

Accelerated Reader

A Guide for Parents



What is Accelerated Reader?

Accelerated Reader is an online reading programme which provides an individualised reading programme for every pupil according to their ability.

Why do we use this reading programme?

It has been well established by numerous studies that there is a direct correlation between reading ages and GCSE results **across all subjects**. Due to this, we take reading very seriously at Chulmleigh College, and we devote both class time and homework time to independent reading. There is no better way of preparing Key Stage Three pupils for the rigours of GCSE.

We expect all KS3 pupils to read for at least twenty minutes a day for homework. However, we do understand that we have varying levels of reading confidence in the college, and so the Accelerated Reader programme is differentiated according to reading age rather than chronological age. This means that if a pupil has a reading age of sixteen, then we expect them to read more challenging and longer texts. On the other hand, if a pupil has a reading age of eight, then the reading homework expectations are what we would expect from an eight-year-old reader. This means that pupils are only expected to read the level and quantity that corresponds to their reading age.

How are the minutes worked out?

The minutes are worked out by the Accelerated Reader programme. It does this by looking at the specific books a pupil has read and then assigning them a certain amount of minutes per book. Exactly how many minutes a pupil receives for reading a book depends on their reading age. For example, if a pupil with a reading age of ten reads 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid', they will get a lot more minutes than someone with a reading age of sixteen. This is because the AR system is heavily differentiated, and the expectations are based on reading age and not chronological age. This means that someone with a low reading age can easily compete with pupils who have higher reading ages.

What happens if a pupil's minutes are below 20?

If a pupil's minutes drop below 20 then they will be put into lunchtime reading catchup sessions. This will appear as 'Low AR Minutes' on Classcharts. There are no negative points associated with this. As long as pupils attend these compulsory catch-up sessions, they will not be given negative points. As soon as they are above 20 minutes, they no longer need to attend the catch-up sessions. Also, if a pupil plays a sport, or has another extra-curricular activity, we will be willing to work around this, within reason.

What happens if pupils do not attend the catch-up sessions?

If pupils refuse to attend the catch-up sessions, then they will be given a formal detention, which will incur a negative point. This will appear on Classcharts as 'Poor AR'. This will also affect the effort grades they receive for English. When pupils get to this stage, we will not work around extra-curricular activities, and if they ever have any sporting fixtures, they will not be allowed to leave English lessons to attend them.

How does the programme work?

1. Your son/daughter will begin the programme by taking a Star Reading Test. This will test their vocabulary knowledge and sentence comprehension. These tests are done online and are individually calibrated to each pupil: if they make an incorrect answer, the next question will be a bit easier; whereas if they get the question correct, the next one will be slightly harder. The test continues like this until the pupil's reading age has been established.
2. After the test, the class teacher will speak to your son/daughter individually about their result. The test not only allows them to see the pupils reading age but also tells the teacher what level of books your child should be reading so that they can progress as rapidly as possible. This level will be shared with your child so that when they go to the library, they will know what level of books to choose. This will normally be a range, such as 3.0 to 4.5.
3. Pupils will then go to the library to choose a book. Your child will have weekly reading lessons with an English teacher so that they can get support and advice on their reading.
4. Pupils are then expected to independently read the book they have chosen. This is their homework task. In KS3 we will set very little additional homework as we would like them to focus on their reading. They are expected to read for a minimum of 20 minutes, every day. However, they have a 1-hour library lesson each week and they also read during two tutor times, so if they make the most of these sessions in school, their homework will be reduced.
5. When they have finished their book, they will complete an online quiz which will test their understanding of the book. This must be done on a school computer. How well they do on the test will determine what level book they should choose next. **This quiz result will also determine their daily minutes. If they fail the book, they will not gain any extra minutes.**
6. Pupils will continue reading books until their next Star Reading Test. If their second test shows an improvement, the level of books they can read will increase.



The Accelerated Reader Process

Pupils take a Star Reading Test.
This will show their reading age and the level of books
they should be reading.

Pupils choose an appropriate book from the library.
They start by choosing a book from the lower end of
their recommended book level range.

Pupils read their book during some tutor times, at the
start of some lessons, during their library lesson and for
homework.

When they have finished the book, they will take the
book's quiz to check that they have understood the
story.

Pupils now choose a new book. The level of their next
book will depend upon the score they get in the quiz.



Common queries

Q. Can my son/daughter read the book they got for their birthday, even though it's not at their level?

A. Of course, just let your teacher know the name of the book and enjoy!

Q. There are not many books in the top range in the library; what can they read?

A. If your son/daughter goes on the Accelerated Reader website (www.arbookfind.co.uk) they will find a list of books for their range. Pick one of those and the librarians will order it for them, free of charge. If they are not sure which book to choose, they should have a chat with their English teacher, who will be able to recommend other books for them.

Q. Why are there so many classics at the top of the range?

A. The scheme is designed to stretch all pupils and once your son/daughter has reached gold, we would expect them to be reading books which will prepare them for the demands of the new GCSEs in English Language and Literature. In both these exams, there will be unseen extracts from classic literature; by getting used to reading challenging texts they will be giving themselves a head start.

Q. Isn't twenty minutes a day too long to be reading?

A. Remember they have an AR lesson every week, plus tutor time, so they should be able to keep up.

Q. What can they do if they have found a book that they really want to read, but there is no quiz for it?

A. Again, they should speak to their English teacher. If their minutes are high, then there is no problem with reading a non-AR book. They can also request a quiz be written for a book; their teacher will submit the request if they ask. It is best to do this well in advance, as the quizzes take a bit of time to be written.

Q. They have just finished a book that is part of a series and they would like to read more in the series. Can they do this even if they are not all at the right level?

A. This is usually fine; we understand that if they have found a series they enjoy they will want to read as much as they can within it.

