

Star Test: This is a computer-adaptive assessment that measures current reading ability. Boys sit a Star Test at the very start of the academic year then at the end of every half of term thereafter. Though each question on a Star Test has a (fairly generous) time limit, each boy essentially works at his own pace, taking somewhere in the region of 15 to 25 minutes for the whole test. 'Computer-adaptive' assessments adapt to a participant's ability level by taking into account the response to every question in order to produce the next question. Such assessments are therefore sometimes referred to as tailored assessments - being completely individualised - and have no ceiling to attainment. A boy's performance on previous Star Tests determines his starting point on the next Star Test that he takes. The key data produced by a Star Test are a boy's Reading Age and Reading Range. Comparing a boy's results from a Star Test with his results from previous Star Tests reveals levels of progress. A boy's performance on a Star Test is the key factor in the formulation of his Reading Target for the following half of term.

Reading Age: This is a boy's reading ability expressed with reference to the average chronological (i.e. actual) age at which a comparable ability is found. Comparing Reading Age to chronological age enables you to see the extent to which a boy is ahead of or behind the level expected of a child of their exact (to the nearest month) age. Tutors will usually refer to Reading Age in end of term reports and parent-tutor meetings, but Reading Age is not something that should be dwelled upon with boys because it can distract from the main focus which is maximising individual potential and progress.

Book Level: Books that are part of the Accelerated Reader programme have had their level of difficulty measured by the creators of the programme in order to assign them a Book Level. Many factors are taken into account when determining a Book Level. For example, the difficulty of vocabulary, average sentence length, and extent of inferential and deductive skills required to understand the book will be taken into account (but the length of the book will not be). A book's Book Level is shown on a sticker on the inside of its front cover (denoted by the abbreviation B.L). Book Levels are on a numerical scale and the higher the Book Level, the more challenging the book.

Reading Range (or ZPD): A boy's Reading Range consists of a lower Book Level and an upper Book Level. A boy stands the best chance of improving his reading ability (and actually enjoying the book) if he reads books from within that range of Book Levels. Books from below the bottom end of the Reading Range will not be sufficiently challenging to lead to any progress, while a book that carries a Book Level that is above the top end of his Reading Range will be too difficult for him to truly access and benefit from the reading experience (even though he may be able to make his way to the end, as there is a significant difference between being able to simply sound out the words and understanding the full meaning of the book). When first introduced to the programme, some boys find that they are steered by their Reading Range towards books that they perceive to be easier than what they have been used to reading. In such cases, we encourage boys (and parents) to trust in the programme as invariably it proves its worth, with enjoyment and ability both clearly improving over time. The Accelerated Reader's official term for

Reading Range is Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the point being that only books that are within a boy's ZPD will actually benefit him by extending his ability. A very useful resource for finding books that are within a given Reading Range, or, conversely, checking the Book Level of a particular book, is www.arbookfind.co.uk.

Points: Every book that is part of the Accelerated Reader programme carries a certain number of Points. The number of Points is essentially determined by the combination of Book Level and length of book. A book's Points value is shown on the same sticker as its Book Level, inside the front cover. A boy aims to accrue enough Points each half of term in order to exceed his Reading Target by taking a Quiz after he finishes each book. Note that no relationship exists between Points and Reading Range, even though quite often it is the case that a book's Points will happen to be of a value that fall within a boy's Reading Range.

Reading Target: A Reading Target is an individualised number of Points that a boy is aiming to earn within a time limit. At the start of every half of term, a boy is given the Reading Target that he is aiming to exceed by the end of that half of term. Reading Targets are, with a few exceptions, entirely computer generated; they take into account a boy's Reading Age (as determined by the most recent Star Test), the number of days that the boy has to meet the target, and the number of minutes that he is being asked to read for each day, including during weekends. This last figure is entered into the computer system by tutors and we generally ask the boys to read for at least 20 minutes every day, though occasionally this may vary. A boy is given a sticker at the start of every half of term that tells him his current Reading Range, his Reading Target for that half of term, and how many minutes every day that he is expected to read for. In essence, every boy who reads books from within his Reading Range for the requested amount of time every day ought to hit his Reading Target, no matter what his underlying reading ability is. Note that because Reading Targets are sensitive to timespan given, boys will have lower targets when a half of term is shorter. Therefore, do not make the mistake of inferring that a lower target than previously means that a boy's ability has gone down. Also note that reaching a Reading Target quite quickly does not necessarily indicate that a boy is ready to move up to a higher Reading Range and take on books of higher Book Levels; it is most likely just the result of reading for more than the requested amount of time each day (which is obviously to be encouraged, but the outcomes should not be misinterpreted). In cases where a boy hits his initial Reading Target for the half of term significantly in advance of the end of that half of term, his tutor will issue him with a manually created extended Reading Target for an additional challenge. There are prizes and competitions linked to meeting Reading Targets on individual, class and year group levels.

Quiz: In order to actually earn the Points that a particular book carries, as soon as possible after he finishes the book a boy must take a computer-based Quiz that the programme creators have written for the specific book. A Quiz usually consists of ten multiple choice questions that test understanding of the content of the book. If a boy scores 10 out of 10, then he wins 100% of the book's Points. If he scores 9 out of 10, he gets 90%, and so on down to getting 60% of the Points for 6 out of 10 on the Quiz. If he scores less than 6 out of 10 though, he gets no points because understanding of the content of the book has evidently been inadequate. Points from one Quiz get added to Points from previous Quizzes from that half of term, and after each Quiz the boy is shown how far towards his Reading Target he is. Quizzes can only be taken on computers on the school network; access will be denied when attempting to do so from anywhere else. At regular intervals (approximately twice each half of term), tutors will send home to a boy's parents the results from the various Quizzes that he has taken recently.

The books in the library in the Nash's building are arranged by Book Level (e.g. a colour coded shelf for all books of Book Levels from 4.0 to 4.9). This helps boys to be fairly independent in choosing books that fall within their Reading Range. Teachers are always on hand to help with choices, and will actively monitor to ensure appropriate choices, but broadly speaking, with the Nash's library being open every lunch break, it is the responsibility of the boy to choose a new book for himself as soon as he finishes his previous one. That goes to say that it is not the case that boys read precisely one book per week, or some similar structure. Instead, every boy gets through books at his own pace, depending on length of book and time spent reading.

Since adopting the Accelerated Reader programme, we have definitely seen a strong correlation between engagement with the scheme (i.e. regular reading of books of the recommended level, regular quizzing, and doing well on those quizzes) and improvements in reading ability relative to age. That said, boys should be encouraged to read outside the programme too; not all books are part of the programme (especially non-fiction books) but that should not stop a boy from reading something that he is interested in.