

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Desborough College,  
Maidenhead, Berkshire

Desborough College is a boys' comprehensive school (11-18) with a co-educational sixth form in Maidenhead, Berkshire with around 700 pupils. It is part of The Education Fellowship academy trust.



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## Boys are reading for pleasure following AR™ implementation at Maidenhead boys' secondary school

Desborough College originally implemented Accelerated Reader (AR) in 2013 due to the belief that reading is a vital skill to succeed across the curriculum. "Senior leaders, the Head of Literacy and myself felt that, as evidence points to reading being the key to success in all subjects as well as helping pupils to feel secure within the world, it was important to establish a reading culture," says Alison Hallissey, the School Librarian. "I had helped implement AR in another school and seen how useful and successful it could be. The library was being under-utilised, and as it is such a fantastic resource we wanted it to be at the heart of the school and to help create a reading culture. It was also felt that some pupils were starting school with a reading age that was lower than their actual age and they required a programme to help them catch up. Some Pupil Premium money has been used to help fund Accelerated Reader so that those pupils are given the best opportunity to improve through reading."

Following the school's implementation of AR, Alison has noticed that a lot has changed around reading at the school. "With dedicated library lessons for all pupils in years 7 and 8 there has been a substantial increase in the number of books borrowed and read from

*“Encouraging boys to read within their range has allowed them to flourish*

the library. Pupils are also reading more for pleasure and enjoyment and are keen to ask for suggestions from staff and peers." Making use of AR's ability to track the total number of words read by the students, the school incentivises reading by recognising "Word Millionaires": students who have read one million words or more throughout the year. "As all our year 7 and 8 boys are on the programme they are collectively motivated and enjoy the competitive element of the millionaire status," Alison says. "They are aware of the boys that have made it to millionaire status and want to emulate them."

During their inspection in 2014, OFSTED also noticed the love of reading for pleasure that had spread amongst the boys, stating in their report that:

*'There are regular opportunities for students to read simply for pleasure in the school day as part of the Learning Resource Centre's range of programmes.'*

*'Funding has helped provide an accelerated reading programme for students who have fallen behind. In discussions, students who had received extra help were very positive about how their reading was improving and were confident when reading aloud.'*

Reading for pleasure

Progress Monitoring

Boys

Gender

OFSTED

*'The achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals has improved. They are quickly closing the gap with other students in the college.'*

"Every boy on the programme has a folder in the library with a reading log stating their ZPD range, as measured by STAR Reading, as well as all their quiz results," Alison explains. "Teachers also have access to all the data and growth. This helped with the OFSTED inspection because we were able to demonstrate improvements and growth using the data as evidence."

STAR Reading's ability to define a student's ZPD range, the recommended reading difficulty range from which a student should be selecting books to optimise their growth, has also proved useful in other respects: "Encouraging boys to read within their range has allowed them to flourish," says Alison. "Sometimes, before joining the school, they were choosing books that were too challenging for them and as a result they stopped reading. Once they realised they could achieve 100% on a book quiz by reading within their range, they were motivated to read more and subsequently their reading age has gone up. We've also been able to encourage high ability boys, who often read books that were quite easy for them, to read more challenging books, as we know from their STAR results that they are capable of doing so. When they read them, they've found that they actually enjoy reading those books and stretching themselves." The school also makes use of the Reading Dashboard, an interface which brings together data from AR and STAR to enable teachers to monitor progress at an individual, class or group level: "STAR Reading results as well as CAT tests have been used when looking at classes. We do use the Dashboard and STAR data to look at which pupils would benefit from intervention and Mrs. McDonald runs six week programmes for those who may need additional help or techniques to improve their reading skills. It is also used to spot pupils who need to expand their reading choices with more variety."

"Accelerated Reader has helped staff better understand the pupils in terms of what they like to read," says Alison. "They can now chat about their shared love of graphic novels, or any particular genre." With this in mind, Alison feels that, with the help of dedicated and committed staff, AR has helped to consolidate a reading culture at the school: "A number of pupils have said that they did not like reading before they joined the school and that now they love it. They enjoy quizzing and seeing the number of words read mount up, as well as the rewards for achievement. Older pupils are envious of the scheme, and wish it had been available to them when they were in Year 7!"

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