

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

**Faughanvale Primary School,**  
Faughanvale, County Londonderry

Faughanvale Primary School is a rural primary school of 199 pupils. With the exception of one year group, the school is single form entry and the majority of attending children come from the surrounding area. The school has used Renaissance Accelerated Reader™ with all 84 children in KS2 since 2013 – Ciaran O'Hare, Vice Principal, Assessment Coordinator and P6 Teacher, describes the impact the programme has had on the school.



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**Intervention**

**Motivation**

**Non-Fiction**

**Reading culture**

**Reading for pleasure**

**Target setting**

# Establishing a reading culture using literacy data

## Before Accelerated Reader

Prior to the introduction of Accelerated Reader™ in 2013 independent reading in the school was completed through visits to the school library; as a result it was difficult to gauge how much independent reading the children were doing. Furthermore, we couldn't determine whether they understood what they read during their independent reading time. The books children read independently were picked randomly and not supported by an accurate knowledge of their reading ability and knowledge of the level and complexity of the books they were selecting. In many respects, for some children, reading was seen as a chore and parents often spoke of their difficulty in encouraging their children to read at home or finding the right type of book that their child would find interesting.

Therefore, as a school we required a new initiative to spark a love of reading amongst the children, and in doing so raise reading levels in the school. We were very aware of Accelerated Reader™ from other schools

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across Northern Ireland and some of the teachers had used the programme in schools prior to joining our own school. Based on this and the positive reports we'd heard about Accelerated Reader™ we decided to purchase the programme for Key Stage 2.

## Introducing Accelerated Reader

Overall, a very definite reading culture has been developed within the school since we began using Accelerated Reader™. Each year we have seen the programme develop to become a mainstay in the school. As we have become more familiar with the software, we have introduced new ideas which have kept the programme fresh and maintained the initial reading drive. The fact that we can constantly see the impact the programme is having on the children makes this an easy and extremely worthwhile task.

In 2013 479 books were read, totalling almost 1,300,000 words. Last year the children read an accumulative 6,900,000 million words (2,324 books).

Whilst we recognise the relevance of the word count, more important to us is the percentage of quiz questions children are getting right, and we've seen that increase from an average of 57% in 2013 to 76% so far this year. As children select their own books, we know that what they are reading is of interest to them, and we know they are capable of passing their quizzes because they are reading within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), so have set ourselves a target to improve this further next year.

Children have become much more effective at personal target setting. Parents and teachers are all aware of children's points targets, and so all stakeholders in the school are able to work together and support children. The instantaneous feedback from quizzes is an exciting aspect of the programme as they see themselves moving ever closer to their personalised target.

With Accelerated Reader™, we're not only able to set these individual targets and track progress towards them, but can also set ourselves targets as a school, and inform them with data.

### **Assessing progress and attainment year-round**

We administer the Renaissance Star Reading™ test 5 times per year. As a classroom teacher, the fact that I can administer a reading test at various times throughout the year, and have absolute faith that the results are an accurate reflection of the comprehension abilities of the children in my class, means I am able to group children accordingly, pitch work to their level and differentiate with confidence.

Star results are monitored by individual teachers and the Accelerated Reader Co-ordinator. The ranked summary report provided by Star gives the teachers more confidence in the reading groups they place the children in and help ensure that the literacy work set is pitched at the correct level. The Star screening report allows us to identify those children who need an intervention programme. We're able to assess the impact of this intervention by comparing the growth reports both before and after the intervention period. In this way the Star Reading test has become a key part in the setting of SMART Individual Education Plan targets.

In my role as the Assessment co-ordinator in the school, I have seen the impact that a minimum of 25 minutes of engaged daily reading time has on the children in my class through the growth reports. I can also gain a picture

of how the children are progressing throughout the Key Stage, identify those who are Gifted and Talented as well as pinpointing underachievers when compared to the national average. We can then put appropriate strategies in place to ensure everyone is working at the right level, and can grow and develop.

### **Solidifying a reading culture in school**

The most positive aspect of Accelerated Reader is how much the children enjoy using the programme. The independent nature of Accelerated Reader means they select their own books to read, whilst the novelty of taking an online quiz certainly has not worn off.

Feedback from parents has been very positive with many parents indicating that their children, who previously were reluctant readers, are now reading independently. The fact that parents can log on from home and see their children's performance in their last quiz, the books they have read and their progress towards their target means that they are more aware of what their child is doing in school.

Data from Accelerated Reader has directly impacted our planning. For example, analysis of our data indicates that the children are reading predominately fiction books. As a result we've aimed to address this by ordering in more non-fiction books and adding them to our library. The children will also be encouraged to read at least one non-fiction book out of every five books read. As a school we're also aiming to introduce more non-fiction texts into our shared, guided and reciprocal reading sessions so as to provide the children with as much exposure as possible to a range of texts and genres. In this way, we as a school are becoming more reflective towards our planning and subsequent teaching based on the data provided.

We are delighted with the impact the Accelerated Reader programme has had on our school. An initiative such as this which sparks a genuine interest and enthusiasm for reading is invaluable to us as a school. The children are reading like they've never read before.



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