

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Maltings Academy
Witham, Essex

Maltings Academy (MTA) is a medium sized mixed comprehensive secondary school with approximately 1000 students on roll. Previously known as the John Bramston School, a school known to be very challenging, it was placed under special measures. The school was then taken on by the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) in 2008, when it became Maltings Academy.



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Data review

OFSTED

Reading culture

Library use

Staff Engagement

AR™ implementation leads to a revitalised library and OFSTED success at academy in Essex

In recent years, Maltings Academy has been transformed: Having been given a 3, 'Requires Improvement', by OFSTED in 2013, it was recently assessed as a 1, 'Outstanding', in 2015. The school has also seen a vast change in the students' attitudes towards reading. "There were undoubtedly some very able readers," says Library Manager Aislinn McFadden, "but generally speaking, reading was very uncool, and the few readers we had certainly didn't publicise the fact." Today, however, reading at Maltings Academy is very different. "It's very hard to imagine how things were" says Aislinn. "Things in the library are so different now – it's so full of life, a real buzz, with students of all ability levels loving and feeling the benefit of reading, feeling that suddenly they are really achieving... What is really magical about Accelerated Reader (AR) is the way the students help each other! They want to share some great book they've found, or introduce their latest favourite series to others in the group. They want to talk about the latest author they've discovered, and hear others do the same!"

All students in years 7 through 9 have an AR lesson once every two weeks, during which Diagnostic reports from STAR are used to address any particular areas of concern. These

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are also sent to tutors several times each half term to help them assess the progress their students are making. "The regular use of the very user friendly data means that we can monitor progress and concerns very easily," says Aislinn, "and the regular use of STAR to retest for growth is excellent evidence of impact." The school has also introduced 20 minute DEAR – 'Drop Everything And Read' – sessions, which have helped improve the students' relationship with reading across the school. These sessions have been described as 'highly effective' by OFSTED at developing the reading abilities of students who join the academy with weaker literacy skills. "They spent lots of time talking to the students," Aislinn says about the OFSTED inspectors, "and observed DEAR on more than one occasion, once again very impressed with how the students freely engaged with their books."


Reading at Maltings Academy was given particularly high praise in the recent OFSTED Report:

'Students read exceptionally widely, can discuss their favourite authors, and make significant gains in their reading ages, such that they are often ahead of their chronological ages.'

AR proved to be highly useful in preparing for the inspection, and went over very well with the inspectors. Aislinn notes: “As Library manager, I was seen by 3 of 4 inspectors, and without exception they were very impressed with the way we run AR here at MTA, and more importantly, the impact it has made. The average increase in Reading Age over 3 years of 2 – 2.5 years impressed them hugely, but even more so, the way our students spoke to them of favourite books and authors.” Aislinn feels that AR really helped the school prepare for OFSTED. “It was superb evidence this inspection. It helped greatly that the inspectors were much keener to discuss AR this time. It was a definite focus, and I was interviewed 3 times, as I said. The reports are very user friendly, so when presented with the growth over 3 years on the programme, its impact was irrefutable. They were really impressed, and said so which was lovely for our young people.”

This literacy boost across the school has also been reflected in the school’s GCSE results. Before AR, GCSE results were below the expected government minimum, and students joining the school tend to have below average attainment. In spite of this, the proportion of students attaining 5 A*-C grades, including English and Maths, at GCSE is above the national average. OFSTED described this as ‘outstanding progress’. Disadvantaged students have also benefitted greatly from the Academy’s improvements. The attainment gap between disadvantaged students and other students has narrowed greatly in recent years, with, according to OFSTED, the proportion of disadvantaged students who make expected progress in English ahead of the national average in 2014. They also noted that ‘disabled students and those who have special educational needs usually make outstanding progress from their individual starting points.’

Alongside initiatives such as DEAR, as well as enthusiastic, dedicated teachers and members of staff, the effective implementation of Accelerated Reader has helped to revolutionise reading at Maltings Academy. “The library is packed daily, with quizzers, and students just hanging out watching them! With over 10,000 quizzes taken last year, over 387 million words, and 110 Word millionaires, it’s been a good year at MTA on AR!”



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