

Astonished to find so many gaps on library shelves!

HEATHCOTE SCHOOL, CHELMSFORD

Since the introduction of Accelerated Reader at Heathcote School in Chelmsford, not only have teachers been astonished by the increase in the amount of reading done by pupils but also by the improvement in their depth of literary knowledge. Shirley Charlton, former English Co-ordinator at Heathcote School says, *"Accelerated Reader is a resounding success in Years 4, 5 and 6 and it is to be extended across the whole school next year."*

Success has also been noticed by parents, one of whom states, *"I don't know what you've done to her but she won't stop reading. One says, It's not normal, she usually won't pick up a book."* This is just one of the many examples of positive feedback received by teachers at Heathcote School.

Accelerated Reader has brought about drastic changes in the library, as it has given pupils the ambition and enthusiasm to read. The school's library helpers cannot believe how many books have been taken out. *"It is not that the pupils not reading before they had Accelerated Reader, it is the vast array of genres they seem to be becoming interested in the software was installed that is surprising."*

There is a real feeling that pupils are pushing themselves, as they can read at their own speed and at their own appropriate level. This helps them to move onwards and upwards on their own. The library's old colour coding system worked to the schools advantage, as they incorporated the AR books to create colour bands for individual reading levels. Now pupils know their own reading level by colour, so choosing books is a really simple process. Once a pupil finishes a book they can immediately choose the next book they wish to read, thus enabling them to move onto the next reading level.

Accelerated Reader has the ability to give a pupil direct feedback. Evidence of their successes are printed on the TOPS report as soon as a test is complete, so pupils can assess their own abilities, before the teacher checks on everyone's performance on the weekly Diagnostic Report. As part of the 30 reports available, the diagnostic shows overall achievements of their class, identifying those in difficulties so the pupil can receive assistance when necessary.