

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Bluecoat Academy,
Nottingham

Shirley Smith, librarian at Bluecoat Academy, describes her school as 'truly comprehensive'. An above-average number of students receive free school meals; 40% use English as an additional language. A large school of 1800 students split over two campuses, Bluecoat Academy strives for academic excellence but found low reading ages to be holding back students' progress. Shirley explains the challenges faced by the school.



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Data review

Library use

Progress monitoring

Motivation

“Accelerated Reader has enabled us to promote, monitor and evaluate our reading levels and work within school.”

An increasing number of students were entering the Academy with reading ages below their chronological age. Within our current Year 7 cohort 39% had a reading age below 10 years old, with 11% of those under 8 years old. Reading was encouraged and promoted within library lessons and English lessons but there was little strategy as to how to match students to books. We also had no knowledge of whether students had completed a book or their comprehension of it.

Accelerated Reader has enabled us to promote, monitor and evaluate our reading levels and work within school. The students have become increasingly engaged with the programme. They read regularly and quiz consistently – particularly those currently reading our lower age range books. Results show AR is definitely benefitting our students and helping to increase reading ages and comprehension. Students have grown in reading confidence as they are now able to finish a book and gain good marks on a comprehension quiz. Moving up colours has also improved their self-belief.

We have a 'Millionaires' Club' board to mark the achievements of students who have read a significant number of words. It is updated weekly and great excitement is shown by the students that have read the most. A reward is given termly to the winning group, usually an exclusive DVD showing in the library. (Book related of course!)

All of our year 7 and 8 students have lessons in the library every two weeks. Most of the time is spent silently reading and quizzing.

AR has also been a means to develop relationships with parents. Home Connect is a brilliant resource enabling parents to support their child and encourage reading and comprehension from home, while regular updates on levels reached are given at school parents' evenings. The AR Diagnostic reports are printed fortnightly for all English teachers and librarians. The information is clearly presented, so we have been able to implement intervention strategies at an early stage where necessary.

The library has shown an extremely large increase in both books issued and library usage. Students are choosing appropriate books to read and are therefore able to complete their book and borrow another rather than being ashamed of not finishing a book because it was too challenging. All of our year 7 and 8 students have lessons in the library every two weeks. Most of the time is spent silently reading and quizzing. These have been so effective that it has been decided that our year 7 cohort will have a weekly library lesson from September.

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