

Fool-proof way of measuring comprehension

HOCKERILL ANGLO-EUROPEAN COLLEGE, BISHOPS STORTFORD

Scale of the challenge

Hockerill Anglo-European College in Bishops Stortford, one of the UK's first specialist language colleges, introduced the software-based reading system Accelerated Reader to its pupils from English and German backgrounds, as well as Italian, Japanese and Chinese.

As one of the Department for Education and Skills' leading-edge schools, Hockerill has a solid reputation. The challenge for the school was to meet the needs of its gifted and talented pupils as well as some students for whom English is their second language.

Implementation

The school installed Accelerated Reader in 2001. Members of the Parents' Association with special needs children held fundraisers to add to money from the library and special needs department.

The system is mainly used by Years 7 and 8, with Year 9 also having access. There are approximately 110 pupils in each year group in Years 7, 8 and 9. Barbara Shellard, Librarian, said "The English Department had the idea of Years 7 and 8 using Accelerated Reader in their fortnightly library lesson. This lesson works on the basis of pupils borrowing two fiction and two non-fiction books, one of which has to be from the Accelerated Reader scheme."

The school has six teachers using Accelerated Reader.

Barbara gives out book tokens as prizes to those pupils who have taken and passed the most quizzes.

Results

"Pupils took to the system from the outset, liking the mixture of technology and competition," said Barbara.

This increased interest in reading has led to noticeable improvements in pupils' reading and comprehension skills. Teachers have found it easy to link the system with class reading, and keep track of each individual's progress. The Head of English has seen reading levels go up in line with pupils' enthusiasm and interest.

What teachers say...

"A fool-proof way of measuring comprehension."

"It helps the pupils concentrate – a real boon!"

What pupils say....

"It's really motivating."

"A fun way to improve my English skills."

"This makes learning English fun!"