

RENAISSANCE®

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Blackminster Middle School,
Evesham, Worcestershire

Blackminster Middle School is a Middle School with over 240 students on roll, covering years 6-8. Linda McQuone, the school's Deputy Head, discusses the impact that the implementation of Renaissance Accelerated Reader has had.



Find out more
renlearn.co.uk/partofthestory

Curriculum Access

Library Use

Motivation

Student Engagement

Improved results across the curriculum at Worcestershire Middle School

Introducing Renaissance Accelerated Reader

We began using Accelerated Reader at Blackminster in 2011 with our Year 6, expanding it to include Year 7 in 2012 and Year 8 in 2013. We were looking for ways to improve our reading, partly to improve our reading SATs results, but also because we had identified that in other subject areas, especially maths, it was reading and lack of comprehension of the questions that was holding children back. Another local middle school was using Accelerated Reader, and were really happy with the results they were getting. We went to visit, and were really impressed as well, so decided to give it a go.

Now we're using it with the whole school, we're really seeing the maximum benefit. We used to implement Accelerated Reader in English lessons, having one library lesson per week dedicated to Accelerated Reader, but now we focus our daily afternoon registration periods around it.

We've become much more confident in our book purchasing decisions and our book targeting because of that guidance, and the library has become richer and better used as a result.

When we first introduced it, one of the things we wanted to do was to move away from reading being just a matter for the English department, we wanted reading to be about the whole child and the whole curriculum, and for that to be everyone's responsibility. Now we've integrated Accelerated Reader into tutor periods, tutors receive copies of all the reports from Accelerated Reader, and we included all staff in the training provided by Renaissance, so every teacher in every subject knows how to interpret the data and can have conversations with their tutees about what they are reading. We've found that it has made tutor time about much more than registration and admin, and also ensures that every child gets 25 minutes of daily allotted reading time. We also have a whiteboard on each teacher's door, with their name on, and what they are reading. It all contributes to constant drip reinforcing that reading is what we do here, that it's important, enjoyable, and we all do it.

Targetting and tailoring the library

The library has gotten much more popular, and much more relevant, since introducing Accelerated Reader. We've found it really useful to have the guidance from Renaissance about difficulty levels and interest levels of books. We have some children who, mechanically, are reading at an adult level, but of course you need to be careful with those children that you aren't presenting them with material that isn't appropriate for them, or books that they aren't likely to be interested in or enjoy. Similarly, for children who don't read so well, it's nice to be able to identify books they can access but that aren't patronising and silly. We've become much more confident in our book purchasing decisions and our book targeting because of that guidance, and the library has become richer and better used as a result.

The benefits of Accelerated Reader

We make sure we celebrate reading with certificates and rewards, noticeboards to celebrate success, and recognition of word millionaires: children who have read over a million words throughout the school year. By far the most successful incentive however was when, one term, myself and the Head Teacher offered, if the whole school could read 50 million words, to hire sumo costumes and have a sumo wrestling match! Of course, they read the 50 million within 9 weeks. That was a brilliant year, the average gain in reading age was 15 months over the whole year.

I'm a big believer in the phrase, 'there is no such thing as children who don't like to read, there are just those who haven't found the right book.' The more you can get children to read, and the more authors, genres and variety you can engage them with, the greater the chance you have of hitting the right book. My favourite thing about Accelerated Reader is being able to say to a child: "I'm really glad you enjoyed this book, have you tried this other one as well?" We do get children who have tried a book because it's within their reading range and have found that they love it, and others who didn't realise how much an author had written and have gone and found other books by them that they want to read, which is lovely to see.

We wanted to bring in Accelerated Reader because we'd seen it work, we wanted to get the maximum benefit and we wanted to see benefits across the curriculum. In fact, probably the most enthusiastic person about Accelerated Reader in our school is the Head of Maths, because she's seen such an improvement in reading and understanding the question. We're seeing a lot more reading, and we're seeing better SATs results with reading, I think we're also seeing more conversations around books, and more understanding of the enjoyment of it, rather than just something being done at school. I really like the guidance and structure of Accelerated Reader – it gives you confidence that the reading being done is enjoyable, but is also providing a real academic benefit.



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