

## Case Study: Freemantle C of E Community Academy

Nearly half of pupils at Freemantle C of E Community Academy speak English as an additional language (EAL), and almost all are new to English when they arrive. With a quarter also eligible for Pupil Premium, the school aims to open up opportunities for every child by getting them on track with their reading.

Many children join the school part of the way through the year, and there is often quite limited information available about their previous education. To make sure that all pupils have the opportunity to fly high with their reading skills whatever their circumstances, Freemantle introduced Lexplore's reading assessment programme.



## Seeing beyond the barriers

Almost all Freemantle's EAL pupils are new to English when they arrive at the school, while others are practically bilingual. With varying levels of fluency all in one classroom, identifying able readers and spotting those who struggle can pose a challenge.

It can also be hard to make a completely objective assessment of native English speakers' reading as Adam Luxford, ICT lead at Freemantle Academy explains. "Often the most enthusiastic, verbally articulate story tellers in the class appear to be strong readers, but some of them may be held back by hidden reading difficulties that are hard for us to detect.

"We want to root out any reading difficulties as soon as we can so we can help pupils make progress. Lexplore provides us with a completely unbiased way to assess our children, regardless of their situation and background."

## Assessment without preconception

With this objective in mind, every pupil from Years 2 to 5 took the Lexplore reading assessment which uses eye tracking technology to monitor a child's eye movements when they are reading from a screen.

By monitoring how a child's eyes move backwards and forwards across a passage of text, and measuring how long their eyes fixate on a word, Lexplore identifies differences in the cognitive processes behind a child's reading.

Lexplore's machine learning technology completely removes the influence of external factors, providing an objective and reliable overview of reading.

For Freemantle, the results presented an interesting picture. "Although we have a high proportion of EAL pupils, the tests showed that our school's reading attainment is on a par with nationally expected levels," says Adam.

"But what really helped is that the assessments pointed to specific problem areas in some of the pupils' reading which we can address, such issues with reading speed, difficulty with sounds and lack of confidence in reading aloud.

"The tests highlighted physical difficulties too. One pupil found it difficult to focus on the words with both eyes, which indicated that he might need glasses to correct his vision, so we spoke to his parents about arranging a sight test."

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**Adam Luxford, ICT lead, Freemantle Church of England Community Academy**

## Uncovering new insight

Lexplore's eye tracking technology gives schools a fresh perspective on reading attainment which can't always be achieved using traditional assessment methods alone.

"You get fascinating insight from actually seeing how a child reads – how the eyes move, where they get stuck and which words they have to go back and re-read," says Adam.

"One of the tests involves reading aloud and one is read silently. We found that those who read faster out loud than in their head were children who do not read at home, and often come from low income backgrounds. Knowing this has given us an opportunity to work directly with those families and encourage more reading at home."

The next step for Freemantle is to work with Lexplore to put interventions in place to help pupils build their reading skills.

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**Adam Luxford, ICT lead, Freemantle Church of England Community Academy**

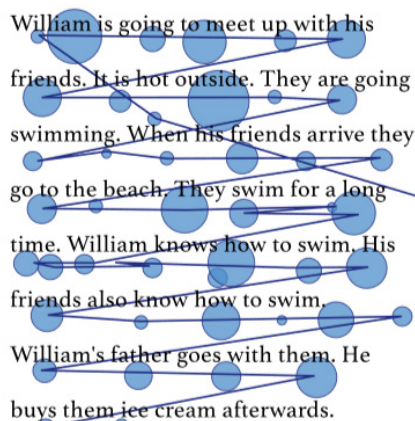
## **Saving time for teachers**

With many children needing additional support, Freemantle's teachers have a heavy workload.

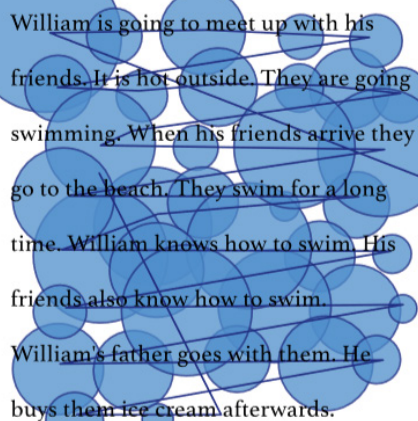
"One of the main reasons we chose Lexplore is because it frees up so much time," says Adam. "Previously, it took teachers an entire term to do accurate assessments on their whole class, with most of this time being used to write up findings to a similar level of detail. This meant we ran the risk of not identifying a child that needed support until later in the term, missing valuable intervention time."

"By contrast, 200 children went through the Lexplore assessment process in a week. Within five minutes of each assessment we had the results of their reading activity and an accurate attainment level."

"Teachers can also log onto the online portal from home, so when completing their final year assessments, they can listen to the past three recordings of a pupil reading and see how that child has progressed over the year."



William is going to meet up with his friends. It is hot outside. They are going swimming. When his friends arrive they go to the beach. They swim for a long time. William knows how to swim. His friends also know how to swim. William's father goes with them. He buys them ice cream afterwards.



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## Collaborative working

One of the key benefits of Lexplore is the analysis tool which presents assessment results clearly using visuals and graphics. This enables schools to easily share results with staff, governors and Ofsted, and Freemantle plans to use the data at parents' evenings to engage families in their child's reading goals.

The system's flexibility allows schools to tailor their assessment programmes to the needs of their pupils, as Adam has found.

"We can add our own notes to the system during the test, which gives us the opportunity to record anything that might affect a child's results, or to add ideas of how we can help a child.

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As more schools like Freemantle Academy use Lexplore, the artificial intelligence (AI) technology continues to learn from new data. And the more the system is used, the more accurate the overview of reading it can give, to the benefit of schools and their pupils.



### Freemantle C of E Community Academy

- Freemantle Church of England Community Academy has 375 pupils on the school roll
- 47% of Freemantle's pupils speak English as an additional language, with 18% new to English
- 20% of pupils are entitled to Pupil Premium