

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

River Beach Primary School,
Littlehampton, West Sussex

River Beach Primary school is a large primary school, with over 740 children on roll.

The school has used Renaissance Accelerated Reader since January 2016, with years 3-6.



Find out more
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Assessment

Motivation

Reading Culture

Reading for Pleasure

Student Engagement

A revolutionised reading culture within one term at River Beach Primary

In the space of a few short months, River Beach has seen a dramatic transformation in the school's reading culture, and in the reading attainment of its children, following the school's implementation of Accelerated Reader. "The impact has been enormous," says Rhona Wilkinson, Assistant Head Teacher at the school. "The amount of books the children are reading is way beyond our expectation; the children have taken to Accelerated Reader so well. The library has always been used by classes, but now children are in there all the time, reading and changing books, and arriving early; the library is never empty."

Judy Grevett, Head Teacher at River Beach, has also been impressed by the changes the school has seen, and the love of reading that the children display. "Two of the things that have really surprised me are children who we know haven't really enjoyed reading, who we've really tried to encourage to read, all of a sudden they've read a book, taken an Accelerated Reader quiz, they've had a positive result and they're just inspired to go on and

The best thing about Accelerated Reader is the impact it's had on our children, and their attitude towards reading

read the next book and the next book," says Judy. "I get children coming up to me all around the school telling me how many words they've read and how many books they've read, and frequently there are knocks at my door with children saying 'I've just come to tell you that I'm up to my 20th book!'"

Why Accelerated Reader?

"When we originally implemented Accelerated Reader, we'd been looking into different options for how we could raise the profile of reading at the school," Rhona explains. "We went to see Accelerated Reader at the local secondary school that we're linked to, and some of our past pupils spoke to our Head Teacher and told us how great it was, and that it was definitely something we should do. So, we came back, took their advice and decided to look into it a little bit more."

"When we first implemented it, we had an onsite training session with an Implementation Specialist from Renaissance," Rhona explains. "It was really great; they explained it all really thoroughly and gave lots of detail – which was particularly useful as there were a lot of newer staff who didn't know so much about it."

How they use it

The school has implemented Accelerated Reader with a broad range of IT resources. "We have iPads, learnpads, netbooks and our ICT suite, so the children have access to ICT resources all the time. The children have full access to those, so can come and quiz whenever they want to," Rhona explains. "They know their own passwords, and are great at logging in independently; they don't need a lot of adult intervention in that process as they do it so well and read so many books. We don't have specific Accelerated Reader lessons because we use it every day – everyone reads at least 15-20 minutes per day, which within our school has been effective."

"The children love the quizzing process," Rhona says. "They find it challenging, but they're desperate to do a quiz, right there and then as soon as they've finished a book. It's because you get such instant feedback on how many questions you got right, and how well you've done. Because of that, when they've got their 10/10 they can't wait to tell you."

Assessing without Levels with Renaissance Star Reading

"When we originally implemented Accelerated Reader & Star, we did it with years 5 & 6. When they did their first Star test, I don't think they took it hugely seriously, I think they thought 'oh, this is just another thing the school is doing to try and make us read,'" Rhona says. "By the time we did the second test 6 weeks later, they were much more interested in the reading, and their concentration had improved massively. Around the time of the first test, some children were reading books that were too easy for them, but had tried much harder books by the second Star test. The average reading age improvement over those 6 weeks in Year 6 was about 8 months. I think the highest individual improvement was 2 years and 4 months. Years 3 & 4 were a lot more interested in reading from the start, and were curious about what years 5 & 6 were doing with Accelerated Reader and Star and were keen to get involved. We tested Year 4 quite recently, and their average reading age increased by about 7 months. Our disadvantaged children actually improved more, their reading age went up by about 8 months on average."

"Star has been a really useful tool. It gives us concrete data about reading age, and a standardised score, which enables us to look more definitely at the progress they're making. As all schools are now assessing without levels Star has been a huge bonus as now we have some concrete information we can use to make sure that we're as spot on as we can be. We can compare reading age and chronological age, and see who is reading at that expected level. It also highlights children who are reading below their chronological age, so intervention strategies can be put in place to support their reading development. We also use Star for interventions: we test them at the start of the intervention, which lasts between 4 and 6 weeks, and again at the end, to examine the impact that it has had. We are delighted that the children come to us actually wanting to read and are much more willing to actively take part in those interventions. They see them as less of a chore now, and more of an opportunity to challenge themselves."

Incentivising and celebrating reading

The school makes use of Accelerated Reader's Word Count, a feature which tracks the number of words a child has read, to celebrate reading milestones. "When a child reads their first 10,000 words, they get a lanyard," Rhona explains.

"They then get a different coloured star for every 100,000 words they read, and initially this introductory year will receive a Kindle at 1,000,000. We've had 7 word millionaires already! Over 90% of the children are proudly wearing their lanyard.

"All the adults at school were asked if they wanted to join Accelerated Reader, and a lot of them chose to do so. It's getting quite competitive amongst the staff, to see who's read the most words and who's going to get the millionaire prize first! This has led to every member of staff having a poster on their classroom door telling the children what book they're reading. Walking around the school, children tell me what book they're reading, what books they like and who their favourite author is."

Having that fun element of testing an understanding of a book is really encouraging that element of reading for fun

David Ayers, Deputy Head at River Beach, agrees that Accelerated Reader has had a massive impact. "Reading is one of those subjects where it's very hard to find a tangible scheme that has an immediate impact, so the fact that our data is showing an increase so early on has got to have a really positive effect on our improvement plan," he says. "We're seeing children keen to go to the library, going to the library early in the morning, desperate to get books that they want, desperate to read more words than everyone else, and it's just raised the profile of reading immeasurably. The key benefit of the scheme is that you have quizzes instead of tests, and children love quizzes: just having that fun element of testing an understanding of a book is really encouraging that element of reading for fun."

The school was recently inspected by OFSTED, who also noticed the improvements around reading at the school. In their short inspection report, OFSTED noted that:

'The changes you and the staff have introduced to the teaching of reading are making a real difference. As well as increasing pupils' pleasure in reading, there is a strong focus on exploring texts to make deductions and infer meaning.'

'You have introduced a reading programme which is motivating pupils to read more and come in early and stay late to complete quizzes. They wear their medals and badges with pride. The staff also join in with this and you are also proud of your many badges. In the first six weeks of the programme, Year 6 pupils made seven months' progress.'

'There are many opportunities for pupils to read for purpose and for pleasure. Pupils choose to read and to share books with adults at lunchtime.'

Rhona agrees. "The profile of reading at the school now is huge. There's one girl in Year 3 who just joined the school this year, and didn't really read at all, but has just got her first lanyard. She says she's never had a prize at school like this before, this is her first one. This week she's completed 7 quizzes on books she read last week, so she's our star reader this week and her photo is up on the AR display board, and she's over the moon at being on display for everyone to see. We've seen such an improvement in children wanting to read, and in children's enthusiasm towards books: the best thing about Accelerated Reader is the impact it's had on our children, and their attitude towards reading."



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– OFSTED

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