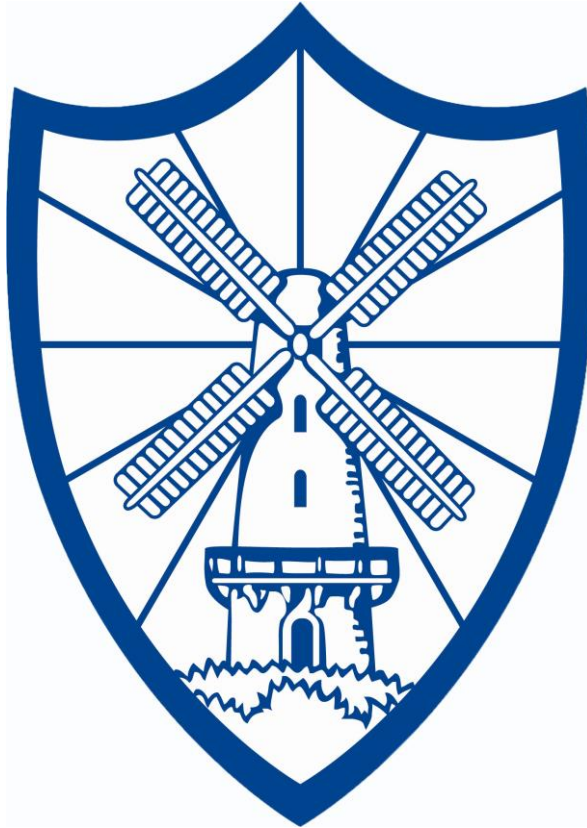


# Meopham Community Academy



## A Parent's Guide to Accelerated Reader at Meopham Community Academy





## Introduction

Children at Meopham Community Academy will be participating in the computer-based Accelerated Reader (AR) program, which is the reading system used once children have moved beyond phonics books. Accelerated Reader is a very effective system for motivating children and ensuring good reading progress. This guide is designed to answer your questions about AR. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact your child's teacher, Mrs Farrington, the school's AR Leader or visit the Accelerated Reader website at <http://readforpleasure.co.uk/>

## What is Accelerated Reader (AR)?

Accelerated Reader (AR) is a computer-based management system that helps teachers manage and monitor our children's independent reading practice and progress. AR is introduced to children in Years 1-6, only when they are secure in their phonic knowledge.

Children pick a book at their own level and read it at their own pace. When finished, the child takes a short book-based quiz within the AR system. This is done in the classroom at a time designated by the class teacher. Passing the quiz (with a score of 85% or more) is an indication that the child understood what was read.

AR gives children and teachers feedback based on the quiz results which the teacher then uses to help set the child's targets and goals and to direct ongoing reading practice and book choice.

*A Sample Quiz Question:*

The screenshot displays three overlapping windows from the Accelerated Reader software. The largest window on the left is titled 'Cliffhanger' and contains a reading practice question: 'When Dad first suggested the adventure holiday, Tim was ---.' with four multiple-choice options: A. making a jigsaw puzzle, B. reading a book, C. drawing a picture, and D. watching television. The bottom of this window shows 'Reading Practice' and 'Question 1 of 10' with a 'Next' button. A smaller window in the center-right is titled 'Score Summary' and displays the following statistics: Correct: 8, Possible: 10, Percent: 80.0 %, Points Possible: 1.0, and Points Earned: 0.8. Below the statistics, it states: 'Adrian Tester passed the Reading Practice Quiz 204539 on the book *Cliffhanger* by Jacqueline Wilson. Adrian scored 80.0 % overall and 60.0 % was required to pass this quiz.' At the bottom of the score summary window is the question 'Would you like to see the questions you answered wrong?' with 'Yes' and 'No' buttons. A third window on the right is also titled 'Cliffhanger' and shows a question: 'Why did Tim spill his bucket of water in the Crazy Bucket race?' with four options: A. While crawling out onto the drainpipe, he slipped and fell in the water. (marked with a red X), B. He tripped over a tree root and crashed to the ground. (marked with a red X), C. One of the Cheetahs banged his bucket into Tim's back. (marked with a blue circle), and D. Giles made him so nervous that the bucket just slipped from his hands. The bottom of this window shows 'Reading Practice', 'Student Answer: B. Correct Answer: C', and 'Question 8 of 10' with a 'Next' button.

Children using AR have an independent choice of the books they read within a range that is given to them by the teacher based on the results of a Star Reading Test. This makes reading a much more enjoyable experience as they feel in control and can choose books that are interesting to them and at their level.



If required, teachers and teaching assistants will guide the child to choose books that are at the correct reading level. These will always be challenging without being frustrating, and will also be at a level at which the child can pass the quiz and experience success.

The school supports the children to achieve in their quizzes by giving them the opportunity to look over the book before he/she takes a quiz, and giving them opportunities to quiz as soon as they have finished the book where possible. Our aim is to ensure the child quizzes no more than 24 hours after they have finished the book.

In most cases, children really enjoy taking the quizzes. Since they are reading books at their own reading and interest levels, they are likely to be successful. This is satisfying for most children. Best of all, they learn and grow at their own pace.

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

According to Renaissance Learning's research, children who read at least 20 minutes a day with a 90 % comprehension rate on AR quizzes see the greatest gains. At Meopham, children are given the opportunity to read, or be read to, for 15-20 minutes daily. They also take part in daily reading activities during Guided Reading for 20 minutes, as well as having further opportunities for reading during English lessons and within other subjects!

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

As with anything, performance improves with practice. We recommend that your child reads daily for a further 15 minutes at home. In this time you may like to hear your child read aloud. Fluent readers may prefer to read independently and perhaps you could read the book too to generate some discussion. Create a culture of reading in your household by starting a home library, visiting your local library or bookshop on a regular basis, or by letting your child see you reading.

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

Initially teachers determine the child's reading level using data from a Star Reading Test. As children begin quizzing, teachers use their best professional judgment based on their knowledge of the child and quiz scores to adjust levels.

### **What is a Star Reading test?**

Every two terms, the child will take a Star Reading test with the rest of their class. This test is a computer-based reading assessment program provided by Accelerated Reader that uses computer-adaptive technology. The child is presented with a series of multiple choice questions. Questions continually adjust to the child's responses. If they are correct, the difficulty level is increased. If the child cannot answer a question, or answers incorrectly, the difficulty level is reduced. The whole test takes approximately 40 minutes. A report gives the teacher an appropriate range of book levels to suit the child's reading ability.



### **What is a Book Level?**

Books are levelled for AR using a nationally-recognised readability formula which represents the difficulty of the text. The levelling criteria cover such factors as vocabulary, average word length, average sentence length, grammatical complexity etc., not how long the book is or how many pictures it contains.

Pupils are allocated a range recommended by the Star Reading test. Our reading books have been given a coloured sticker on which the level is indicated. Children in KS1 are given a colour band to choose from which matches their Book Level range and children in KS2 are provided with their range e.g. 2.7-3.6, within which they are able to choose any book in that range.

AR books are organised on the shelves in the library according to level to make it straightforward for children to choose an appropriate book. We give the children the responsibility to ensure they are choosing books at the correct level. However book choices are monitored by teachers in their reading record and on a weekly report generated by our dedicated Accelerated reader Administrator.

### **What is a Book Level range (ZPD)?**

In independent literature-based reading, ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) is the range of levels that will challenge children without causing frustration or loss of motivation. The child will be given their Book Level range after a Star Reading test, and this may be extended or amended throughout the two terms by teachers if needs be. It is important for children to read with a high degree of comprehension within his/her range, and the Reading Practice Quizzes the children take determine their level of comprehension.

### **What are points?**

Every book that has an AR Reading Practice Quiz<sup>1</sup> is given a points value. AR points are based on the difficulty of the book and the length of the book (number of words). The points values of our books are indicated on the inside cover of the books (Pts). Children earn points on a pro-rata basis, depending on how well they do on the Reading Practice Quiz.

### **EXAMPLE:**

*A pupil who takes a 5-question quiz on a book worth 1 point will earn 1 point for 5 correct answers (100%), 0.8 point for 4 correct answers (80%) and so on. A pupil who reads a book worth 5 points and takes a 10-question quiz will earn 5 points for 10 correct answers (100%) 4.5 points for 9 correct answers (90%), etc. Children need to pass a quiz with a score of 60% or higher to earn points.*

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<sup>1</sup> NB – Not all school books have an associated Reading Practice Quiz. The Reading Practice Quiz number is written on the inside front cover of a book that has an associated quiz available.



### **How will my child move through the levels?**

Teachers will monitor children's quiz scores through their reading record. Children must have their reading record with them in school in order to take a quiz. Teachers also look at weekly reports on Accelerated Reader, which give them an overall picture of the children's quiz successes over the week. As children quiz and score highly frequently at the top end of their range, teachers may use their best professional judgment based on their knowledge of your child and quiz scores to adjust levels. Alongside this, children will take a Star Reading test at three points during the year, which will indicate a new range of Book Levels for each child and measure their progress at the same time.

### **Can my child read other books as well as books at their level?**

Of course! We encourage children to read a wide range of books they enjoy, however children should only take quizzes on books at their book level to ensure consistent progression and consolidation of the skills they need to progress in their reading comprehension.

### **Can children take quizzes on books from home?**

If books from home are on Accelerated Reader, and are within the child's Book Level range, they can also quiz on these books. Children should let their teacher know when they are ready to quiz.

### **Can children in Key Stage 1 access Accelerated Reader independently?**

In Years 1 and 2, children are supported by teachers and other adults with logging on and quizzing, once they have moved on from phonics books. Children in Key Stage 1 aim to take one quiz a week where possible, and will not quiz on every book due to the volume of books they may read. Not all books the children take home will have an associated Reading Practice Quiz. This will be indicated on the inside cover of the book.

### **My child is not a strong reader. Can he/she still use Accelerated Reader?**

Accelerated Reader helps all children become better readers, and all children can access it once they have moved on from phonics books. When children read books at their appropriate level, they experience success. Furthermore, in KS2, data from Accelerated Reader is used to set appropriate AR reading targets to challenge each individual child.

### **How are Accelerated Reader point targets set?**

In Key Stage 2 only, targets are set for the number of points to achieve over two terms. Two terms are known as a 'Marking Period'. The Points target is set based on the child's Book Level range, and also assumes a total of 20 minutes of reading practice a day. The child's achievements in AR over the previous Marking Period are also taken into consideration to ensure the target is challenging and achievable. The target is designed to be motivational, and to ensure enough reading practice is happening to guarantee progress. Additionally, an average Book Level target is set, and all children are set a target to achieve an average of 85% or more on their Reading Practice Quizzes. Targets cannot be changed during the Marking Period, even if they have been achieved.



The three Marking Periods at Meopham Community Academy are:

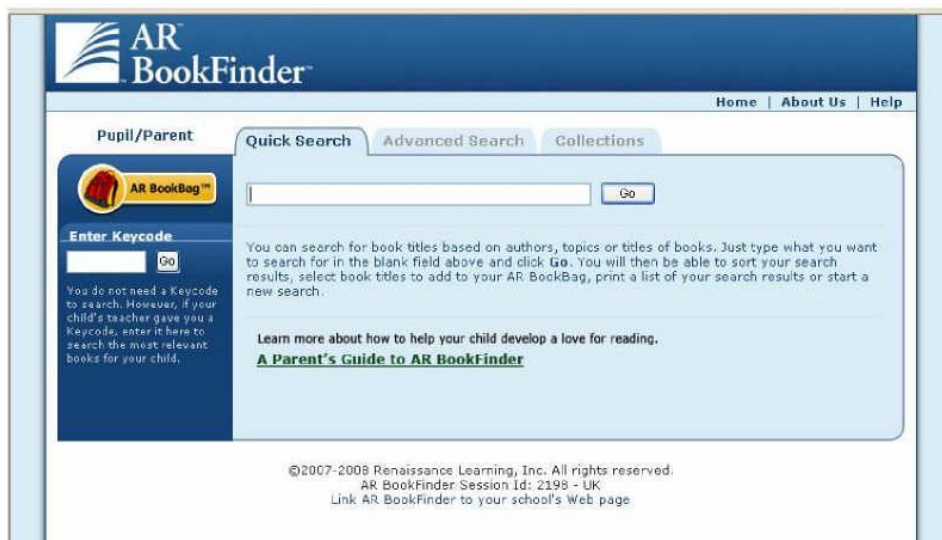
- Terms 1 & 2,
- Terms 3 & 4 and
- Terms 5 & 6.

### **How many Accelerated Reader quizzes are there?**

There are over 20,000 AR quizzes available and more being written every month. The Academy has a continuously updated book stock which will ensure there are enough books across a range of levels. Children may still read their own books, but they should only quiz on books within their level. The majority of top children's authors can be found on Accelerated Reader.

### **How will I know if a book has an AR quiz?**

You could use the online AR BookFinder service, available at [www.arbookfind.co.uk](http://www.arbookfind.co.uk), which allows you to conduct a search of all available books with AR quizzes. This is not restricted to books in the school library. There may be books on your child's shelf that have quizzes too! Your child can bring a book from home into school, log in to the system and search for the quiz.





## How can I help my child find books that are at the right level?

Visit [www.arbookfind.co.uk](http://www.arbookfind.co.uk) and click on Advanced Search. By conducting an advanced search, you will be able to generate book lists that contain titles based on the criteria you enter, such as Book Level, Topic, Interest Level and Fiction/Non-fiction, etc.

A screenshot of AR BookFinder

## What is the Interest Level (IL)?

Just because a child can read the words in a book, does not mean the content is appropriate. The Interest Level of the material must be considered. Interest Level is based on content; a book's themes and ideas, and indicates for which age group a book is appropriate. The chart below shows which years fall into each Interest Level. This is indicated on the inside cover of the books.

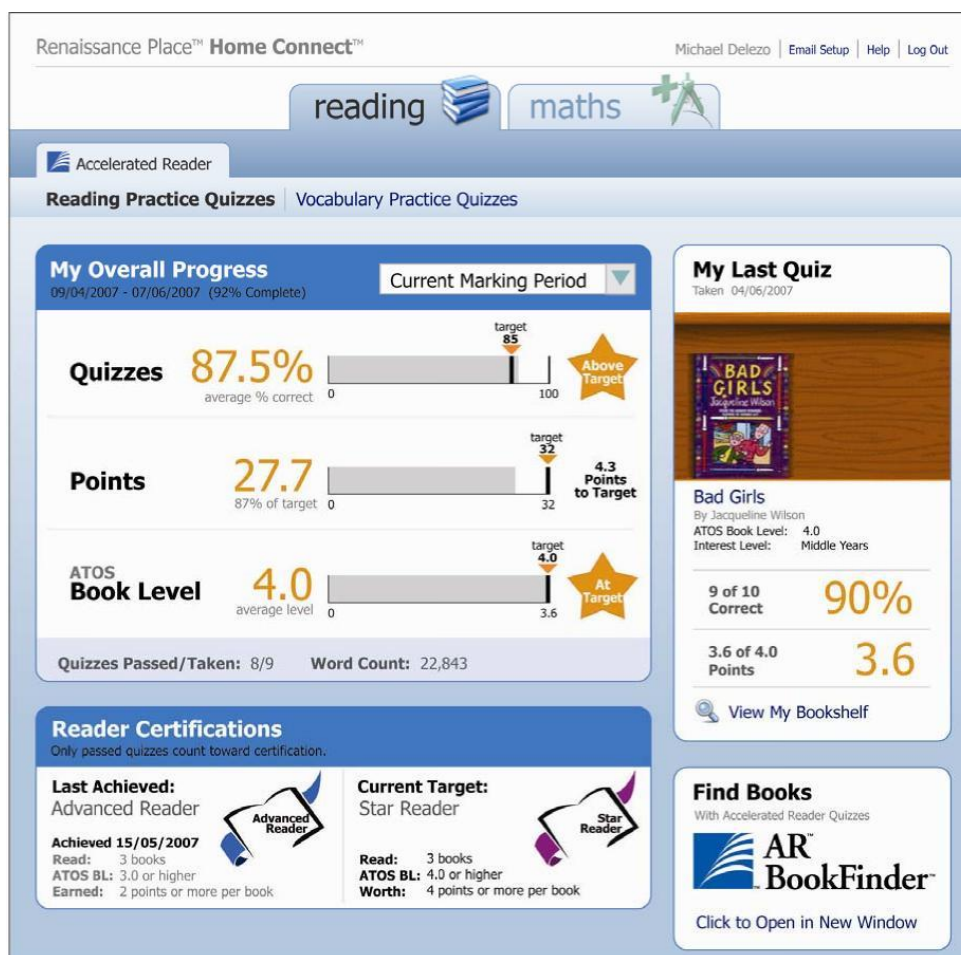
Interest Level	Year Level
LY – Lower Years	Key Stage 1
MY – Middle Years	Key Stage 2
UY – Upper Years	Key Stage 3/4

That is not to say that children can't read within other ILs – they may choose to do so.



## How will I know how my child is doing?

The Renaissance Place Home Connect system, which can be accessed from any web-enabled device, will allow parents to keep track of their children's progress from Year 3. At the beginning of Year 3 the children are provided with a letter and log in details on how to access Home Connect. Once in the program, you can view your child's progress towards targets, points and books read. You can also access AR BookFinder to search for titles of interest. You can only access information about your own child. In addition to this, all quiz scores should be recorded by the children in their reading records. Should you not know your Renaissance Home Connect login details for your child's account, please use your contact book to request this from your child's teacher.



## What if I have questions about using Renaissance Place Home Connect?

After logging-in, click on the 'Help' icon in the upper right hand corner, or contact your child's teacher via your child's contact book.

## How can I help?

As well as reading together, share their Accelerated Reader experience by using Home Connect and discussing your child's quiz scores and progress towards their targets. Encourage them to take quizzes and to come to AR Club on Thursday lunchtimes (currently KS2 only) if they are unable to take a quiz





on the day they have finished the book. Children in KS2 will also earn certificates for their progress, which can be celebrated at home too! Please remember to record all the children's reading experiences in the reading record so teachers can see how much reading practice is happening at home. This will help when setting challenging, yet achievable targets.