

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BARCELONA AND THE READERPEN™

Promoting confidence in reading in students with reading challenges

The British School of Barcelona (BSB) is a high performing, all-through British International school for students aged 3-18. For more than 60 years the school has been delivering a caring, highly personalised and future-facing education to children from more than 60 nationalities and cultures.

With a focus on personalised care and support, BSB offers a tailored education for every student, whilst developing each individual's social, emotional, cognitive and digital skills, and instils great learning habits, to ensure they thrive in a world that is constantly changing, with the confidence and resilience to embrace every challenge.

BSB has been accredited as an 'Outstanding School in Every Category' following the recent British Schools Overseas (BSO) inspection. The school has four campuses: BSB City (from Early Years to Pre-University - in Barcelona), BSB Sitges (Early Years & Primary - in Sitges), BSB Castelldefels (Early Years, Primary & Secondary - in Castelldefels) and BSB Nexus (Pre-University - in Castelldefels).

In the Secondary section, there is (approximately) a 7% of students who receive learning support and around 4% have specific reading difficulties that require additional interventions.

In order to support students with reading difficulties, the school purchased the first ReaderPen™ in 2015; and as part of a master dissertation, the Head of Learning Support

department in Secondary carried out a brief research project to measure the usefulness of the ReaderPen™ as a tool to support dyslexic students in exams. Although the results were limited, as the population sample was very small, the advantages outweighed the challenges:



increased comprehension of the texts read



high reading accuracy and portable friendly advice



ease of use in exam conditions compared with text-to speech software based on computers

Students valued the fact that it helped them to read independently. At the beginning the learners benefited more from using the ReaderPen™ only for single words or small groups of words that they found difficult, often just as a support to help them decode those unknown words. The more familiar the students became with the ReaderPen™ the more useful they found it in longer pieces of text.

In recent years, the Learning Support Department have promoted the use of the ReaderPen™ for the students who needed a reader in exams by providing them with time and space to practice using the ExamReader™ during internal exams or support sessions.

Some students choose to use it only for (internal or official) exams, some prefer to use it at home when reading longer texts. Some

start using the ReaderPen™ but by the time they reach formal examinations, they have become confident in their reading and no longer use it.

The ReaderPen™ also includes built-in dictionaries and voice recording, so it is not only a tool for students in exam conditions but also a learning tool that can be used in the classroom or at home. In the past, some students have been reluctant to use a computer reader or the ReaderPen™ in lessons because they do not like feeling different to other students. However, following the COVID-19 lockdown, the school accelerated their plans to develop the IT provision of the school, providing students in Secondary with iPads and personal computers to do their work at school and at home. As all students now use different devices in lessons, students with reading difficulties feel more comfortable using the ReaderPen™ in class and the ExamReader™ in exams. As a multilingual school, it is gratifying to see the extensive number of languages the ExamReader™ recognizes and speaks.

It has been particularly useful for English native speakers with dyslexia who choose to study Spanish or French. As school, it saves time and

Student 1 - “It helps me recognise the words. Hearing the difficult words help me understand better.”

Student 2 - “It is easier for me to recognise and understand words. When I read alone I forget quickly.”

resources: those students who learn to use the ReaderPen™ no longer require a human reader in exams. But most importantly, they are more confident in their own abilities and independence as learners.

The Learning Support department have recommended some families to buy the ReaderPen™ for use at home, and there are plans to purchase more ExamReaders in the near future as more and more students are requiring it for exams. In addition to the benefits of using the ExamReader™ for our students, we are grateful for the training provided by Scanning Pens to a group of schools in Barcelona, hosted by The British School of Barcelona, about exam access arrangements in 2017 and also for the ongoing online training they provide on the use of their products and best practices.

