

# Success story

## Lavant House Junior School, Chichester

### School Profile

Number of pupils	155
EAL	tbc
Free School Meals	tbc

Children in the Junior School at Lavant House, an independent all-girls school near Chichester, appeared to be very articulate in their reading. However, when the children took their twice-yearly NFER comprehension tests, Head of Juniors Meg Gardner found that the results told a very different story.

*"Although they could read the actual words, their scores were much lower than I expected," she said. "It was clear that many children were not absorbing what they were reading. There's no point in reading if you don't understand what you've read - it's worthless. If we can help our pupils develop this skill, we're truly equipping them for adult life."*

Meg read about Accelerated Reader in the Times Educational Supplement, and thought it might be able to help. She sent for details, and decided to give the program a try.

Lavant House has using Accelerated Reader for two years, mainly with Year 2 to Year 5. The school began by buying books and quizzes for the lower level readers, and Meg was pleased that there were plenty of short, easily accessible books to choose from. For the older children, she found that quizzes were available for many of the books the school already had in its library, which helped to maximise the resources available within her budget.

Initially Meg and her colleagues just used the program with children who scored below average in the comprehension tests. However, the other children felt they were missing out and asked to join in, so now everyone is included.

The girls steadily work their way through the levels. Provided that they pass the quiz for the book they've been reading, they can move to the next level. However, if they fail the quiz, they have to read other books at the same level until they are passing

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## Lavant House Junior School, Chichester *continued...*

the quizzes with a good score.

The impact of Accelerated Reader at Lavant House is clear from looking at the NFER test scores.

Scores are standardised, so the average score is 100. Since introducing the program, children who were below average in September typically increase their score by some 11 points in the eight months before they are tested again.

Meg cites examples of pupils whose scores improved from 86 to 97, from 95 to 106, and from 94 to 107. Another pupil who was scoring below 70 - so effectively not being given a score at all - achieved a score of 87 just eight months after beginning to use Accelerated Reader.

The progression in reading ages tells the same story. Typical examples include improvements in reading ages from 8 years to 9 years 9 months, and from 9 years 3 months to 11 years 4 months, over the eight month period between tests.

Meg is "absolutely delighted" with the results. "We get a lot of new things in school, and while we're always willing to have a go, sometimes it's more hope than expectation," she says. "But this has returned much more than we would have expected. We find the girls often begin by reading well, and then they stumble when they get involved in sport and other activities. They start to see reading as a chore - which is when we find Accelerated Reader particularly helpful. By Year 6, they are usually strong independent readers and are flying again without the need for extra encouragement."

She concludes: "The effectiveness of this approach has been proved by the improvements in our test scores. It really is a very good system."

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