

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

The Angmering School,  
West Sussex

The Angmering School is larger than the average-sized secondary school and caters for 1,450 students between the ages of 11-18. The proportion of students eligible for the Pupil Premium is below average. The majority of students are of White British heritage, with a small number speaking English as an Additional Language. The school has an above average proportion of disabled students (physical/sensory/cognitive) who are taught both in mainstream classes and the on-site Lavinia Norfolk Centre.

Anne-Marie Anderson is Senior Leader: English at the school and has responsibility for cross-curricular literacy, which includes overseeing the day-to-day implementation of Accelerated Reader (AR) from Renaissance Learning since its introduction in 2011.



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DEAR

Reading Culture

Intervention

Motivation

OFSTED

“Having reading at the heart of the school...has had a very positive impact on students’ attitudes to their learning and progress.”

In 2010 just 42% of students at The Angmering School were achieving A\*-C grades in English and Maths, but last year the figure jumped significantly to 62% thanks to a concerted effort to increase the provision in literacy across the school – as Anne-Marie, Senior Leader: English at the school explains:

“Our students have changed from non-readers to readers and there is now a very positive reading culture. I believe part of this success can be attributed to the combination of Accelerated Reader and DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time across the school, with all students reading for 20 minutes every day.

## Study Description

This approach was noted by Ofsted in their recent inspection of the school, who observed:

*“The school has dedicated a twenty-minute period each day for reading, known as DEAR. Students value this period greatly and are clear that it has benefited them and encouraged them to read more widely. DEAR also includes a weekly session of ‘talky DEAR’ involving debate and reading aloud, which is evidently making a difference, notably, to students’ ability to speak confidently, articulately and precisely.”*

“We implemented DEAR two years ago, and adjusted our school day to fit in, first 15 and now 20 minutes of reading every day. This is now a regular part of school life. The majority of students read in tutor groups – others read 1:1 with a member of staff or a 6th former. Some are in reading groups. It has been a very successful part of our Literacy strategy.”

Over time, the cumulative effect of daily reading practice in conjunction with AR quizzing has been felt across the school, but nowhere more so than in the library, which is also where students’ success with AR is displayed for all to see.

“In 2010 our average daily loan rate was 12 books; now it’s 41. The library is very popular both during lessons and break times as well as before and after school. Students also come in to view our ‘Round Britain’ themed Accelerated Reader quiz display, which is very popular. We have a weekly status update to see who is the top quizzing tutor group and also a weekly competition ‘Get Caught Reading’. All of these ensure that reading has a high profile in the school.” Another aspect of AR is the instant feedback it offers teachers and students alike, which has proved an important factor in closing the attainment gap between students in receipt of additional funding such as the Pupil Premium, and their peers – whilst the quizzes themselves determine whether a book has been read thoroughly from cover to cover.

“Students like the competitive nature of the quizzing and the fact that they get the results straight away. They quickly realise that they can’t quiz if they’ve just seen the film, which gives the quizzes value as they really do test reading.”

As AR Quizzes can be taken on books read individually or collectively, greater emphasis can be placed on the shared experience of reading whilst also highlighting the role every student plays in achieving personal and class targets. “If they are quizzing a book read as a class, this promotes discussion – students do want to get the answers right. Lower ability readers are not disadvantaged, and our tutor group competitions mean that they are taking a collective responsibility for reading and passing quizzes.”

## Results

Since the decision was taken in 2010 to address reading, and specifically reading for enjoyment, there have been noticeable improvements in both the students’ attitudes towards and enthusiasm for books, as well as their academic achievement.

Accelerated Reader often brings out a student’s natural competitiveness, which can be highly motivating as Anne-Marie has found: “Tutor groups compete and gain prizes, and students work towards their reading badges, which we celebrate in assemblies. Books are discussed openly and regularly at all levels in the school; reading achievement is taken seriously by our students – we send the reading reports home with our Interims.”

Like many others, staff at the school found that the first step to achieving success is successfully addressing any underlying issues. “AR has highlighted an area for development in the school, relevant to all subject areas. We identified the issue early on – students were unable to access parts of the curriculum due to poor literacy skills.” AR is designed to be as intuitive and simple to use as possible, which has certainly been the case at this school. “We like the ease of use for staff and students – I particularly like the Dashboard facility, which gives a quick overview at a glance.”

The data provided by AR allows for a more personalised approach to practice to be adopted and encourages differentiation of reading materials in the school to support the least able whilst also proving a powerful motivating tool that has led to students taking more ownership of their own progress. “Students are more engaged in their reading progress – one student in Year 8 said: ‘I don’t want to have a reading age of 9’ and has since made rapid progress with the support of his teacher. We have used the AR data to target students with a reading age of 10 or below for intervention. We can then measure the success of the intervention very quickly. All staff have access to this data and we are also discussing how to share reading intervention strategies with our feeder Primary schools.”

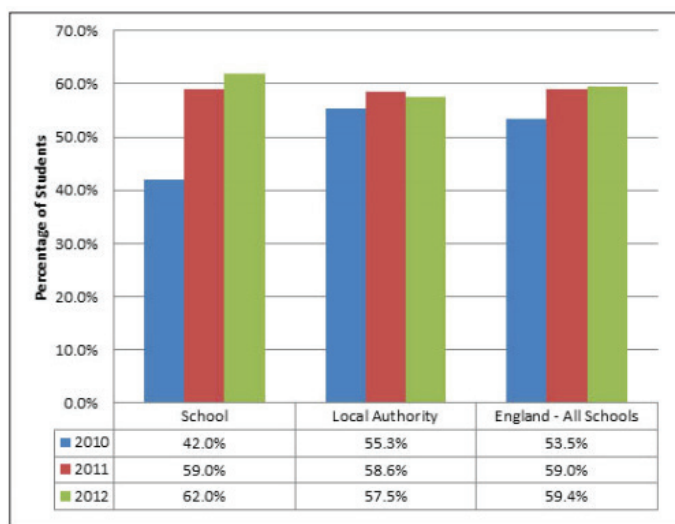


Chart 1: Percentage of students achieving 5+ A\*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs

## Conclusion

Since the introduction of Accelerated Reader the profile of reading has never been higher within the school and, as Anne Marie notes, “the students now talk very positively about the impact this has had on their learning.” This has also led to students reading more widely in all subject areas, with topic-specific book lists now being issued and tutors promoting reading materials in their area of specialism.

Furthermore, the data made available from the use of AR has not only enabled differentiated instruction, but proved a boon during a recent Ofsted inspection when it was necessary to show student progress in reading by class, Year Group and across the school.

Overall, however, the biggest impact has been on the culture of reading at the school:

“Having reading at the heart of the school required a shift in culture and has had a very positive impact on students’ attitudes to their learning and progress. Reading is talked about much more openly throughout the school and at all levels. As part of a range of strategies, I believe AR has helped our school to improve.”

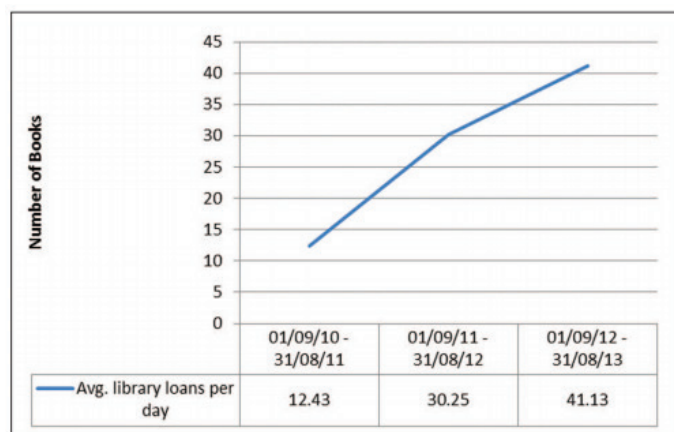


Chart 2: Average library loans per day since the introduction of Accelerated Reader

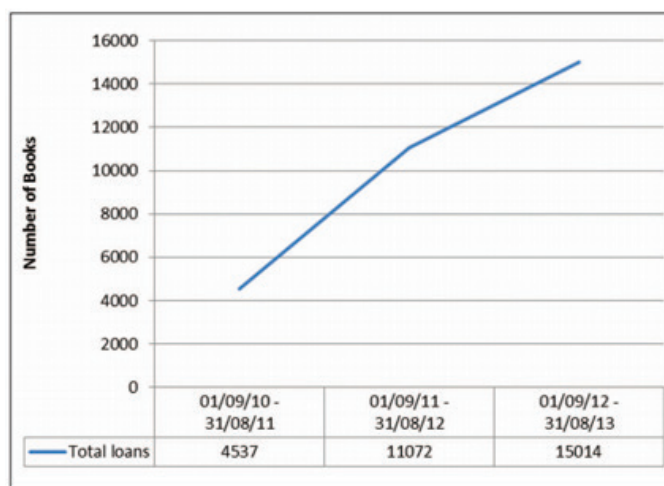


Chart 3: Annual library loans since the introduction of Accelerated Reader

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