

“AR has provided us with a tool to build a culture of reading and learning”

King James’s School

Knarborough,
North Yorkshire

King James’s is a large 11-18 comprehensive school with over 1700 students on roll.

Lisa Bryden is the school’s Librarian. Having seen the impact of Accelerated Reader (AR) at a previous school she, in conjunction with the English Department and Learning Support team, implemented it at King James’s in time for the new Year 7 cohort in September 2013. They currently have 294 students on the programme including some Year 8 and Year 9 students.

“I joined King James’s in the summer of 2012 and, having spent four years using AR, was keen for our school to experience an increase in literacy standards and also the positive impact of the programme in terms of improved attitudes to learning. After presenting the programme to the SLT with a proposed structure and implementation plan, we began establishing resources within the library and organising the delivery of the programme.

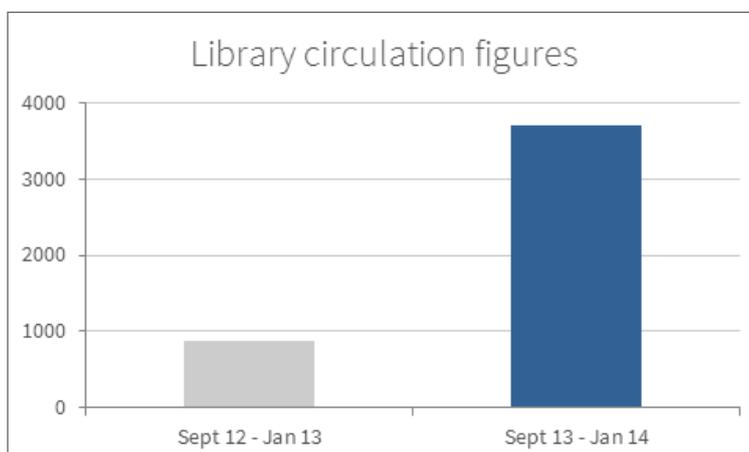
In consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, English Department and Learning Support team, I established a sustainable structure to support the programme. The Senior Leadership Team devised a new curriculum to incorporate AR into the timetable. This takes the form of an hour-long AR lesson every week, planned and delivered by a team of inspiring English teachers and supported by the library. Half the lesson is used for reading, quizzing and book exchange while the other half is a newly devised scheme of work which focusses on encouraging reading for pleasure. The lessons range from introducing students to dystopian fiction to ‘What makes a great opening sentence?’ The lessons have a similar impact to having an author in school – books fly off the shelves during and after each session!

Before AR a large number of SEN students had difficulty in choosing books that they could access. The library was also very poorly resourced in the lower level books. This has now changed, and since introducing AR we have witnessed a huge increase in library circulation figures. 3709 books were borrowed between September 2013 and January 2014 – four times as many as for the same period the year before. Our library is busy from 8.15am until 4.30pm with students reading and taking quizzes on the iPads.

We have had phenomenal success in terms of improved reading ages as well as a much improved attitude to reading and learning. All Year 7 students carry a reading book in their bag each day, which has eliminated the need to rush into the library to select a book ‘just for English’. It has been noted that students are seen reading around the school and not just in the library.

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Charts showing the increase in Library circulation since the introduction of AR



Many of our students have become confident readers. Students who were once reluctant readers now have the confidence to recommend books to each other. Completing a book of their own choosing and then achieving success in the quiz is proving to be a real motivator.

As well as Library, English and Learning Support staff, form tutors and our Key Stage 3 Learning Manager are also involved in monitoring students' progress. We use the reports and the Renaissance Place Dashboard to help us identify those students who require intervention. I have also designed an Accelerated Reader (AR) log for the student planner which can be used as a form of intervention if students are not recording their reading. In addition, we use this to communicate with parents if we feel that students are not spending sufficient time reading and require extra help. We request that parents check and sign their child's reading log on a weekly basis.

The reading accomplishments of the whole year group are acknowledged in 'Celebration of Reading' assemblies led by the Head of English. Reading Millionaires (those who have read over a million words in one Learning Cycle) and a Star Reader from each class are rewarded with reading trophies and vouchers. Students achieving 100% on their reading practice quizzes are entered into a prize draw, giving every student who has achieved top marks in the quiz another chance to win.

The impact of AR has been phenomenal. There is a real buzz surrounding reading – for some students their AR lesson is the best lesson of the week. AR is a team effort at King James's and has provided us with a tool to build a culture of reading and learning. We hope that our students will continue to develop their passion for reading well beyond their time at school.

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