



Accelerated Reader at Blackminster Middle School.

A Guide for Parents.

Your child is participating in the Accelerated Reader (AR) programme here at Blackminster. This guide is designed to help you understand, and answer your questions about AR. Please feel free to contact your child's English teacher or Form Tutor if you need any additional information, or visit the Accelerated Reader website at www.renlearn.co.uk

- **What is Accelerated Reader (AR)?**

AR is a computer programme that helps teachers manage and monitor students' independent reading practice. Your child chooses a book within his/her own level and reads it at their own pace. Teachers will monitor how long each child is taking to read their book, and will discuss the progress they are making with your child.

As soon as he/she has finished the book, he/she takes a short quiz on the computer. The result of the quiz informs teachers about the level of understanding the student has achieved (comprehension). A high pass mark, 90% +, indicates a good level of comprehension for example, whereas a fail, (less than 60%) demonstrates that the student has not understood many of the words in the book.

AR gives both students and teachers feedback based on the quiz results, which teachers can then use to direct ongoing reading practice. For example, if a student appears to be struggling reading books at a certain level, their teacher will suggest a strategy which may include reading from a slightly lower level until 100% is achieved on quizzes.

In most cases, students enjoy taking quizzes. Since they are choosing books at their own reading and interest levels they are more likely to be successful. This is very satisfying and most importantly, they are able to learn at their own pace.

- **How much will my child read during the school day?**

According to research, children who read for at least 20 minutes a day with a comprehension rate (average percentage correct) of 85% on AR quizzes, see the greatest gains. At Blackminster, all students read for 20 minutes during pm tutor time up to four days a week. Year 6 students also have an AR lesson in the library every other week.

- **How can I help my child become a better reader?**

As in all things, performance improves with practice. Encourage your child to read at home, read with them and discuss books that each of you have read. When reading together, stop every so often to ask questions in order to be sure your child comprehends what is being read.

- **How does the school determine my child's reading level?**

Twice a term students complete a STAR reading test as part of the AR assessment. The STAR test uses computer-adaptive technology. Questions continually adjust to your child's responses. If they answer correctly, the questions will increase in difficulty. If they answer

incorrectly, the questions decrease in difficulty. Each child will face a set of questions selected from a bank of thousands, so no matter how many times they take the test they will not get exactly the same questions each time.

Reading ages are calculated from these test results, along with the suggested book levels (ZPD) for each student. It is always suggested that a student looks for a book at their lowest book level point to begin with. Quiz results then determine how quickly a student progresses through the suggested range, high scores mean rapid progression while lower scores would indicate the more reading at the lower level would be beneficial. Each child is different and will be guided individually by teachers.

- **What is a ZPD?**

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the range of books that will challenge your child without causing frustration or loss of motivation. Your child will be given their ZPD after taking the STAR test in the form of the book levels they should choose from. All library books at Blackminster are marked with the book level and colour coded to make it easy for students to choose from their correct range.

- **What are points?**

Every book that has an AR reading practice quiz is given a point value. AR points are computed based on the difficulty of the book and the length of the book. Children earn points depending on how well they do on the reading practice quiz. E.g. if a book is worth 5 points and a student gets 100%, he/she will get all 5 points. If they achieve 80% they will get 4 points and so on. The pass mark is 60% for quizzes with 10 questions, and 70% for those with 20 questions.

- **Is it ok for my child to read outside of his/her reading level?**

Just because a child can read the words in a book does not mean that they understand the content, or that the themes and ideas in the book are appropriate for their age. Every AR book has an interest level as well as a book level:

Interest Level	Year Level
LY – lower years	Ages 5 - 8
MY – middle years	Ages 9 - 13
UY – Upper Years	Ages 14 and above

In many cases, interest level coordinates with a book's reading level. However, some books have a low reading ability level but are appropriate for upper years, and conversely some have a high reading level but are appropriate for high ability younger children. We have a

comprehensive range of books, and staff are always on hand to help students select appropriately.

- **My child is already a strong reader. Why does he/she need AR?**

All children, including very able ones need to be challenged. By using AR each child has the opportunity to develop and progress at their own pace. To be good at anything requires practice, and AR provides tailor-made practice for each individual student.

- **My child is not a strong reader. Can he/she still use AR?**

AR helps all children to become better readers regardless of ability. When children read a book at the appropriate level for them, they experience success which boosts confidence, and so encourages further reading.

- **How will I know how my child is doing?**

You can access your child's AR information by logging on to Renaissance Home Connect. Details of how to do this are in the attached letter. If you require any further information please contact the school and speak to Ms McQuone or Mrs Croft.

Additional copies of the letter with log in details are available from Reception, just ask your child to bring a copy home.