

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Bristol Brunel Academy
Bristol, Avon

Bristol Brunel Academy is a larger than average Secondary Academy with around 1,100 students on roll. An inner city school, it has an above average proportion of students for whom English is an additional language (20%) and students eligible for Free School Meals (30%). It has a high Pupil Premium percentage (41%), and 5% of the students have Special Educational Needs. Entry literacy levels are typically well below average.



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OFSTED: Accelerated Reader™ helping students develop a love of reading at a Bristol academy

Bristol Brunel Academy is now in its fifth year of using AR. “We had seen Accelerated Reader™ used in other schools,” says librarian Sarah Middleton. “We were keen to implement it due to the low literacy levels students have on entry. We also wanted to give the library a higher profile.”

As a result of AR, the Academy has seen a huge increase in library usage, which has been spurred on by the way the school has implemented it. “We use AR with years 7 & 8, but now in our fifth year, all year groups have participated,” Sarah says. “For these two years each student has a timetabled library lesson once a week. Reading and quizzing is set as weekly homework for them. We have 18 library lessons per week, involving 430 students. As a result we see over 10,000 book loans per year!”

It isn’t just library usage that has improved, but also the students’ attitudes towards the library and towards reading in general. “It’s made a real difference during student free times,” says Sarah. “You can see over a hundred students in, during break or lunch, reading for pleasure or quizzing. The library is definitely not considered ‘uncool’, ‘nerdy’ or ‘geeky!’”

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OFSTED

Library Use

Data Review

Reading Culture

Reading for Pleasure

Pupil Premium

Accelerated Reader’s role in promoting a passion for reading amongst students has not gone unnoticed by OFSTED. In their most recent report on the academy in 2013, where their grading of the school improved from 3, ‘Requires Improvement’, to 2, ‘Good’, OFSTED wrote the following:

Year 7 catch-up premium funding and the academy’s accelerated reader programme have been well targeted in helping younger students to develop a love of reading while ensuring that they gain quickly the skills they need.

“We have used Pupil Premium funding to go towards AR,” Sarah says. “During the inspection, I asked the Principal to invite an inspector into the library while an AR lesson was going on. I showed the inspector the STAR data for that class. He spoke to a couple of students about their reading (one had over 3 years in Reading Age growth). This successful student informed the inspector that he put his growth down to reading often and pushing himself to read higher level books.” OFSTED made a number of observations about the remarkable improvement of the academy in their report, also noting that:

“The performance of students in 2012 shows the academy to be amongst the 100 best improving schools in terms of the progress students make between Key Stage 2 results and their GCSEs.

Students’ standards of attainment on entry to Year 7 in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly below the national average. From these low starting points, their attainment has been rising faster than in other schools nationally over the past three years. The number of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A to C rose sharply during this period.*

The academy monitors the progress of individuals rigorously. Effective use is made of additional funding received through the pupil premium. The average point scores for these students in English and mathematics are below those of other students, but are improving rapidly.”

Bristol Brunel Academy has enjoyed success not just with AR, but also with STAR Reading™. “We use the STAR reports often, liaising with the English Department to determine progress, Reading Ages and levels,” Sarah says. “Student Reading Ages have now also been included in our main SIMS database, which are then in turn included in student school reports. I present the growth data to SLT as a bar chart, which gives a clear visual display of progress through the year across all classes.” The school also makes use of STAR independently, with students who do not use AR: “Students in Year 9 and above would not normally be tested on their Reading Ages after leaving the AR program, so we purchased 30 additional licenses to be used for KS4 STAR Testing.

The English Department has used these a number of times, and it gives teaching staff a better picture of student attainment.” AR and STAR have also proven useful in communicating student progress to parents. “I am present at parent evenings to discuss student reading ages and progress with parents,” says Sarah. “I also give them a full presentation of the AR programme, and demonstrate the Renaissance Home Connect function to them, where they can opt to receive an email every time their child completes a quiz, informing them of the results.”

The school also makes effective use of incentives to encourage their students to engage further with reading. Sarah says: “We have implemented a termly House competition using AR targets & quizzing. Tutor groups gain hundreds of house points depending on the most targets hit and most quizzes passed. This is presented in assembly with certificates and a trophy, which stands on the House shelf in the main foyer of the academy. We also have a Word Millionaires display board in the library, for students who have read over one million words, and I use Twitter frequently to celebrate the success of our readers. At the

end of the year, we present trophies and certificates in assemblies to the most successful readers in terms of quizzes passed and number of books borrowed. This information is also included in the Academy Newsletter which is issued to the Academy community and will be included on the new Academy website.”

Overall, it seems that Accelerated Reader has changed the reading ethos at the Academy for good. “Since implementation, I can safely say there is a strong reading culture now in school,” says Sarah. “It is an integral part of school life.”



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