

ACCELERATED READER: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Introduction

In 2018, Sacriston Academy want to focus on improving the reading provision for Key Stage 2 children.

To ensure the children have access to the best fiction books available, we have made the decision to invest greatly in a wide range of new books which would cater for the needs of all children, a variety of interests and genres. These have been chosen by the children and we are committed to continuing to add to these books each year.

In order to support our focus on reading, we researched a number of reading programs that would help develop a culture of 'reading for pleasure', as well as allowing staff, parents and pupils to monitor progress and attainment. Accelerated Reader allows Sacriston to achieve this.

What is Accelerated Reader?

We launched the program in school with an assembly, and will share the program with parents at our 'Meet the Teacher' meetings to ensure effective communication between home and school.

How does Accelerated Reader work?

Primarily Key Stage 2 children will take a STAR Reading assessment that uses computer-adaptive technology. Questions continually adjust to your child's responses. If the child's response is correct, the difficulty level is increased. If the child misses a question, the difficulty level is reduced. The test uses multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

After undertaking this assessment the class teacher is then provided with a range of information related to your child's reading ability. This includes: their reading age, the difficulty range of books that your child should be reading (ZPD) and how children can be supported to improve their reading comprehension.

In independent literature-based reading, ZPD is the range of books that will challenge a child without causing frustration or loss of motivation. Your child will receive a ZPD range after taking a STAR Reading test. It's important for children to read with a high degree of comprehension and within their ZPDs.

After completing the STAR Reading Test, your child picks a book at their own level and reads it at their own pace. When finished, your child is then able to take a short quiz on the computer or ipad. Time is available every day for children to compete Accelerated Reader quiz. (Passing the quiz is



an indication that your child understood what was read.) Accelerated Reader gives children and teachers feedback based on the quiz results, which the teacher then uses to help your child set goals and direct on-going reading practice.

Children using Accelerated Reader choose their own books to read, rather than having one assigned to them. This makes reading a much more enjoyable experience as they can choose books that are interesting to them. Teachers and librarians help your child choose books at an appropriate readability level that are challenging without being frustrating, ensuring that your child can pass the quiz and experience success.

If your child does not do well on the quiz, the teacher may help your child:

- Choose another book that is more appropriate.
- Ask more probing questions as your child reads and before your child takes a quiz.
- Pair your child with another student, or even have the book read to your child.

In most cases, children really enjoy taking the quizzes. Since they're reading books at their reading and interest levels, they are likely to be successful. This is satisfying for most children. Best of all, they learn and grow at their own pace.

According to research, children who read at least 35 minutes a day with a 90% comprehension rate (average percent correct) on AR quizzes see the greatest gains. Therefore, your child should have at least 35 minutes set aside for reading during each school day. At Sacriston we have timetabled a 'Read and Relax' session in school each day for 20 minutes. Each child is then expected to read at home for 15 minutes each day.

As with anything, performance improves with practice. Encourage your child to read at home. Create a culture of reading in your household by reading with your child, starting a home library, visiting your local library or bookstore on a regular basis, letting your child see you reading, and discussing books that each of you has read. When reading with your child, stop and ask questions to be sure your child is comprehending what is read. Reading with your child, no matter what the child's age, is an important part of developing a good reader, building a lifelong love of reading and learning, and creating a loving relationship between you and your child. Make learning a family affair!

Parents may be concerned that children are unfairly compared to each other. I'm concerned that my child will be unfairly compared to others. Accelerated Reader allows Sacriston Academy staff to work with each child individually. Children are encouraged to progress at their own pace and set their own goals with the help of the teacher. The aim of Accelerated Reader is for all children to succeed in achieving their goals.

How is my child's goal / target set?

Accelerated Reader goals are set using a points system. Goals / targets are set using a child's ZPD level and the time provided for reading practice, this ensures each child's target is personalised and relevant to their individual ability in reading. Each child will receive a new personalised goal / target at the start of each term. Children are able to track their progress each time they log in to Accelerated Reader and through their TOPS (The Opportunity to Praise Students) report.

How are book points allocated?

Every book that has an Accelerated Reading Practice Quiz is given a point value. Points are computed based on the difficulty of the book (ATOS readability level) and the length of the book (number of words).

For example, the Horrid Henry books, which are about 5,135 words long and have an average ATOS book level of 3.3, are 1.0-point books. Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone is 77,325 words long and has an average ATOS book level of 6.0, is a 12-point book.

Children earn points, or a portion of a book's points, depending on how well they do on the Reading Practice Quiz. For example, a child who takes a 5-question quiz on a book worth 1 point will earn 1 point for 5 correct answers (100%), 0.8 point for 4 correct answers (80%), etc. A child who reads a book worth 5 points and takes a 10-question quiz will earn 5 points for 10 correct answers (100%), 4.5 points for 9 correct answers (90%), etc. For quizzes with 3, 5, or 10 questions, a child needs to pass a quiz with a score of 60% or higher to earn points. For quizzes with 20 questions, a child needs to pass with a score of 70% or higher to earn points.

There are over 160,000 Accelerated Reader quizzes available!!!

Celebrating Achievements

At the launch of Accelerated Reader, we shared with children that we wished to reward those children who achieved their goal / target points at the end of each school term. Each class worked with their class teacher to decide on how their class wished to celebrate. This included popcorn parties, movie afternoons, extra playtimes etc. Every child who achieves their goal will be invited to attend the party or event. If a child has not achieved their target - they will not be able to attend. This is not a punishment but meant to encourage children to strive to 'do their best' with reading and to achieve the realistic goals that have been set. Staff in school will closely monitor children across the term to ensure they are on track to achieve their goal / target by the end of the term.

How can I help my child find a book that interests them?

If you wish to help your child select a reading book then visit arbookfind.co.uk and click on Advanced Search. By conducting an advanced search, you can generate book lists that contain titles based on the criteria you enter such as book level, topic, interest level, fiction/nonfiction, etc. This is a great idea when looking for presents.

How can parents/carers be involved?

At Sacriston Academy we strive to ensure parents are an integral part of their child's learning. Please share reading with your child regularly regardless of their age or ability. Use their personalised reading diaries to support you in asking reading comprehension questions to check your child's understanding.

If teaching staff have a particular concern regarding your child's progress they will endeavour to contact parents directly. Parents are always welcome to speak to class teachers to check how well their child is progressing across the term.

My child already does well in school. Why do they need this?

Even if a child is gifted at playing a musical instrument, they have to practice to develop their talent. Gifted children, like all children, need to be challenged. Teachers using Accelerated Reader are able to guide each student to books that give the child both challenge and success, regardless of the child's level.

My child is not a strong reader. Can they still use Accelerated Reader?

Accelerated Reader helps all children become better readers, from students with special needs to those who are gifted and talented. When children read books at an appropriate level, they experience success. Furthermore, teachers and librarians work with children to set appropriate goals based on each child's reading level.

How will I know how my child is doing?

A TOPS Report is available after a child takes a quiz to give you feedback on your child's understanding of the book and shows cumulative data for the marking period and school year. The TOPS Report may be sent home with your child.

How will my child take a quiz?

There are two different ways students can take Accelerated Reader quizzes at school: on the computer or on a mobile device. Quizzing from home is not permitted. Time is allocated each school day for children to take quizzes when they have completed a book. Your child needs to take a quiz within 24 hours of completing their book where possible. Children may take quizzes of books they have read at home but should make sure they have read and understood each book before completing a quiz.

Will my child have to read a book I don't want him to read?

No. There are many, many choices of books at your child's level. Your child will never be forced to read a book you find questionable.