

# The Cherwell Secondary School Implementation + Results

Case Study: DM Easyread 6-11 Intervention 2014-2016

## **DM Easyread OVERVIEW**

The DM Easyread 6-11 intervention (formerly known as Easyread) uses the innovative Trainertext© visual phonics method to teach struggling readers in the way their brain needs to learn. Using a game-based, multisensory, implicit approach, DM Easyread's structured lesson process teaches students proficient decoding, comprehension, fluency, and spelling skills over an average of 6 months' of lessons. Each daily online lesson lasts around 15 minutes.

## **TRAINERTEXT METHODOLOGY**

The Trainertext© visual phonics method uses engaging visual characters to represent each phoneme (sound) in the English language. These characters float above a given word, providing the accurate decoding for that word. There is a then a image-based pronunciation of the word provided alongside the letter spelling. Learners can decode even the most irregular word correctly, bypassing the need to guess or sight-memorize. After around 3 months of decoding practice, the Trainertext© characters are largely removed, and learners begin a phase of fluency, comprehension, and spelling development.

## **ELEMENTARY LEVEL RCT RESEARCH RESULTS**

A recent independent randomized control trial by the Open University in London schools found that 8 year-old students, who were an average of 2 years behind, caught up to the national average after 120 lessons. That equates to an average of 2 years' reading gain in 6 months' worth of lessons.

## **STANDARD IMPLEMENTATION**

When implemented in a school setting, DM Easyread lessons are completed by students with a teacher/assistant/parent-facilitator, usually in a one-to-one ratio. Some schools two-to-one ration of student : facilitator. A computer or laptop with strong Internet connection is all that is required. Unlimited support from the DM team is provided.

## CHERWELL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDY SNAPSHOT

The Cherwell School is a state secondary school in Oxford, United Kingdom with pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. DM Education provided the implementation free of cost initially in the trial phase. The school has since taken the program on as a first-line literacy intervention for incoming 11-12 olds with low reading skills.

Throughout the initial 2-year implementation, teachers and students participated in regular feedback interviews, and progress data were tracked along a number of metrics, including: reading speed (wpm), reading accuracy, spelling accuracy, eye-tracking speed, phonological awareness (rhyming), lesson satisfaction, and lesson consistency.

Students' improvement was additionally measured by teaching staff along two main metrics: sight word and phonological reading ability through the TOWRE 2 test, and behavioral impact by tracking the number of behavior/achievement points throughout the study.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The results showed an average gain of 2.15 years of reading age in an average of 151 lessons. On the basis of 5 lessons done per week, that equates to a **2.15 year reading age gain in 7 months of lessons**. This calculation is based on a combination of phonological decoding progress with nonsense words (2.75 years of gain) and sight word fluency with real words (1.5 years of gain).

### TYPE OF STUDY

Implementation tracking

### TYPE OF SCHOOL

State (public) secondary school, ages 11-18

### LOCATION

Oxford, United Kingdom

### CITY POPULATION

160,000

### SCHOOL SIZE

~1,900

### SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

259 students eligible for Pupil Premium in 2016 (extra funding for disadvantaged students)

### ASSESSMENT TOOLS

TOWRE 2 - Test of Word Reading Efficiency to measure decoding ability with single word and phonological testing

### STUDENTS IN TRIAL

37 students, ages 11-14, who were an average of 4 years behind reading age expectation

DM Easyread is very focused on building up a learner's decoding skills and most of the students starting the intervention have been using sight memorization skills to try to get through text. Therefore the differential gain with the decoding is to be expected and generally reflects an increased level of real functional ability and comprehension because the auditory cortex and Wernicke's linguistic cortex are engaged in the reading process.

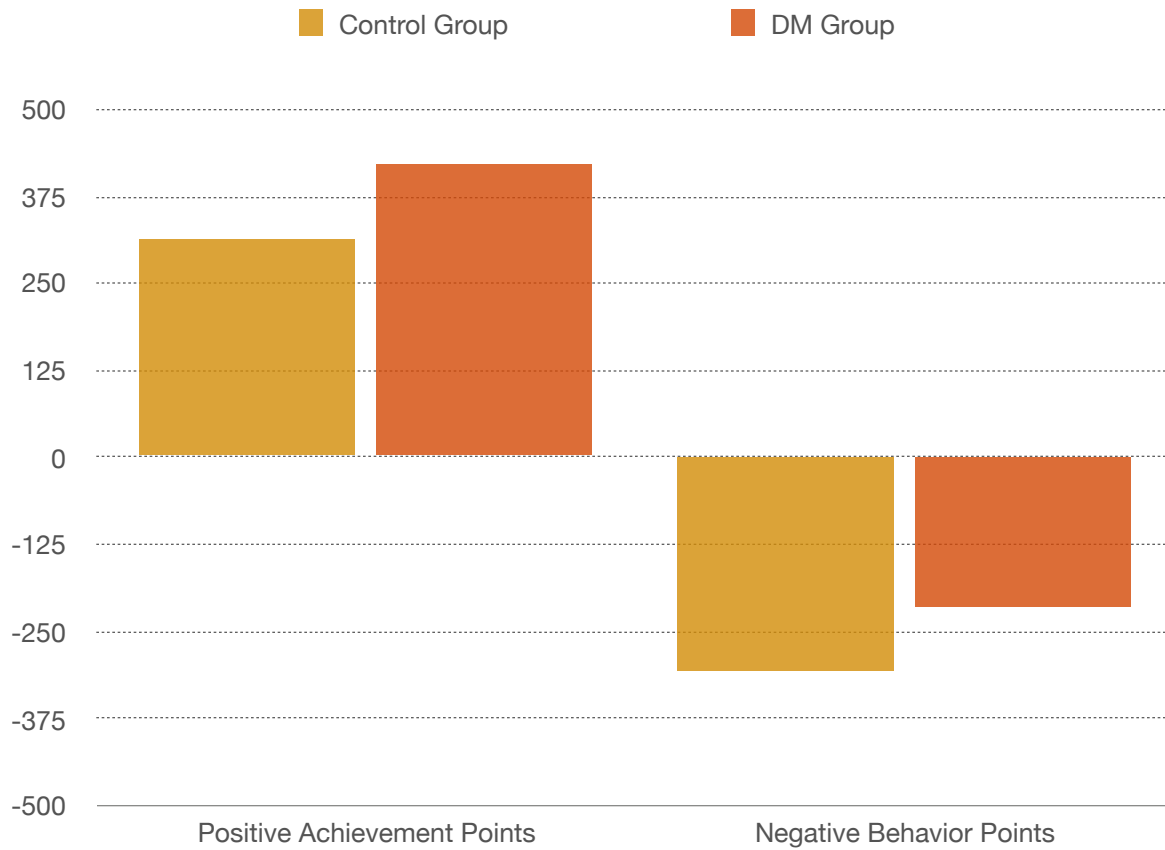
### **BEHAVIORAL IMPACT GAINS**

The DM Education and Cherwell teams both were interested to measure the wider impact on the psychology and behavior of the students as they undertook this reading intervention. Anecdotally the teachers reported increasing difficulty with engagement for the struggling readers and increased levels of delinquency in the classroom. Not being able to read simple text, while one's peers are reading Macbeth, leads to obvious patterns of stress, frustration, and low self-worth. Some students bottle these emotions up and withdraw. Many seem to distract attention from their difficulties through disruptive behavior. So the team began collecting hard data to support this impression.

The Cherwell ran a behavioural study alongside the intervention to measure the impact on students' attitudes and actions. The Cherwell assigns behavior points to students for negative interactions, and achievement points for positive interactions, as a part of a behavior management scheme. The DM Easyread group points for both were measured against a control group of struggling readers not using the intervention.

In the first 5 months of the intervention, DM Easyread students gained a total of 108 additional achievement points over their peers (421 vs 313). In the same timeframe, DM Easyread students gained a total of 89 fewer negative behavior points compared to their peers (213 vs 302).

This data is encouraging in terms of the direction of travel for these students since the big behavioral problems tend to kick in around the age of 13.



**EDUCATOR FEEDBACK**

The statistics were triangulated with the qualitative reports by subject teachers and intervention specialists, who reported marked changes in students’ attitude and self-opinion throughout the trial.

“Just thought I'd give you a quick update of the reading group. Amy is doing absolutely brilliantly!! She has come on so much, I spoke to her English teacher this morning who said she has really improved in her reading and her confidence has grown so much as well, she offered to read in front of the class the other day, which for her is a massive thing! I'm so pleased! Tom is also coming along really well, his recognising of the

characters and then transferring that into his reading is brilliant, I'm noticing a big difference in him!" - Katie, DM Easyread Facilitator from The Cherwell Teaching Staff

"Children are getting back up to chronological reading age in a short space of time... they're catching up!" - Tracy, Head of English at The Cherwell

"Really the results were amazing. We were gobsmacked by how this quite simple intervention was working. I think because it's a one-to-one. They all have their different issues, and it addresses those issues in different ways." - Ida, Head DM Easyread Facilitator at The Cherwell, and Special Education Specialist.

Members of the Cherwell Team are interviewed in the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuM4PDiRmog>

## CONTACT DETAILS

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