

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

## Warrington & Vale Royal College, Warrington, Cheshire

Warrington & Vale Royal College provides a variety of courses for school leavers up to adults. The college is in its third year of using Accelerated Reader with students aged 16-18 across a variety of vocational areas. Bethan Bligh, Learning Resource Centre Manager, outlines the importance of reading in Further Education.



Find out more  
[renlearn.co.uk/partofthestory](https://renlearn.co.uk/partofthestory)

**Book stock**

**Incentives**

**Library use**

**Motivation**

**Student engagement**

## Ingraining reading at a Further Education College

### Reading at Further Education level

At Warrington and Vale Royal College, reading is the golden thread through everything we do. Accelerated Reader is used by 16-18 year olds studying Sport, Hairdressing, Childcare, Supported Learning, Health & Social Care, Art & Design and IT. They are supported in doing so by their Curriculum Tutor, our English Team and the Learning Resource Centre; the entire college family supports Accelerated Reader and understands the significance of reading.



Many of our students study their English GCSE alongside their vocational qualification and we've found that improvement in reading skills has led to improved coursework and concentration in both academic and vocational lessons.

### Implementing and using Accelerated Reader

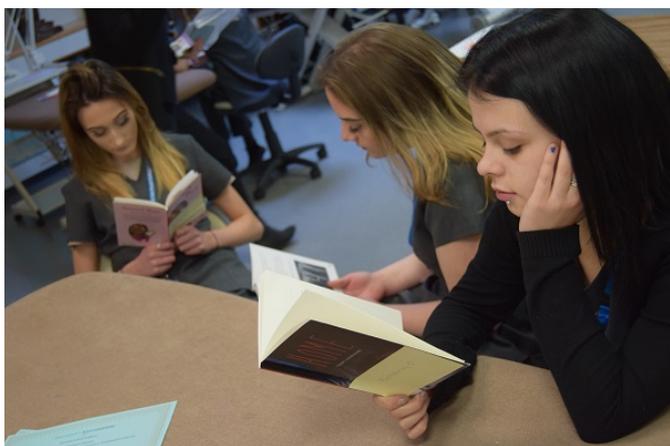
We started using Accelerated Reader with a pilot group of 40 students and have since expanded it across the curriculum with 240 current participants. Our initial training was very useful and we've made frequent use of live chat support when we run into any issues, receiving quick and helpful responses.

Our library now contains 1,716 handpicked books, all with Accelerated Reader quizzes. Our challenge is to provide fiction and non-fiction which is interesting to 16-18 year olds but still accessible to those with very low reading ages. Most of our books are fiction but we also source non-fiction texts, particularly those that complement the vocational curriculum. We also have self-help books that offer guidance with common issues, such as mental health and being a teenager. When students are interested in the subject they devour non-fiction texts and stretch themselves to understand unfamiliar text and vocabulary.

Our fiction collection is extremely comprehensive. All our books are suitable for young adults and range from graphic novels and young adult fiction to dyslexia-friendly texts and books shorter than 300 words.

Many of our students would not consider themselves readers on entry. They often have no experience of reading or using a library at school, and have little confidence when working with books. As such, it's our challenge to engage them creatively.

We aren't timetabled, so fitting reading into students' schedules is an additional challenge as some students will come in 3 days per week, for instance, or study during unusual hours. Every tutor schedules 20 minutes wherever possible in the library, where students read, quiz and change books. We've had to get creative to engage students: figuring out the best reading times, lengthening reading sessions where possible, celebrating reading accomplishments and closely monitoring progress. The aim is always to draw students in and establish reading as a habit.



“Students used to feel that reading was a chore... now they want to read more, and we've found that academic performance has improved in several areas as this interest has grown.”

### Building an interest in reading

Students used to feel that reading was a chore, but now take an active interest in reading and approach us to ask for recommendations for authors and genres. They want to read more, and we've found that academic performance has improved in several areas as this interest has grown.

We use Accelerated Reader's reporting to track the attainment of all students and ensure no-one is falling behind. We can make sure that individuals are reading at the right level for them, and understanding what they read. We administer the Star Reading test four times per year, and use the Scaled Score it generates to monitor even microscopic progress being made.

We make sure to celebrate and incentivise reading as much as possible. We regularly distribute certificates and vouchers and host 'Reading Elevenses' where we reward reading successes with tea and biscuits. We often invite guests to the school to read from their favourite books and discuss what they like about them with the students.

We're immensely proud of the students taking part – this academic year the 240 participants read over 3.5 million words, passed over 400 quizzes and been issued over 2,000 fiction books. 89% of our Health & Social Care students have improved in reading age and ability since the start of the year. 53 of these students are now classified as 'gifted and talented' readers, compared with their peers nationally, many of whom will be academically studying full time for their A-Levels.

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