

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

The Malling School,  
Kent

The Malling School is a small school with just under 600 students, 98 students attract the Pupil Premium and approximately 100 students are statemented for speech and language difficulties and are part of a special needs unit, the Tydeman Centre.

Corinne Sherry, the Learning Resources Manager, explains how an effective implementation of Accelerated Reader has transformed reading and writing across the school.



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Data review

Intervention

Library use

Reading for pleasure

Parents

## “The programme has made a huge impact with more students reading more books.”

Although Accelerated Reader (AR) has been available in the school for a number of years, it is only in the last three years that it has been used effectively. Previously AR was only being accessed by year 7 and 8 students and data shows that the engagement time was less than 2 minutes a day. We are now using AR across the whole school (years 7 – 11) and are achieving engagement times of 23 minutes in year 7, with many more students than before achieving 85% or above on tests.

Reading is now a big part of our school. Students are introduced to the library as soon as they join the school and are given their reading ranges as soon as possible. They learn all about AR and how to search for books and use the programme very early on in their school career, as well as being given weekly opportunities to read, choose books and quiz in the library.

The library is now open for the whole day, as well as both before and after school, to encourage students to participate in the AR programme. Since taking AR across the whole school we have invested in many more books, particularly at the higher age level, to provide a wider selection of reading material for the students. Students are usually asked to read for the first ten minutes of each lesson and are expected to have a book with them all the time which hasn't been a problem.

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More library time has been given over to reading. Years 7 – 9 now receive a 50 minute reading lesson in their timetable and year 10 have a 30 minute slot in the library every week. Reading point scores are now part of assemblies and house winners are announced and prizes given. The library is in constant use with students coming in and out regularly even when it is not their library session or reading time. Students are now interested in choosing books for themselves and are becoming more successful readers; reading time is now an important 'lesson' and most students appear to enjoy their library time and enjoy the books and quizzes. These initiatives have made reading an important part of our school and we are seeing a gradual rise in reading ages across the school.

Students are clearly reading for pleasure as the AR engagement time has gone up hugely. There is a real buzz around books and reading; a lot more discussion from students about books and reading has become the norm. Students are actively asking for books and certain authors and they are now reserving a lot more books on the library software so that they have their next choice available. Multiple copies of many titles have had to be ordered because students are so keen to read them. Where once the library PCs were being used for games at

lunch and break times, they are now only available for home work or AR quizzing as there is such a high demand.

We launched Home Connect with our parents last term; approximately 40% have signed up so far. We have used parents' evenings to discuss AR and Home Connect, and have held some weekend events in the library (our 'reading café') to promote AR and reading to parents.

The best feature of AR from the adult and teaching point of view is the important data that it provides. At the basic level we can see whether an individual child has actually read and understood a book and to what extent. I look at the dashboard regularly and print off the data to see how we are progressing. This information is shared and discussed initially with the literacy co-ordinator and English department, and then teaching staff and the senior leadership team. Report data is shared at whole staff briefings and the information printed and put onto a noticeboard in the staff room. We also share basic details such as engaged time with the school governors.

As well as seeing how a student is progressing with their quizzes and targets, we can also very easily see how whole groups of students are performing against their peers in the school and nationally. The Screening Report is extremely good as struggling students can easily be identified and interventions put into place. The reports across the whole system are detailed and we can tailor them to our own needs to put students into different groups for monitoring.

Using the data from AR, intervention has been put in place with extra reading in the school for the lowest level students. We also have older students working with younger, less able readers. Our own 6th form students and adult volunteers from the 'Beanstalk' organisation are helping us with reading for our low ability intervention students. We have found this very successful: by using this intervention we have had students make three years of progress in just one term.

The culture of reading has changed across our school now that we are using AR to best effect. The programme has made a huge impact with more students reading more books and believing that reading is a part of everyday life. Students are more engaged with reading and certainly spending more time reading outside school hours. Students also seem to enjoy the competition and do try hard to get their individual targets. There are now lots of activities, competitions and rewards for reading across the school related to AR which makes reading accessible and fun to more students.



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