

## Sparx Reader Guide

### Logging on to Sparx Reader

Go to the website: <https://sparxreader.com/>

Select login

For school name type: B30 1DY or King Edward VI King's Norton School for Boys and select our school from the list.

Your son's username will be **firstnamelastname** (all lower case, no spaces). Their password will be the same as their Sparx Maths password. If they need to reset this, he can select forgotten password and their teacher will be able to reset it

### Sparx Reader Homework Expectations

Homework for every year 7 English class will be reading on Sparx Reader.

This will be set on a Monday and due the next Monday.

Every week, students will be expected to read enough to earn 450 Sparx Reader Points (SRP). This equates to about 45 minutes of reading but might not be exactly this time, as factors such as accuracy answering questions can affect how quickly students can gain these SRP.

## FAQs

### **1. Does the timer slow down/change?**

There are two different question types that have different timers:

- Multiple choice style questions have a timer of **50 seconds**
- Find the sentence style questions have a timer of **120 seconds**

This timer is fixed and does not change based on level and cannot be adjusted for an individual student.

### **2. How can you keep track of your child's progress?**

You currently receive Sparx Maths emails which update you on your child's homework progress. This email also mentions that reading homework is available to view. If you click on the link, you will get taken to a parent portal where you can view homework progress for Sparx Reader. This will include information on current/previous homework and browse books they have been reading.

You can also download the 'My Child at School' app. This will allow you to keep track of when students receive their Sparx Reader commendations.

### **3. What Is Gold Reader and how does it work?**

Students who are doing additional reading on top of their compulsory homework will be rewarded with gold stars. Once they reach 5 gold stars, students will be awarded with a Gold Reader pass which lasts for 5 weeks.

Gold reader then allows students to read any physical book of their choice and still earn Sparx Reader Points. To do this they should choose a book and add it to their Gold Reader library by following the steps below:

- Click on Add Book
- Click on Scan the barcode
- Take a photo of the barcode of the book- this will then autofill the ISBN number.
- They will then be asked: What page does the story begin on? What page does the story end on?
- When these have been completed, click submit.
- You will then be able to see their book
- Click continue reading to read.

Students will then be able to complete their weekly reading homework on Gold Reader and earn Sparx Reader Points. When a student is ready to complete their reading homework should click continue reading and then:

- They will be asked: what page they are starting on and the last three words on that page.
- Click start reading and a timer will begin.
- When they have finished reading they will click I have read for 15-20 minutes.
- They will be asked: what page they are on now, the last three words on this page, how many minutes they read for
- **Make sure students do not tick the *I have finished this book* until they have completed the entire book. Students should click *Add this to my reading log* without ticking this to record the reading done.**
- Students will then write a question for themselves and be informed how many Sparx Reader Points they have earned. There might be a delay in their Sparx Reader Points being added to their account, as their reading logs are carefully checked. They will only receive Sparx Reader Points if they are reading carefully.
- If Gold reader is not being used properly, the student will receive a warning. If they receive multiple warnings, the student will go back to reading e-books.

#### 4. What is Sparx Reading Level?

Sparx Reading Levels are a measure of student reading ability, on a 1-9 scale. These can be mapped onto reading ages. Below are the reading ages mapped to each level, as well as some more information about the books and questions:

**Sparx Level 1:** Reading Age 6 (Easier books to support struggling readers, and simpler tasks in place of questions)

**Sparx Level 3:** Reading Age 9 (Easier books to support struggling readers)

**Sparx Level 5:** Reading Age 12 (Middle-grade books)

**Sparx Level 7:** Reading Age 15 (Challenging books for strong readers)

**Sparx Level 9:** Reading Age 16 (More challenging books for stronger readers)

Students will be shown a selection of books that are appropriate for their Reading Level. Every time students do some reading or answer a question, we learn a bit more about how they read, and that all feeds into our estimate of their current reading level. The more students read using Sparx Reader, the more information we will have to ensure their level is accurate.

#### 5. What accessibility settings does Sparx Reader have?

Sparx Reader has a number of settings designed to make it more accessible, including coloured overlays, font size, dyslexia-friendly fonts, and reading guides. These settings are available on both desktop and mobile devices. A student can access this menu by clicking their name in the top right corner and then clicking 'Settings'. Here they will find different settings which they can change to make the text easier to read for them, as pictured below.

For Font Scale, the scale of font sizes will differ slightly based on screen size.

For larger screens (e.g. Laptop), the font sizes equate to:

- Normal: 18px
- Large: 19.8px
- Larger: 21.6px

- Largest: 24.3px

For smaller screens (e.g. Mobile), font sizes equate to:

- Normal: 15px
- Large: 16.5px
- Larger: 18px
- Largest: 19.5px

## Screen Readers

We do not currently have the function of a screen reader within Sparx Reader as we are trying to encourage students to learn and practice reading carefully. However, we acknowledge that in specific circumstances the text being read out loud could be a useful tool to support specific students for example those with a visual impairment. In these cases, most screen reading software should work alongside Sparx Reader.

### 6. What is the League Table students can see?

Students have the option to enter a League Table which will show them where they rank in comparison to all other Sparx Reader users, those in their class and those in their school. Students will also choose a made up name for themselves as part of joining the League Table.

**If a student does not want to be included in the League Table, they can exclude themselves by not choosing a name for themselves. If no name has been chosen, the student will not appear.**

### 7. How does Sparx Reader support struggling readers?

There are over 200 books on the platform, catering for students with reading ages between 6 to 17+. We know that older students who are struggling readers are less likely to engage if they feel their book isn't age-appropriate, babyish or boring. To support these readers, we have a large number of high interest age, low reading age (Hi-Lo) books (from publishers such as Badger Learning). These Hi-Lo books handle mature content while still being accessible for them to read. This makes them much more appealing and helps to keep older readers with lower reading ages, engaged in their reading. We offer books to students that are appropriate for their reading age, meaning

students with a lower reading age will be offered more accessible books such as those mentioned above.

In our lowest reading age books (5-6), the questions will differ to support these readers. For example, we do not always include a 'Not in story' option as we are mindful of managing these readers' cognitive loads, and for novice readers, it isn't always appropriate or helpful to include this option. Instead, we vary the nature of the questions by providing gap-fill options, still in a multiple-choice format. In lower-level books (reading age 5-7), while the distractors are there, they are all lifted from the text itself so that the novice reader's working memory isn't overloaded with yet more new information.

For pupils with a low reading age, the frequency of the checks will differ too. For our weakest readers, questions appear more frequently and can be as often as every 50-100 words providing them with regular check-in points and constant feelings of success. They will also be presented with fewer questions at each check than those with a higher reading age.

As a reminder, the questions are carefully designed and are based on the most important events, characters and themes from the section the student has just read. This means it should be easy for students to pass if they have read carefully. The language used in the questions is also pitched at the same level as the text itself.

8. What is the vocabulary check?

In addition to weekly reading homework, students have optional daily vocabulary practice. This is not compulsory, but students do earn SRP for it!

9. Are there any videos to support students when they get it wrong?

There are not any videos as the platform differs slightly to Sparx Maths. Rather than seeing a video if they get an answer wrong, they are asked to go back and read again. This supports students with returning to a text to find the answer rather than giving up which is a skill in itself.

10. Does Sparx Reader have an audio option?

We see Sparx Reader as something that sits alongside many different types of valuable reading provision within schools so currently, we don't provide a function for the text to be read out loud within the site.

### **We want to support students in building effective reading habits**

Sparx Reader aims to develop robust, independent close-reading habits in young people, who learn to read with care, precision and insight. We believe that this particular aim is best achieved when pupils read books for themselves.

This is because the complex process of reading is based on a great many sub-skills being held in perfect balance, consisting of both cognitive processes and 'soft skills'. In brief, effective reading is a crucial interplay between word recognition and language comprehension, and habit-development, self-efficacy level and the ability to persevere.

### **Students can learn to rely too much on listening rather than reading**

When a student listens to an audio version of a book, some of the load of decoding is removed from their cognitive processes. Equally, a speaker's use of dynamics can go a long way to add meaning to, and generate insights into, the narrative. While these aspects can heighten enjoyment and interest, they do not necessarily promote careful, individual reading for meaning. In order to become proficient in close reading, learners must take responsibility for establishing meaning, for themselves.

### **Students can read the text aloud themselves**

For some students, it may be beneficial to read the text on Sparx Reader aloud - either to themselves or to a teacher - before tackling the questions. This way, it is still the learner who is decoding, identifying and comprehending the words and their larger place within a sentence.

### **Extenuating circumstances:**

We do understand that in unique cases, such as for students with visual impairments, it may be essential for the text to be read out loud. In these cases, most screen reading software should work alongside Sparx Reader.