

The structure of the program helps the children obtain a purpose to their reading

RIMBLETON PRIMARY SCHOOL, GLENROTHES

Scale of the challenge

While every primary school is focused on improving reading skills, each needs to tailor its approach to its individual mix of pupils.

At Ribleton Primary School in Glenrothes, an urban school with 280 children including many with special needs, the head teacher was looking for a way to give greater structure to reading within the school. This needed to cater for pupils of all abilities, from special needs students to high flyers.

After seeing a demonstration of the Accelerated Reader program, she decided that it would be a useful way of providing that structure. The school has now been running the scheme for three years.

Implementation

At Ribleton, Accelerated Reader is the main reading tool in the Upper School - Primary 6 and 7.

After successfully running the scheme with the older pupils, Acting Principal, Stewart Westwater introduced it in the Middle School with Primary 4 and 5. Here it is used with the more able readers who have completed the Oxford Reading Tree scheme.

Pupils read for half an hour at school and half an hour at home every day. All books are bar coded to show their level and pupils are free to make their own choice. When they have finished a book, they sign their name on a wall chart to show they are ready to take a test, and then take turns to use the computers.

Everyone has a reading log, which they take home for their parent or another adult to sign. They also take home the TOPs report generated by Accelerated Reader, which helps keep parents informed of progress according to Stewart.

Because each class includes a wide range of abilities, pupils do not compete with one another. Instead, each is given a point's target which they have to achieve over several weeks. Their teacher uses the program's reports to track their progress, and can encourage them to "get their skates on" if they are falling behind.

Results

Stewart is pleased that he and his colleagues now have a good structure which, he says, helps the children and gives a purpose to their reading.

The children themselves like the reading program, and have become very knowledgeable about how it works. They understand that it is designed to encourage them to read more books more often, know their target ranges, and constantly monitor their own progress.

"I think it's a good program," he says. "What we now have is a way to get children interested in books and to introduce them to reading for enjoyment.

"It has made our children very motivated to read.

Importantly, this approach is also delivering improvements in performance as well as motivation.

"I have definitely seen an improvement in the reading levels of the pupils I have worked with," says Stewart. "We measure the reading ages every year, and Accelerated Reader has contributed to the improvement we have seen."

What teachers say...

"I think it's a good program"

"I was very surprised at how many books the pupils were able to read"

"The children certainly like it"

What pupils say....

"I really enjoy reading now"