

RENAISSANCE®

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

**Baxter Business and Enterprise College,  
Kidderminster, Worcestershire**

Baxter Business and Enterprise College is an academy school in Kidderminster. The school has been transformed in recent years: once struggling, it was recently judged 'good' by OFSTED.

The school serves a challenging catchment. Many of the students come from one of the most deprived wards in the country, and the prior attainment of students on entry is significantly below the national average.



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**Motivation**

**Student engagement**

# 'We have clear evidence of enhanced reading, greater library footfall, and more book loans.'

Baxter College has a Raising Attainment Plan that has made literacy a central focus across the curriculum at the school. In recent years, it has adopted a range of initiatives to improve literacy standards, particularly by helping students who are under-performing on entry in Year 7 to catch up with their peers. A key part of this strategy has been the use of Accelerated Reader.

## Awarding students for outstanding progress

The impact of AR was recently put on public display at an awards ceremony attended by the school's local MP. Two students were singled out for an Outstanding Progress award. The school's principal, Dave Seddon, explains how these students first came to use AR and outlines the impressive progress they have made since:

"Over their five years at Baxter College, a group of special needs students became affectionately known as 'The Dream Team' because they were a dream to teach. It had become evident in their first year here that they needed bespoke programmes if they were to achieve their full potential. For improving their literacy and subsequently, their confidence and self-esteem, we turned to Accelerated Reader."

*Our students enjoy the competitive element. The quizzes are a fun way of demonstrating their enjoyment and comprehension of the books they read*

"Two students made tremendous gains and received a joint Award for Outstanding Progress at our Annual Celebration Evening. Jack Geden and Hanaa Finnie received their prizes from Mark Garnier, MP for Wyre Forest, in appreciation of the improvements they made over a 5 year period. Hanaa has stayed on in our Sixth Form and Jack is pursuing his dream to become a chef – two real success stories."

## Enabling staff to talk about reading

"AR forms part of a whole package of strategies we use to improve the standards of literacy," AR Data Manager Jo Griffiths explains. "A number of years ago we introduced 'ERIC' (Everyone Reads in Class) into morning registration and we were keen to develop this further to give it more structure. Ultimately giving students the opportunity and time to read regularly was key to its success; and AR added in the motivation factor!"

Although initially rolled out during registration periods, AR is now run through the English Department and additional time is given during English lessons for students to read silently, exchange books and take quizzes. "Participation has improved greatly with the intervention of the English Department. Purely running the programme through tutor groups did not work

as well because it was administered inconsistently across the whole year group. However, now it is running well with the library and literacy sessions we can encourage more form tutors to get involved.”

Because of the data available to staff, they are more readily able to talk with students about the books they have been reading. This is something Jo strongly encourages: “the more people who know what the students are up to, the more likely it is that discussion, praise and further encouragement will happen.”

### Motivating students to read independently

“Our students enjoy the competitive element,” Jo continues.

“The quizzes are a fun way of demonstrating their enjoyment and comprehension of the books they read. The weaker cohort have engaged particularly well as they gain a quick reward using the lower level and shorter books and see merit in taking a high number of quizzes regularly.”

“We also feel that AR helps students develop independence; managing when and where they quiz, communicating with staff about their progress and resolving problems they may encounter, organising visits to the LRC outside of timetabled lessons etc. Students take responsibility for their own progress through the choices they make. Student Voice feedback indicates that students like the relative independence of it, the ability to monitor their own progress and the prizes we offer.”

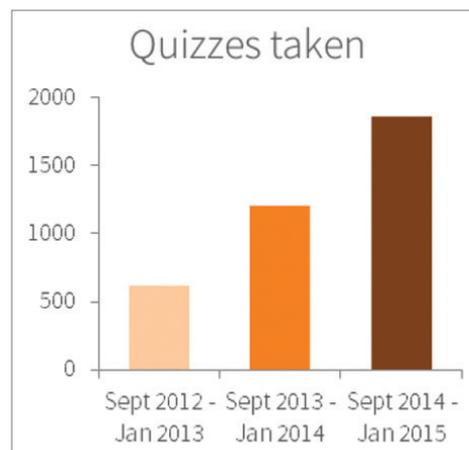
The data AR gives teachers can itself be used to engage and motivate students. Jo sends out weekly updates using a variety of the metrics AR monitors. “This changes every week based on the data collected,” she explains. “It could include the word count each class achieved, or the level of participation each class had with the programme, for example. I also highlight particular success stories, for example if a student has scored 100% on a number of consecutive quizzes.”

Prizes are awarded at the end of each term, marking individual and group successes. Each year an Awards Night is held, and in recent years a reward for reading has helped further to raise the profile of reading.

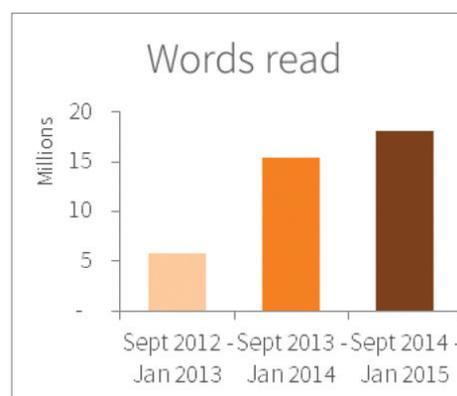
As well as motivating students, AR provides useful data to help staff to monitor progress and respond appropriately to it. Literacy Coordinator Jim Phillips explains the impact this has had: “We have clear evidence of enhanced reading, greater library footfall, and more book loans. When we are next inspected by OFSTED, we intend to use the AR scores in order to gain another measure of impact. We expect AR to confirm engagement with reading, increased use of the library, and an enhanced sense of reading being a source of pleasure and learning in all subjects.”



*Jack and Hanaa receive their Outstanding Progress awards from Mark Garnier, MP.*



*Students are increasingly engaged with AR, owing in large part to an effective implementation through the English Department and a strong focus on reading attainment.*



*The number of words read by students using the programme has also increased in the past three years, showing that a culture of reading is taking hold at the school.*

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