

Success Story

Tudhoe Grange School

“The introduction of Accelerated Reader significantly affected overall standards of literacy. ,”

Since the introduction of **Accelerated Reader™ (AR)**¹ software from Renaissance Learning™ in 2009 there has been a significant increase in assessment results and standards of literacy. Library circulation has increased by more than 50 times amongst the third of the student population actively quizzing on AR books.

A reading culture has developed at the school and periodic **STAR Reading™²** assessments show that some students have increased their reading age by over four years in just one academic year - as SENCO Janet Bowden explains:

“Prior to introducing AR and **STAR Reading** for all KS3 students, weak literacy skills were a concern for many of our students. A large majority of students were reluctant to read and some were unable to read. Many had already decided that they hated reading and had no intention of reading any of the books that we had in the library. It wasn’t for them: many had never even read a book from cover to cover. There were a number of students who could read accurately but were unable to understand what they had just read as our students had a very limited vocabulary.

Academic Year	Books Loaned
2008 - 2009	67
2009 - 2010	1,010
2010 - 2011	3,738



As a result, the staff found that many textbooks and worksheets were too difficult for students to read. Many refused to read out loud in class as they were embarrassed at their lack of reading ability. The introduction of **STAR Reading** baseline assessments and AR across all KS3 students, combined with the implementation of Reading Recovery programmes for some students, has significantly improved overall standards of literacy at Tudhoe Grange School. **A renewed focus on reading has also helped to improve results in other areas of the curriculum as students are now more able to cope with the pressures of learning core subjects.**

School Background

Tudhoe Grange is a smaller than average secondary school of 638 children situated in a semi-rural community in the Spennymoor area of County Durham. Students predominantly come from a White British background and there are slightly more boys than girls. The proportion eligible for Free School Meals is above the national average as the socio-economic background of students varies considerably, with a minority living in areas of high deprivation. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average.



Renaissance Learning Success Stories

To qualify as a Success Story, a school must be able to demonstrate measurable ‘success’ with Renaissance Learning products, particularly in terms of the implementation of **Best Classroom Practices**³ to motivate students of all ages and abilities, improved academic achievement, development of a reading culture and other key criteria.

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“Students are now more able to cope with the learning pressures of core subjects.”

This approach has had such a significant impact on the culture of the school that there is now a real buzz about books and reading - with students actually telling staff which books they would like to see on the shelves. “Before we started using **Accelerated Reader** the library circulation was very poor, but over the last few years it has rocketed.”

To monitor growth and assess the students’ progress, we carry out **STAR Reading** tests during each term throughout the year. The Learning Support Department, which consists of one SENCO and two Learning Support Assistants, then meets with every student in KS3 to discuss the results of their reading test and analyse their **AR** data. This provides an opportunity to praise, encourage and make further recommendations as to how they could improve their reading over the following term.

STAR Reading tests are carried out to coincide with the publication of student assessment data and where a student’s reading age falls below the functional reading age of a 10 year old and/or their English assessment result is below level 4A, intervention strategies are put in place.

The effect of this approach has been dramatic, with a significant majority of these students increasing their assessment level by a minimum of two sub levels and most by three or more sub levels in just one academic year. In September 2010, 35 students in Year 8 had English levels below 4A. In June 2011, after using **AR** with intervention strategies, there were only six students at that level. Similarly, in September 2009 37% of Year 8 had a reading age below 10 years, but by April 2011 that figure had dropped to 8%.

Overall, by placing AR at the heart of our approach to raising literacy standards, students are more confident and the English department has reported improved comprehension and writing skills.”

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¹ **Accelerated Reader** offers personalised reading practice for pupils of all ages and abilities with over 24,000 fun, motivational quizzes on popular books ranging from *The Hungry Caterpillar* to Roald Dahl, and the *Harry Potter* series to the Classics, which test a pupil’s understanding of what they have just read.

² **STAR Reading** is computer-adaptive baseline assessment software that quickly and accurately establishes the actual reading age and National Curriculum Level of individual pupils, so that growth can be easily measured.

³ **AR Best Practices** are research-based guiding principles for using Accelerated Reader to ensure fidelity of implementation.