

# Parents truly amazed by the amount of time their children spend reading at home

## CARRADALE PRIMARY, ARGYLL

### Scale of the challenge

Only a small proportion of the 38 pupils at Carradale Primary, the small village school in Kintyre, Argyll, qualify for free meals. The school sits in a beautiful area where tourism increasingly adds to the local prosperity. In fact many families would regard themselves as relatively "comfortable" - and for the school that was part of a problem.

To head teacher Marion Morris, many of her charges were hooked into the electronic age, spending time watching TV, playing computer games or logging on to the internet.

She would see them indifferently turning the pages of books set for exercises and then be presented with scappily presented written work that showed only the barest minimum of effort.

"The school has the varied mix you would expect to find in a village like this", she says "But there was little enthusiasm for reading. Everything about the set-book work spelled 'boredom' in capital letters. It became my trigger for action."

### Implementation

Marion remembered that another school in the region had successfully piloted Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader and decided to send off for the company's "box of tricks".

She was impressed - so much so that she asked a representative to come along and show her more, after which she decided to explain the system to the school board, the parents and the children themselves.

They shared her enthusiasm and she pressed ahead, introducing it to the whole school, which is equally divided into two classes of 18 spanning the ages 5-11, in spring, 2005.

As part of the induction process she carried out an audit of the school's entire library stock, taking shelves of "dust covered" books and setting aside those that matched the Accelerated Reader quizzes.

Then she photo-copied their covers, stapled several together in individual batches, handed them out, and told pupils to go and get the ones that interested them.

With the help of the school's two other teachers – Marion is very much hands on herself – and a "very able" classroom assistant who cares for the five-year-olds, the system was launched with barely a hitch and a keen sense of anticipation.

## **Results**

Within months of its introduction, Accelerated Reader had stimulated such a motivational surge that Marion called a special parents' evening to explain how effective it was proving and how well their youngsters were doing.

She found feedback from the mums and dads highly instructive. "I spoke to every one of them and without exception they remarked on how much time their children were now spending on reading at home. One father said he was literally shocked at being asked by his child to actually buy a book!"

Follow-up progress letters to parents followed in January, 2006. Meanwhile, as a spin-off from Accelerated Reader the school has created a language scheme where pupils and teachers join in inter-active discussion about grammar, use of words and creativity.

"Accelerated Reader has impressed me immensely and proved a super addition to the school", Marion says. "No one speaks of being bored any more. It's become a dead word."