

Accelerated Reader (AR)

At St Budeaux Foundation, we want to foster and enhance our pupils' attitude to reading. In January last year, we introduced Accelerated Reader, a system, which helps motivate children to read and understand what they read.

What is Accelerated Reader?

This reading scheme is offered by a worldwide company, called Renaissance Place. It is designed to help children to read more and to understand what they are reading. Every time children finish reading a book, they take a 5, 10 or sometimes 20 question quiz (depending on level of the book). This is done online and every detail of their progress is available to the teacher and support staff.

How does it work?

First, it is very important that children borrow books at the right level of difficulty for them. They take a STAR reading test every six weeks. The score from this is called their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This level is a guide for teachers and pupils in deciding which range of books to select from. For example, a child's score may indicate a ZPD of 3.9 – 5.2: teachers will then look at previous reading levels and suggest that the child begin reading books from 3.9- 4.4 to begin with. If the child reads books from these levels confidently and quizzes well (scoring 100%, three times within the range), then a new range of levels will be suggested by the teacher in order for the child to make steady progress toward the level at the top end of their ZPD.

The books that children read within their suggested levels are their own choice (children will be encouraged to read both fiction and non-fiction). Some books can appear to be simpler than others at the same level: the level of complexity in the quiz question would reflect this.

The best reading progress is achieved when children score 100% for their quizzes.

How books are put into levels

Books are levelled through Renaissance Place

At Renaissance Place, words are counted; scanned for level of difficulty and awarded a Book Level. A 5, 10 or 20 question quiz on each book is created which the children access on line.

Books are given an Interest Level: Lower Years, LY Middle Years, and MY Upper Years UY. Older children, who have lower reading abilities, still need books to interest them. These may be less clear to very young children who are also beginning to read so they are marked UY. Labels are inside the front cover of each book.

Each book is allocated a number of reading points from 0.5 up to 16+ depending on the level of difficulty.

What happens in school?

At a minimum, children are given 25 minutes, 3 times- a- week to read their AR book. They will progress faster if they read at home as well and we expect all children to read at home for at least 20 minutes each school night. Every time children finish a book, they will quiz on it (it is important that they quiz as soon as they can, while it is still fresh in their memories). The points they score for getting all or some of their quiz correct, mount up gradually and they achieve certificates and awards.

Your child could become a millionaire!

The number of words read build up over time. These are checked every six weeks and there is a very special certificate for pupils who read a million words (As a guide, 'Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix' has a quarter of a million words in it!).

The AR display in the main corridor will track children's progress towards becoming a 'Millionaire Word Master'- it will show children who have read 25,000; 50,000; 100,000; 250,000, 500,000 and finally 1000,000 words.

In addition, each week we will have a 'Champion Class'. This will be awarded to the class who score the most reading points in a week. These come from the number of points awarded when children quiz. The more successful quizzes- the more points are earned.

Real Success

The children should all feel that they can succeed, if they are reading books which challenge them but aren't too difficult. The important thing is to try to get more than 85% in every quiz. That really shows that they have understood what has been read.

Each week, teachers monitor children's progress and help them to find ways of improving their reading ability. Every child is being assessed on a daily basis.

This is what two pupils said after only one term:

'Accelerated Reader has really helped me because it has made me read the books properly and not skip pages because I am determined to get 100% on all the quizzes.'

'When I first started trying Accelerated Reader, I was quite low in levels. The thing is when you just read a book with no challenge what's the point? So I started to read bigger books. As I improved, I read books in a shorter time. I moved up slowly but steadily. The quizzes were hard but fun at the same time.'

How can you help at home?

- Make sure your child always has the Accelerated Reader book in school. It can be very off-putting to have to read something else during quiet class reading, because of a forgotten book which was left at home. Also they need to return one book before they have another.
- Encourage your child to read each evening, preferably in a quiet room where there are fewer distractions. If possible read with him/her and stop occasionally to ask a question. 'Can you tell me what happened last?' is good if he/she has already started reading at school, because it also helps you to understand what has happened so far.
- Ask how a quiz went. Children can often explain why they have scored less well. Listen and make suggestions on how things can be improved.
- Please don't push your child to read the next level before he or she is ready. It's like going to the gym: you wouldn't want to start with the biggest weights. Muscles have to be built up gradually with increasing practice and reading muscles are improved in a similar way. Children begin to take charge of their choices in a good way and usually they know the best level for them.
- Be positive about the system. If you make them feel that it is wrong in some way, this will undermine their confidence.