Accelerated Reader

This page covers the first (efficacy) trial of Accelerated Reader, which tested whether it could work in schools under best possible conditions. To read about the second (effectiveness) trial - testing a scalable model under everyday conditions in a large number of schools - click here.

Accelerated Reader (AR) is a reading management and monitoring programme that aims to foster independent reading. The internet-based software assesses reading age, and suggests books that match pupils' needs and interests. Pupils take computerised quizzes on the books and earn AR points as they progress.

Broadgreen High School, Thornaby Academy,Tideway

Independent Evaluator
Durham University

Pupils	Schools	Grant
349	4	£147,000

Themes

B Behaviour

L Language and literacy

+3

subject
English

key stage
Key Stage 3

EEF Summary

Accelerated Reader is widely used in England, but much of the evidence for the approach comes from the US. The EEF funded this evaluation to see if it could have an impact in English secondary schools. This is one of a number of small trials developed by EEF and designed to improve outcomes for struggling readers at the transition from primary to secondary school.

The study found that Year 7 pupils who were offered Accelerated Reader made 3 months' additional progress in reading compared to other similar pupils. For pupils eligible for free school meals the figure was 5 months' additional progress.

For weaker readers, the approach appears to contribute towards catch-up at the start of secondary school, although pupils at very low levels of reading may need initial support from teachers to benefit, if they are not independent readers.

Based on the promising findings from this small study, EEF has now funded an effectiveness trial, to see if the results can be replicated for a larger number of schools.

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Research Results

Outcome/Group	Impact - the size of the difference between Accelerated Reader pupils and other pupils	Security – how confident are we in this result?
Reading	+3 Months' Progress	
Reading (FSM)	+5 Months' Progress	N/A

Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

The project involved four urban, mixed gender, secondary schools. Three of them were rated by OFSTED as “requiring improvement”, while the final school was rated as “good”.

Around 35% of the pupils in the project schools were eligible for free school meals.

Could I implement this in my school?

Accelerated Reader is available from Renaissance Learning.

For the intervention tested here, 15 staff (teachers, TAs and literacy co-ordinators) from each school attended one day of training.

Accelerated Reader requires space in the timetable for independent reading and schools may also need to increase the number of books in the school library.

delivered by
Teachers

participant group
Individuals

intervention length
22 Weeks

How much will it cost?

Accelerated Reader costs £450 per year for 50 pupils, or £9 per pupil per year. This covers the annual licence needed for each participating pupil (the minimum subscription is for 50 pupils), one day of teacher training and year-long access to a free hotline telephone service.

cost per pupil
£9

Training time per teacher
1 Day

Schools	Pupils	Key Stage
4	349	Key Stage 3
Start date	**End date**	**Type of trial**
January 2012	January 2015	Efficacy Trial

Evaluation Conclusions

1. Accelerated Reader appears to be effective for weaker readers as a catch-up intervention at the start of secondary school.

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2. A well-stocked library with a wide collection of books banded according to the Accelerated Reader readability formula, and easy access to computers with internet connection, are the main requirements for successful implementation.
3. Pupils at very low levels of reading may not be independent readers and would need initial support from teacher to start reading books.
4. Schools can lead robust evaluations of their own planned interventions, under favourable circumstances, and with some advice and oversight from expert evaluators.

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