how certain approaches could help us to overcome these challenges."

**There is nothing like the Scholastic Reading Audit out there – it is like gold dust. It allowed me to step outside of my school and Trust roles and be more strategic. The audit directly informed my subject improvement plan and reading is at the heart of our curriculum.**

One outcome of the Scholastic Reading Audit was that Oaks Primary took the decision to sign up to the Connectors programme to support the reading strategy. Connectors is a reciprocal reading series for peer-to-peer learning which sees children working in small independent groups of up to six, each taking turns to be the leader as they read and debate a book together. Formal classroom trials of Connectors show children's reading age leaping forward by an average of 9.1 months in just 12 weeks. **"Children across the school are reading independently – that is the biggest difference already – they are not relying on adults, and so far outcomes are improving term-by-term,"** Georgina said.

This is quite an impact, given that Connectors was only introduced in November 2018. "The key to our success is sharing Scholastic Reading Audit with the staff and giving them the ownership to improve reading in their classrooms and getting feedback from them and the children along the way," Georgina explained. "We continually measure pupil voice as well as harder outcomes. Other schools from within the Trust have been invited to see how we are approaching reading – and sat in on training – and we will be going out to other schools in the Trust to do the Reading Audit too."

Reading is taught daily in a variety of ways, including individual reading, group reading and whole-class reading – and, whilst parental engagement remains the biggest challenge across all schools, there is "a strategy to bring them on the improvement path". Georgina added: "Our relationship with Scholastic is great – the team is very knowledgeable and know their products inside out and how they can help schools in their improvement strategies. We use Scholastic to boost our library stock and the book fairs are always very good too. We will complete the Reading Audit again in 2020 and re-evaluate."

*Case study developed: July 2019*