Warrington & Vale Royal College

AT Superstore



CASE STUDY

Too self-conscious to ask for help: how one college is giving learners a more discreet way to read

*Warrington & Vale Royal College is replacing outdated reading pens with a tool designed to help learners become more independent – **in their everyday reading and in exams.***

THE COLLEGE
Warrington & Vale Royal College

THE TOOL
RocketPen Reader

STARTING WITH
Exams where a computer reader can't be used

SmartPens

About the college

Warrington & Vale Royal College is a vocational college supporting a diverse range of students, including 16–18 full-time students, students with SEND and EHCPs, adult students and apprentices. The college offers a wide range of vocational and technical courses for both school leavers and adults, including T Levels, apprenticeships, higher-level and professional courses.

The challenge: support that learners actually want to use

The college already had an established reading support offer. Support staff work along side learners in lessons, human readers are provided in exams, a large number of students successfully use computer readers in both lessons and exams, and the team had a small supply of reading pens.

Many students lacked the confidence to ask for help in front of their peers, and that hesitation was holding back their independent learning. This became particularly challenging in exams, when students were unfamiliar with the invigilators or support staff assigned to them.

> *"We have support staff in lessons and human readers in exams, but students don't always want to access support in this way."*
>
> **Zoe Laurence, Specialist Assessment & Inclusive Learning Manager**

There were practical goals too. The college's existing reading pens weren't as user-friendly as the team wanted, and sourcing human readers for exams carries an administrative burden. The aim was to replace outdated stock with something that offered more features and versatility, reduce that administrative burden, and empower learners to become more independent – both in their everyday reading and in exams.



Why the RocketPen Reader?

The college first came across the RocketPen Reader online at AT Superstore. What convinced the team it was the right fit was how much easier it seemed to use than other models on the market. Three features stood out:

01

A touchscreen interface that makes it much easier for students to navigate the device.

02

Continuous reading, so students can scan blocks of text smoothly.

03

Extra decoding features that give students the support they need to break down words and work by themselves.

The team sees the RocketPen as an extra tool alongside computer readers, which a large number of their students already use successfully. It gives another option to learners who want support in a more discreet way, and to those who don't need to rely on a computer reader as much.

> *"The RocketPens provide an extra tool to support students who want to work with support in a more discreet way or who do not need to rely on a computer reader so much."*
>
> **Zoe Laurence**

Trying before buying with AT Superstore

Before committing, the college took out a loan of RocketPen Readers from AT Superstore, giving the team the chance to try the devices for themselves first. Following the loan, the college purchased RocketPen Readers as the first step in replacing its outdated stock.

> *"It's been great supporting Warrington & Vale Royal College as they put independence at the heart of their reading support. We're looking forward to hearing how their learners get on."*
>
> **Lauren Jeffery, Business Development Manager, AT Superstore**

Getting started: quick and simple for staff

The college is at the start of its RocketPen journey: students haven't started using the devices yet, but staff have. They found the pens incredibly straightforward to set up, and because the interface is so simple, it has taken very little time for staff to get used to the features.

> *"Because the interface is so simple and user-friendly, it's taken very little time for staff to get used to the features, and we think students will pick it up just as quickly."*
>
> **Zoe Laurence**

Feedback from the support team has been just as encouraging, with support staff impressed by how easy the RocketPen is to use.

Where the RocketPen will be used first

The college has a clear plan for where to start. The first priority is exams where students can't use a computer reader. Alongside this, the team plans to use the RocketPen with students who require support but want to access it in a more independent way.





Looking ahead

The college's long-term ambition is to replace its older, less user-friendly reading pens with RocketPens when the time comes, so that learners have the best tools available to them. And when asked whether they would recommend the RocketPen Reader to other schools and colleges, the answer was unequivocal.

> *"Yes, definitely. It is much more user-friendly than other models. It is a great extra tool to have alongside computer readers."*
>
> **Zoe Laurence**

Advice for other colleges

Zoe's advice for any college thinking about introducing the RocketPen Reader is to start with staff.

> *"My main advice would be to ensure that staff are comfortable with the devices first. When staff are confident, they can easily demonstrate and model them, which will be a massive help for getting student buy-in."*
>
> **Zoe Laurence**

Thinking about reading support at your school or college?

If you're a SENCO, head of learning support or headteacher looking for ways to reduce your reliance on human readers – or to give learners a more discreet, independent way to access text – Warrington & Vale Royal College's plans show how the RocketPen Reader can sit alongside your existing support.

Get in touch with AT Superstore to find out more about the RocketPen Reader and how it could support your learners. We offer free trials on most of our products, so you get to fully try out the tools with your learners before committing.