

Success story

Boothville Primary School, Northampton

School Profile

Number of pupils	552
EAL	tbc
Free School Meals	tbc

Boothville is a large, urban primary school with roughly 500 pupils. It draws them from a wide variety of social backgrounds and ethnic groupings. English is not first language for a small percentage of the school's pupils, making an individualised focus on learning paramount.

A reorganisation of the school system in Northamptonshire several years ago left teachers at Boothville Primary seriously concerned that motivation to read amongst some pupils was ebbing away. The three-tier system of 'lower', 'middle', and 'upper' schools in the local state sector had been altered to a two-tier - 'primary' and 'secondary' system.

The challenge was how to keep stretching the reading skills of Year 6 children, aged 10-11, as they remained in the "same old school" for seven or eight years, rather than moving up.

Teacher Andy Elyard had heard how Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader program could motivate pupils to read more through its unique system of quizzes and point awards.

Andy introduced 'no-uniform' privileges to pupils and their friends when they achieved 100 point scores, a move that resonated very well with girls, who started reading "huge amounts" to get the results.

He kept up the positive reinforcement with verbal feedback, weekly powerpoints and reports on which class had achieved the best average in quizzes.

Individualised learning became a reality with this method, by liberating staff from the difficult task of selecting books, as pupils picked their own, guided by a colour code. Even the quizzes were managed by self-starting pupils. Teachers were able to focus on the real challenge - providing support and direction at individual level.

Continued overleaf

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Boothville Primary School Northampton *continued...*

They were also able to focus on those that were finding the quizzes difficult, or those who were reading parrot-fashion - helped by the test results that clearly pointed out those who were failing to make real progress.

Andy was quick to involve parents in the new scheme. He took the opportunity of a parent/teacher evening to explain the benefits. Letters were sent home to mark significant advancements in a pupil's reading ability, which created a lot of goodwill between teachers and parents.

Many pupils have acquired the reading habit. They are not only reading longer, and taking books home, but they are reading tougher books, such as the Hobbit and Lord of the Rings.

Lower ability pupils have also responded well to being matched with suitable books, being encouraged to "have a go" and have started to earn their first points.

Accelerated Reader has kept the pupils really fixed on task. *"I think we would have struggled to be sure of getting to the position where this level of motivation was possible, without this method."*

"Books are a lot more tattered that they should be," said Andy, after noticing the unusual amount of wear and tear on new books, many of which are swapped daily for a new book. Boys have been particularly responsive to the element of competition that the quizzes introduce to the learning process. Andy regularly has children staying in at break times to complete quizzes, more than he would normally expect to see.

Staff at Boothville are in agreement that Accelerated Reader has stimulated children to the point where they can go on to develop a genuine love of reading. *"It is reassuring to know that the children are reading at the correct level,"* says one teacher. Another adds: *"The pupils who would otherwise get left behind get every support with this."*

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