

RENAISSANCE®

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

St Joseph's Primary School,  
County Armagh

St Joseph's Primary School is a rural school with over 130 pupils on roll. Paud Loughran, the school's Principal, describes the tremendous impact Accelerated Reader has had on reading at the school.



Find out more  
[renlearn.co.uk/partofthestory](http://renlearn.co.uk/partofthestory)

**Incentives**

**Motivation**

**Progress monitoring**

**Reading culture**

**Reading for pleasure**

**Student engagement**

'Renaissance Accelerated Reader is the most motivational reading programme I have seen in almost 30 years of teaching'

## Implementing Accelerated Reader

We originally implemented Accelerated Reader in 2012, from P3-P7, having looked for new ways to motivate our children to read. We visited some other schools who were using the programme to see it in action, and we knew even then that the programme would motivate our students to read in a way that others could not. Setting up the programme wasn't hugely challenging from a technological standpoint. We changed a lot within the library to take account of Accelerated Reader, and wanted to arrange things so that children could visit the library and access books at the appropriate level for them as easily and quickly as possible. This was the most labour-intensive part of the setup, but after the initial work it has just been a matter of updating the library with new books, and things run very smoothly. Children are often very keen to take a quiz as soon as they come in in the morning, so we arranged for the ICT suite to be open from 8:30 every morning for this purpose. Children are also able to take quizzes on iPads if the suite is full, and we find this system works very well.

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## An unprecedented impact on reading

I've been teaching for nearly 30 years, and have been a principal for over 20. I would say that this is the most motivational programme I have come across in my career. Over the course of 30 years of teaching we have tried numerous ways of promoting reading, all with varying degrees of success, but nothing that we have put in place over those 30 years has come anywhere near the motivational aspect of Accelerated Reader: nothing has produced anything like the upturn in results, and nothing has motivated boys as successfully. I would safely say that this programme has raised reading standards within our school, which I would say were very satisfactory, to the point now where they are absolutely excellent at every level of ability, and particularly with our reluctant boys, who are very motivated by the programme. Children are more enthused, the standard of reading is increasing substantially in terms of difficulty level and we're seeing children read deeper and longer texts – all of which we see as evidence of children improving their reading habits.

Even before we were able to meaningfully analyse the impact of the programme from a data perspective, within our first couple of weeks, the first indicator to me that Accelerated Reader was going to be a success in our school was when I came across a boy in the corridor, who I knew to be a very reluctant reader, and he was reading a book while walking. He was nearing the end of the book, and told me that 'it was only 60 pages long.' This was a child who previously would have struggled to read 3 pages, so that was a very strong indicator to me that we had struck something. When the data started coming in we were amazed, and since then things have continued to improve to the point that we can see year on year that the level of reading going on in our school is incredible compared to what it had been previously.

The children really enjoy the opportunity to read and take a quiz because the feedback is immediate. There's a sense of satisfaction, they can visually see progress being made on the screen, and they can visually see that they are moving towards their target. It's a great sense of accomplishment for them whenever they achieve success; they're very proud and are practically running down the corridor to tell the teachers when they have reached their target or got 100% on a quiz. And because they are reading books within their Zone of Proximal Development they are all going to achieve success, because they won't be reading books that are frustrating for them, and in that regard the programme is truly motivational.

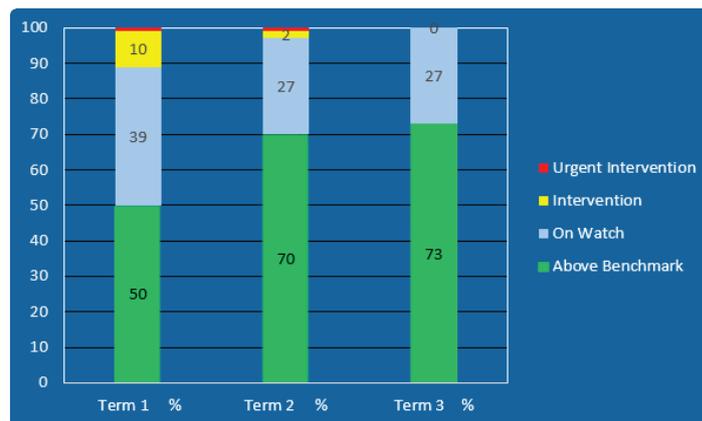
### Spreading reading motivation throughout the school

We have implemented a large number of rewards and incentives alongside Accelerated Reader, which children find very motivating: we have a weekly 'star reader', which is not a data based award but recognises a child who, from a teacher's perspective, has improved in terms of the effort they are putting into their reading. We also have a weekly reward, based on Accelerated Reader data, for the child who has read the most words that week in every class, there's a reward for any child who has reached their points target, any child who has achieved 100% on a quiz, and also a team reward for reading, based on particular teams the children are allocated into.

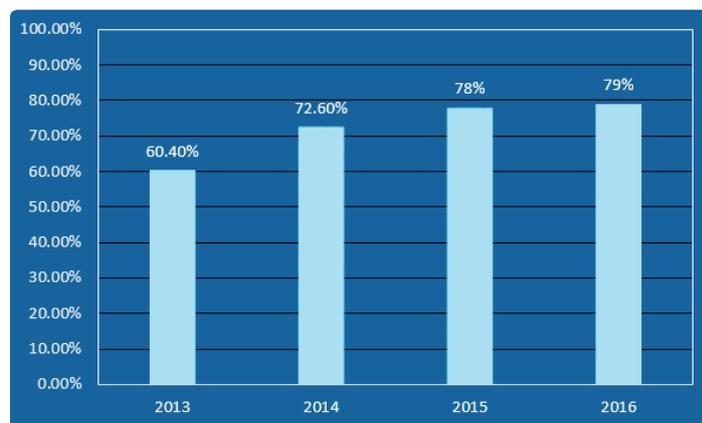
In the context of the classroom, silent reading time for instance would have been an opportunity in the past for some children who weren't as motivated with reading to take some time out. We see now though that silent reading has become more purposeful, and children are using this time appropriately: they are more motivated to read the text

and read it carefully, and therefore we can see that they are more switched on with their reading than they used to be.

For our teachers, their obligation is to check daily the children's ZPD level, and asking what book they're on to ensure they're reading at an appropriate level. We check the diagnostic report weekly to make sure that everyone is on track and on target, and to see if any intervention is needed, which we then put in place. As a result, teachers are more conscious of struggling students, and we're then able to support them through teaching strategies, classroom assistants and by tailoring specific work for them.



Student reading levels across the 2014/15 school year



Proportion of children reading at or above their chronological age

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We aim for children to read for at least 45 minutes per day – 30 minutes scheduled into the school day and 15 minutes at home, and ask parents to support us in this. We often find that children surpass this, because we are motivating them and Accelerated Reader motivates them to achieve these standards.

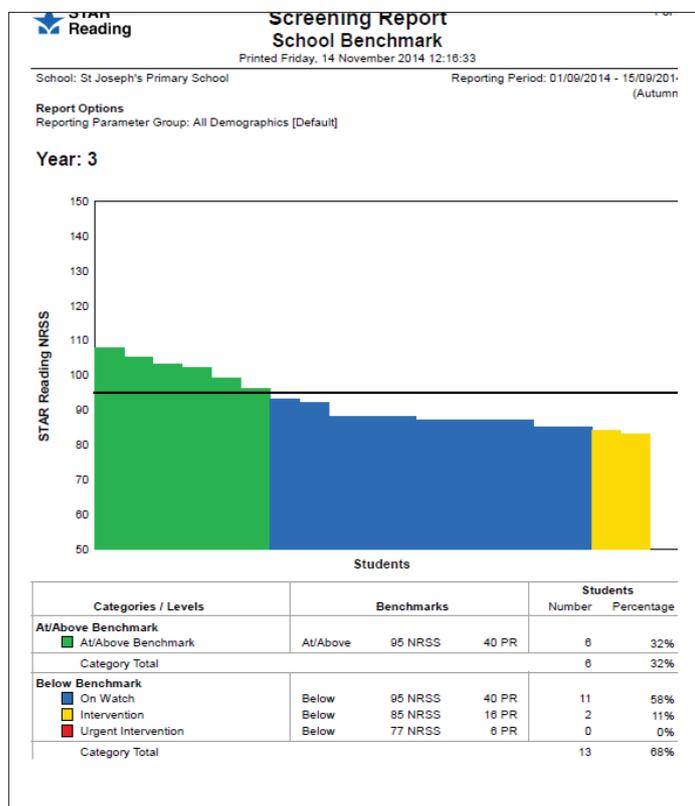
## Illustrating success to parents and inspectors

We recently had a parents' evening, where I was able to take parents through 4 years of data and illustrate year on year how children had progressed through the programme, and we could demonstrate how Accelerated Reader is highly stimulating and highly engaging for the children. The data is clear, and enables parents to see this progress with their own eyes. We had informed them previously of how they can log in through Renaissance Home Connect and view their child's results, and receive instant alerts when they complete a quiz. The opportunity for them to receive instant feedback on their child's performance, and what they are reading, enables them to have these conversations with their children around the dinner table, and the rewards for parents can be much more immediate.

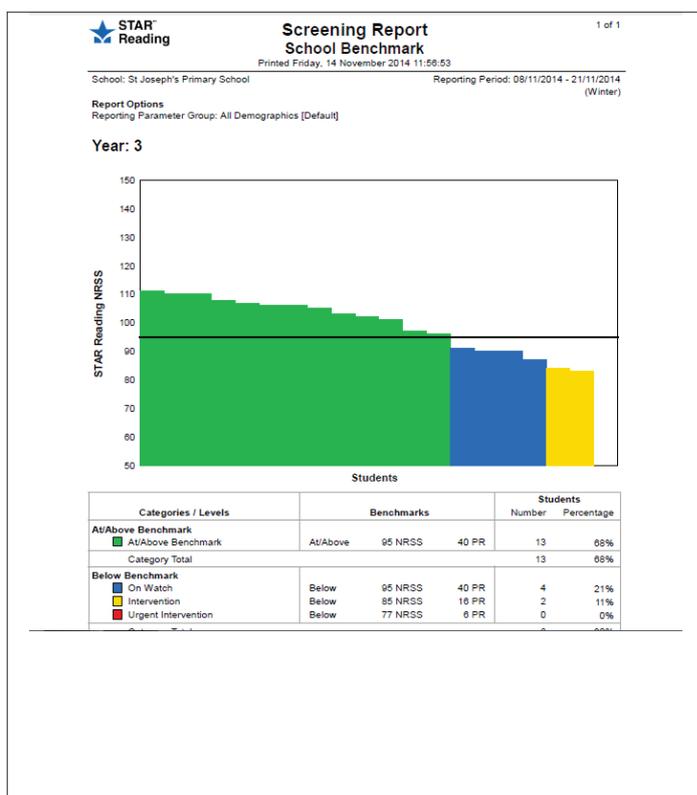
We underwent an inspection from the ETI last year, who rated us as outstanding. We were able to use data from Accelerated Reader to clearly illustrate the success our children were achieving with reading, and could show for instance that 90% of our children were making progress in line with or above expectation, or that the proportion of children reading at or above their chronological age has increased by 20% since we introduced the programme. At the other end of the spectrum, we could also show how we identified students who excelled with their reading, and how we used the programme to stretch them a bit in terms of their reading. They were very interested in the programme and very interested in the progress children were making. We could prove that we as a school were not only raising standards in that particular year, but year on year, and that this was hugely down to our implementation of Accelerated Reader.

## A typical class improvement journey

These charts show the progression of a P3 class throughout the 2014/15 academic year.



Term 1

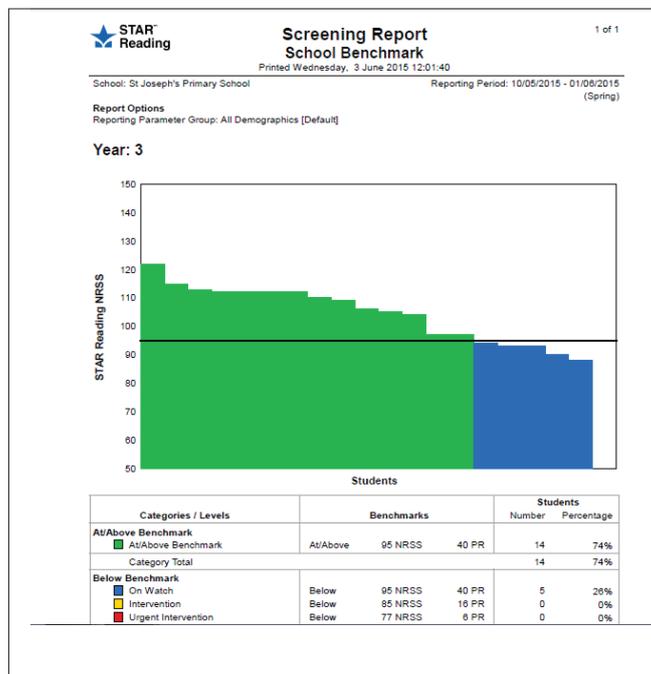


Term 2

## Making the most of Accelerated Reader

When we initially invested in Accelerated Reader, we had a responsibility to demonstrate that this investment was wise, and that the work and thought we had put into implementing it would prove worthwhile. In terms of establishing our baseline, I felt it was important to be able to answer questions like, 'how many children experience reading success at this school?' 'Where is our school in terms of achievement and progress?' 'What does reading success look like here?' Whilst we would have carried out this analysis on a class by class basis, I wanted to be able to drill down into this data at an individual, class and whole school level. When we looked at our data throughout our first year the impact was clear, and we were able to continue to encourage extraordinary progress ever since.

For us, fundamentally we would see reading as a basis upon which children are going to experience success or failure on their educational journey, and if reading isn't established as an enjoyable habit from an early age then children are not going to be able to access the curriculum in a way that will enable them to experience success throughout primary school, and we want to ensure that children are leaving our school as confident young children ready for the next stage of their education, and we can't do that unless they have a competent level of reading ability. Our school maximises the potential of Accelerated Reader, and that's why it's so successful: if it's implemented properly, and thought goes into the implementation process, and the planning, preparation and rewards alongside then the programme absolutely will succeed, and that's totally different from anything we have experienced in the past.



### Term 3

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