

A parent's guide to Accelerated Reader at Bassingbourn Primary School



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As your child moves into Key Stage 2, they will soon participate in the Accelerated Reader (AR) program, which is the reading system used in KS2. There is an overlap between the Book Banding System used in Key Stage 1 and the AR program, so the transition will be made when class teachers feel that children are ready. We appreciate that for some children, they will prefer the security of remaining on the Book Banding System, not wanting too many changes at once. Children are able to select books of a similar ability level in both schemes, making the transition much smoother. The AR program is an effective way of giving older children a little more independence in their choice of reading material whilst still enabling us to track and promote reading very effectively here at Bassingbourn. If, having read this guide, you have any further questions – please feel free to contact your child’s teacher.

What is AR?

AR is a computer program that helps teachers monitor and manage children’s independent reading practice. Each half term, your child will take a Star Reading Test. This is a test of vocabulary and comprehension which then gives us a reading level range (based on the AR scheme) for your child to select books from. Your child will select a reading book from the Key Stage 2 library, at that level, and then proceed to read that book at home and at school. Some books from the Key Stage 1 Book Banding System are also on Accelerated Reader so children who continue to read these books will still be able to participate in the Accelerated Reader program.

Children are able to select freely from the books within the correct range for their reading level – these should be challenging without being frustrating. However, children in years three and four are steered towards books with orange stickers on the spine and that have LY (Lower Years) written on the AR sticker inside the front cover of the book. These books are deemed more suitable for the younger reader due to their content.

Once the book is finished, the child is required to take an Accelerated Reader Book Quiz which can be done at home or in school by connecting to the Internet. We would advise that children begin by only taking quizzes in school until they are confident with the format, then once they become more confident, the Accelerated Reader App can be downloaded onto Apple devices, using the school code: BPS-53BX. Alternatively, log on to the website: <https://ukhosted22.renlearn.co.uk/2240164/> Please note that this address must be used in full and ‘Accelerated Reader’ should not be typed into a search engine, as the figures in the address relate to our school specifically. Please note that quizzes can only be taken Monday to Friday.

Every child will have their own log in and password which must be used for them to take quizzes. This will be written in their reading record at the beginning of the school year and will remain with them throughout their time here.

Passing the quiz is an indicator that your child has understood what they have read. Both the children and staff receive feedback on the quiz results and quiz activity is monitored weekly by class teachers. Children not taking and passing quizzes regularly will be required to discuss their reading habits and activity to their teacher.

If your child does not do well in the quiz, it is possible that they have skim read or not read the book in adequate detail. It may be that they would benefit from paired reading for a little while. It could also mean that they are not choosing books of the correct level, so should aim for a slightly lower levelled book next time. In most cases the children really enjoy taking the quizzes as they like to be successful!

How much will my child read during the school day?

It appears that children who read for at least 20 minutes a day see the greatest gains. In KS2, children will be given the opportunity to read for at least 20 minutes on most days, although it may not all be time spent reading their AR book – for instance they may be doing group guided reading with a teacher on a shared text. We are also very fortunate to have several parent helpers who come into school and spend time with individual children, listening to them read and helping them to select new reading books. Clearly it is important that children continue to read outside of school hours and, as with Key Stage 1, it is expected that they will do so as part of their homework routine.

What is the STAR reading test?

In the first few days of each half term, your child will take a STAR reading test. This is a computer based assessment program. The child is presented with questions and multiple choice answers. Questions continually adjust to your child's responses e.g. if the child's response is correct, the difficulty level is increased. The whole test takes about 20 minutes and is not an ordeal. A report gives us an estimated reading age and an AR level (a reading range which is suitable for your child). As the year progresses and more star reader test and AR quiz data becomes available, the AR program can give quite detailed reports about children's reading ability and areas to develop. These reports will be shared with you at Parents' Evening Consultations.

What are the book levels?

Book levels help us to ensure that your child is picking up a book which is suitable for them. Each book on the program is analysed according to its vocabulary, word length, sentence length, grammatical complexity etc. A book level of 4.5, for example, means that a text could likely be read by a child whose reading skills are average for a year 4-6 child. The book levels do not directly reflect ages, or year groups. Your child will be given a suggested reading range (or 'zone of proximal development' / zpd) e.g. 2.5 – 3.4. This indicates the lower and upper book levels that we are recommending for your child – so that their reading is adequately challenging. Our reading books are organised into these levels and have a sticker in the inside front, or back cover, which indicates their level (ATOS BL).

What are points?

Every AR book has a 'points value'. AR points are based on the difficulty of the book and the length of the book. The points values of our books are also indicated on that inside sticker (Points). Children earn points (pro-rata) depending on how well they do on the Reading Practice Quiz. For example, a pupil who takes a 5 question quiz on a book worth 1 point will earn 1 point if they get all 5 questions correct, 0.8 points if they score 4 correctly etc. A child needs to pass a quiz with a score of 60% or higher to earn points. Class teachers monitor the number of points that are scored and success is rewarded.

What's the Interest Level (IL)?

We acknowledge that children's interests vary. Some of our year 3 and 4 children are very advanced readers who may be reading at book level 5 or above – however whilst they can read the words, the content may not be suitable for them. Likewise, we may have year 6 children who are reading at book level 2 or 3, but who want more advanced topics. IL represents interest level – LY indicates lower years (suitable for ages 5-8), MY represents middle years (suitable for ages 9-13) whilst UY usually suggests it would be of interest to teenagers. These bandings are merely guidelines – as children's interests vary hugely – but may be worth considering when selecting reading material. For ease, LY books have orange labels on the top of the spine as well as the coloured band showing the reading level. Similarly, UY books are really only borrowed by Year 6 children and are easily identified.

What if my child wants another sort of book to read?

Each KS2 child is able to withdraw two books from the library. One of these should be an AR reading book which is read daily in school and at home. However, if your child wishes to withdraw an 'interest book' which might be a non-fiction text, or a harder fiction book that they wish to share with you as a bedtime reader – they are more than welcome! If they choose to read a longer book that is not on Accelerated Reader, we would suggest that they read a shorter AR book as well or between longer books so that they can still take AR book quizzes relatively frequently.

Should your child listen to an audio book, or have a more difficult book read to them, as long as the book is on the AR system, they can still take a quiz. Once they have selected the correct book quiz, there is an opportunity to indicate whether they have read the book themselves, with someone else or had it read to them. For assessment purposes, it is important that this question is answered honestly.

Can I find out about which books are suitable for my child?

Yes...of course. You will be informed about the Zone of Proximal Development that we have suggested for your child. This means that you would be able to select books for them from their exact level. If you wish to withdraw books from the public library, or purchase books for your child, it is possible to access a website called 'AR bookfinder' (www.arbookfind.co.uk). On this website you can search for a particular book and discover the book level, interest level etc. or alternatively you can type in the level that your child is reading at and see a vast range of suggested books at that level – which could be borrowed or bought. Many libraries have internet access, so it would be possible to check books that interest your child to see if they are too easy, too hard, or just right. Unfortunately, not all books are on the AR system but the list is increasing every day, so it is worth checking a book on different occasions as it may well be added. It is also worth typing in the author's name if the title does not appear to be on the list. Sometimes a misplaced apostrophe for example will suggest that the book is not on the scheme when actually it is. Whilst we do encourage children to read predominantly AR levelled books, it is possible to read others also, as described above.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your continued support.