

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Neston High School,  
Neston, Cheshire

Neston High School is an 11-18 rural comprehensive school of over 1700 students. It is an oversubscribed school, and many students travel from Chester, Wales, and The Wirral to attend.



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# Recognising reading attainment with Accelerated Reader™

## Why AR?

Charlotte Pearson, Library Manager at Neston High School, says: “We originally implemented Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) five years ago as a means for intervention for select students from years 7, 8 and 9, as we felt that it was a system that would allow the school to stretch and challenge students in terms of their reading, and enable us to give accurate targets to students to help them keep improving their reading ages and literacy skills. In addition, the system allowed for students to have tailored reading material without having to exclusively read reading scheme book sets. Students could read the same genre or author as their peers and we could be sure they could access the materials. Since 2012, we have expanded the programme to include all students in those years, as we felt it would be brilliant for all students at all levels.”

## Funding AR

“To cover the cost of Accelerated Reader, we split the cost into three sections,” Charlotte explains. “We draw the money from the Library budget, the English budget and the Interventions budget,

*The reading community in school has blossomed since implementing AR*

Reading for pleasure

Reading Culture

Library Usage

Incentives

Word Millionaires

Intervention

as all of these areas heavily benefit from Accelerated Reader. The English department use Accelerated Reader in lessons, and as part of homework, to improve literacy levels and ensure that students in Key Stage Three have a broad reading history as they move on to GCSE, while the library uses AR in library lessons to find students appropriate reading materials, and to reward progress and effort. The Interventions surrounding reading development and literacy levels in school also heavily rely on Accelerated Reader to motivate students and to provide staff with data that allows them to support a student’s reading growth.”

## Informing reading interventions with STAR Reading™

Charlotte explains how the school uses STAR Reading alongside AR: “The STAR Reading test is completed three times a year by our students, each time producing their reading age. We use this to stretch and challenge them, but also to match students with books they will enjoy and be able to access. We use the reports and STAR data to inform interventions in school, and to select students to attend Accelerated Reader catch up club. Three nights a week we have hourlong sessions in the library, where we advise and support students on improving their Accelerated Reader point score or STAR Reading age. Additionally, we have used STAR

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### The impact of AR

"The reading community in school has blossomed since implementing AR," Charlotte says. "Students are taking out more books than ever and have described how the scheme has motivated them to read more and more. Literacy standards are improving with the emphasis on reading for pleasure in school and the added monitoring of reading ages with STAR Reading. Students are reading more, and feel that this is because of AR. For instance, in 2013-14 more than 7,000 quizzes were taken, which we saw increase to almost 13,000 in 2014-15, while the number that were passed increased from around 5,000 to more than 9,500. Even after five years of using the programme, we are still seeing improved progress and reading engagement. We are in a position where the library is full every break and lunch time with students reading and quizzing!"

### Incentivising and rewarding reading

Accelerated Reader has enabled the school to recognise and acknowledge success and achievement more than ever before. "The system allows us to see incredible progress," Charlotte says. "In January 2015 we had 13 reading millionaires who had collectively read 22 million words. This year in January 2016 we saw an incredible 35 reading millionaires who had collectively read 58 million words! This progress would never have been recorded without Accelerated Reader, and the scheme to reward these high fliers would not exist. Accelerated Reader lends urgency and importance to reading in school, making it a huge priority for our students. As a result, as time has gone on students have taken more books out of the library, read more books and taken more quizzes. Without Accelerated Reader, we would not have a true, accurate image of the reading community in school, the levels they are at and the growth they have made with us so far."



“Students who read over a million words before January are part of the reward scheme which includes reading conferences, lunches and awards”

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