

RENAISSANCE®

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Christ the Redeemer
Primary School,
Belfast, County Antrim

Christ the Redeemer Primary School is a large primary school, with 600 pupils on roll, which opened in 1999. Liam O'Hare, KS2 and Accelerated Reader Coordinator at the school, discusses his experiences with the programme.



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Developing Reading Comprehension and Engagement at County Antrim Primary School

Introducing Renaissance Accelerated Reader

We have been using Renaissance Accelerated Reader since 2010. Before then, independent reading in the school mainly took place through visits to the school library, as well as the class teacher providing levelled reading books to the children. The children visited the library once a week and selected a book of choice. The teacher had no real input into the level or complexity of the books being selected, and there was no way of really knowing whether the children had read or understood the book. The levelled books were selected by the class teacher, and so the children had no choice in the book they were being sent home to read. Furthermore, the books were selected to suit the reading ability of a particular group and not necessarily tailored towards the individual reading ability of each child. It was also at this stage that we as a school decided to tackle the issue of underachieving boys, and so we were on the lookout for a new initiative to spark a love of reading amongst the children and raise reading levels in the school.

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Having heard about Accelerated Reader, we decided to visit a Primary School in Derry which had implemented the programme and were duly blown away its potential. We decided to purchase the programme for a year, and so brought it into Key Stage 2, at first piloting it in my own P5 class, before extending it to the other two P5 classes and then further into P6 and P7.

Improving reading standards

Over the course of the past five years the programme has gone from strength to strength and is now a key aspect of learning in Key Stage 2. The initial problems we experienced in 2010 regarding children not reading have now been completely resolved, as the data gained from Accelerated Reader indicates that in 2010 the children read an accumulative nine million words (2000 books), whilst by the end of 2015 almost forty-four million words (9000 books) had been read. More importantly for us as a school was the fact that comprehension levels were improving - as indicated by the average percentage of questions the children were getting correct.

Student Engagement

Reading Comprehension

Reading for pleasure

Personalised practice

Data review

Student Engagement

In 2010 the average percentage of questions the children were getting correct stood at 76.4% and has shown an upward rise ever since, with the children answering 88.1% of their questions correctly in 2014-15. Our data shows that all children are engaging in independent reading and whilst there are still one or two reluctant readers, the data highlights these children so support measures can be put in place.

The feedback from Accelerated Reader directly impacts our planning and teaching. For example, analysis of our results showed that the children tend to read a much higher number of fiction books than non-fiction. For example, in 2014/15 the children had read 94% fiction and only 6% non-fiction. We sought to address this by ordering in more non-fiction books and adding them to our Accelerated Reader library as well as encouraging teachers to read more non-fiction texts in Shared Reading sessions. The children were also encouraged to read at least one non-fiction book out of every five books read.

Assessing ability and planning intervention with Star Reading

The data that the programme produces is exceptional and has given the teachers more confidence in not only the reading groups they have placed their children in, but that the reading material they are giving their children is pitched at the correct level.

Star allows us to identify those children who need an intervention programme and subsequently track their progress over the course of the year. It also allows the teacher to track progress within the year in terms of each individual child's reading. The comparison of their reading ability with the national average of children of a similar age, allows the teachers to see where the children fall in a national setting.

Star Reading is also an excellent tool to enable us to set targets for those children on Individual Educational Plans. Many of the targets set involve the children improving their reading age, which can easily be monitored via the Student Progress Monitoring report. Information from Star Reading tests is also passed on to the following year's teacher through our transition forms and so ensure that the teachers have an accurate picture of the reading ability of those children coming into their class.

Encouraging a love of reading

A love of reading has been instilled throughout Key Stage 2: the instantaneous feedback provided after completing a quiz, the points targets set, the subsequent prizes to be won and the children being allowed to select their own books are some of the main factors in children's enjoyment of Accelerated Reader, which they reported in recent questionnaires we distributed concerning their views of the programme. Indeed, the data gained from the Star Reading tests is used to direct children to select reading materials which are suited to their reading ability. This means that they are not becoming frustrated by reading books that are too difficult and complex, or being de-motivated because they are reading books that are too easy. In addition, data from the Accelerated Reader quizzes quickly allows the teacher to see if a child has understood the book they have read.

Feedback from parents has been phenomenal with many parents indicating that their children, who previously were reluctant readers, are now reading independently. Parents of children with Special Educational Needs have become more aware of their child's reading age and their involvement in trying to improve upon it through targets set at increasing their reading age. Accelerated Reader has been a major success in the eyes of all the major stakeholders in the school. It has made a huge difference to the children's attitudes to reading and provided the spark some needed to develop a love of reading. The children love the programme.

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