

Accelerated Reader - A Guide for Parents

The ability to read is an essential need of every child and is highly valued at Freeman's Endowed CE Junior Academy. In order to support our focus on reading, we have implemented Accelerated Reader (AR) at our school. 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 Freeman's. 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. Once the book is finished, the child is required to take an Accelerated Reader Book Quiz. 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. Reading practice should be recorded in reading records, which will also be monitored by class teachers.

Children not taking and passing quizzes regularly will be required to discuss their reading habits and activity with 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. At Freeman's, children will be given the opportunity to read for at least 20 minutes a day, 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. Clearly it is important that children continue to read outside of school hours and 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 to complete. 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.

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 if my child wants another sort of book to read?

Each child at Freeman's 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.