

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

**Slough & Eton CE School,
Slough, Berkshire**

Slough & Eton CE School is a secondary school with over 1,100 pupils on roll. The school has used Renaissance Accelerated Reader™ since 2014, implementing it in Years 7,8 and 9. Lindsey Blake, Consultant

Librarian, outlines how the school have used the programme to engender a whole school approach to reading and engage students of all abilities.



Find out more
renlearn.co.uk/partofthestory

EAL

Incentives

Progress monitoring

Reading age

Word Millionaires

Achieving word millionaires with a 75% EAL cohort

Implementing Accelerated Reader™ and celebrating reading accomplishments

When we first brought Accelerated Reader™ in, we found the setup very easy. The training we received was very good, and had no issues setting up and understanding the system ourselves. The process of labelling the books is time consuming; that was probably the most challenging part of implementation, but now that it's finished all that's required is some monthly upkeep.

Every student from Years 7, 8 and 9 has a 50 minute library lesson each week, where they can read, quiz and change books. Students are also set 20 minutes of reading every day as homework. Every week we in the library pull off the Diagnostic Report for each student and look over these with their teacher, identifying who isn't reading for 20 minutes per day, which students are failing to quiz and which students aren't passing quizzes. The teacher can then address these issues with students individually.

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As well as identifying issues however, it's also an opportunity to celebrate students who are doing fantastically. Every student in Years 7,8 and 9 receives weekly feedback on how they are doing with reading.

Every student is set a termly points target, and they can log in to see this and their progress towards it at any time. We incorporate targets into our reading celebrations: we have an interhouse cup, where the class with the most pupils reaching their target receives the reading challenge cup every term.

We also have a large board in the library with pictures of the children. Anyone who has read over 100,000 words in the year is added to the board. It's very motivating, and the younger students in particular are excited to appear on it. We also have a millionaires board, which has bronze, silver and gold stars for those who read over 1 million, 2 million and 3 million words. We haven't decided what to do for those who read over 4 million or 5 million words yet – we never thought this would be an issue, but we have one student in Year 7 who is already over 5 million words and well on her way to reading 6!

Spurring immediate growth with EAL students

About 75% of our students have English as an additional language. We also have a significant percentage of parents that do not speak or read English and the school newsletter is on podcast in 5 different languages. As such we as a school need to put a strong focus on literacy, and an emphasis on learning to read and speak English. Accelerated Reader™ is something that these students can access though, even with limited English, because it's so simple, and we are seeing it make a difference with them.

The great thing with EAL students is that you can see large amounts of progress very quickly, and Accelerated Reader™ shows this progress to them, which then motivates them to continue putting effort in. We have students join with absolutely no knowledge of English, who appear on the reading leaderboard a year later; just recently we've had two Year 9 students who joined in Year 8 with no English language who have become word millionaires.

The framework around Accelerated Reader™ and Renaissance Star Reading™ works very well for EAL students. They like knowing their Zone of Proximal Development, along with their reading age, because they can see these improve and then go on to access bigger, more challenging books. Once the language starts to click their reading age can increase by several years in the space of one year, and it's very helpful for them to receive immediate feedback that what they are doing is working.



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Emphasising literacy and reading age across the whole school

Accelerated Reader™ has been a key strand of the whole school focus on developing literacy. Changes like ensuring that students have a reading book on them at all times, 20 minutes of trackable reading per day being set as homework and support from pastoral staff with putting competitions in place have very much shifted the whole school's focus towards reading. Promoting reading is something that all teachers do.

This whole school approach is particularly important when it comes to GCSEs and our focus on reading ages. While we use Accelerated Reader™ in Years 7,8 and 9, and use Star Reading™ alongside it in these years, we still use Star in Year 10, and with a few students in Year 11, to monitor reading age. We administer it twice per year, and three times in Year 7. Before Star, we administered a paper-based assessment to determine reading age that could only be used once, and cost us more per pupil. Star is a much more ongoing type of assessment, and because it links in with Accelerated Reader it means we have a much more consistent approach across the board: all teachers can see students' reading ages, how this links in with their ZPD and how that links in with their reading. Because the test is computer-adaptive, even students with very limited English can access it because the difficulty adapts to their level. It helps us to pick out lower achievers, and to work with teachers to put in intervention where necessary – we use the benchmarking report quite frequently, and we can identify what we need to do to support individual students from there.

It's very important to us that reading age information is available to and understood by all teachers, particularly with the focus in the new GCSEs on reading and understanding the question. We send out reports containing reading age information to staff regularly, and it's also visible on students' records. We've run inset training around the reading age required to access GCSE textbooks and exam texts – we have seen pupils underperform even at AS level, and when checking their reading age it's clear that comprehension of the question was the issue they were running into.

We make regular use of the growth report, and send home diagnostic reports to parents every time a Star test is completed, so they can see how their child is performing in comparison with the rest of the class. All of this helps to ensure reading at the school is recognised as a core skill, and like any other skill you will get better at it if you practise it, and over time it will become easier.

Enthusiating students by illustrating progress

The structure of Accelerated Reader™ provides us with checks and balances to ensure that reading is taking place. Children are very excited to take the quizzes, and often new students in Year 7 are more interested in taking them than they are in reading! As such we do see quizzes being taken on films they've watched, books they've read five years ago, books they've seen the cover of, and initially a lot of low scores appear as a result. We turn that around in Year 7 – they're excited to quiz, and enjoy the novelty of being on computers, but what they really enjoy is seeing their progress. They can see themselves moving towards their target on screen, and they're always running over to tell us if they achieve 100% in a quiz, or they've met their points target. I always remind them that if they've read the book, they will pass the quiz, because it's written in such a way that the answer almost jumps out at you once you know it, and they find that very rewarding.

Accelerated Reader™ is brilliant because it absolutely standardises everything – it lends a lot of structure to reading, which is important both for the students, to help them form that habit, and for us, to be able to show that reading is happening and having an impact, and we can then see how much progress is being made and where we are moving towards as a school.



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