



HAYES SCHOOL

West Common Road, Hayes, Kent, BR2 7DB

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Our ref: SCA/mhn/off/Yr7-8SparxReader

17th September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

We're excited to let you know that, following our Sparx Reader pilot project with last year's Year 7 cohort, we have now subscribed to it for the coming academic year, and your child will be receiving a weekly homework to carry out careful reading using Sparx Reader.

The evidence from last year is undeniable: students who engaged more with Sparx Reader made more progress than those who engaged less. (Data from NGRT and Sparx Reader.)

When starting on Sparx Reader, your child can choose from a range of ebooks at their appropriate level and, as they read, they'll answer questions to check they're reading carefully. Careful readers earn points, meaning they can track their progress and climb the league table! As students improve, the books they are offered will become more challenging.

Your child's homework will be set on Mondays and will be due on Sunday evening each week. The first homework will be on Monday 23rd September. If students have any technical problems or need any help with the Sparx Reader homework, they will attend the 'Reading Room', which is held in C1A every Wednesday from 3:00pm to 3:30pm.

Motivated readers who demonstrate consistent, careful reading can unlock 'Gold Reader'. This means they can read any paper book from the library or from home by scanning in its barcode. The Sparx Reader software allows them to demonstrate their love for reading and enables us to track whether they are continuing to read challenging books carefully or whether they are starting to find books predictable and to skim-read.

Whilst we hope that many students will go on to become readers for pleasure, it is also important that all students understand the value of reading as a tool for learning. Evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and attainment (Clark 2011; Clark and Douglas 2011). They have to read frequently to be able to enjoy it.



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Cont'd...

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Thank you for supporting us and encouraging your child to engage in this program. We look forward to celebrating your child's achievements later in the year. Attached to this letter are some responses to FAQs.

Yours sincerely



Ms. S. Alexander
Leader of Literacy Across the Curriculum



Miss C. Thompson
Head of School

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Frequently asked questions

How do they log in?

- Students log in at sparxreader.com. They will need to find 'Hayes School' and log in using their Sparx Maths details.

What devices are supported?

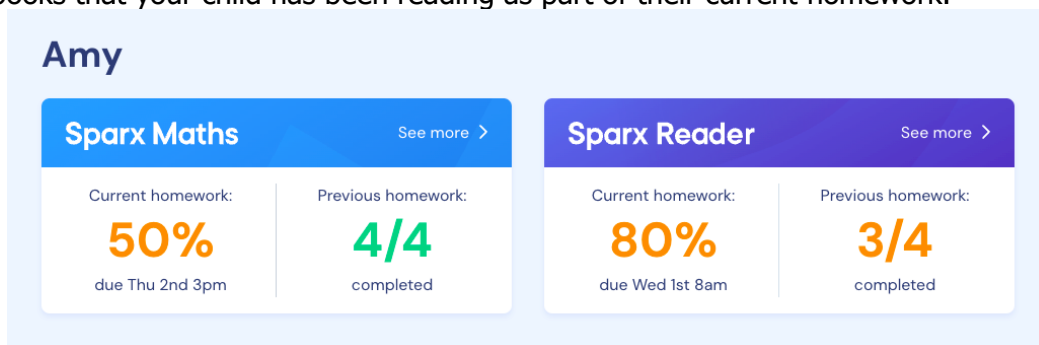
- Your child can access Sparx Reader on any device that connects to the internet with a web browser.

How can I support my child with their reading?

- Sparx Reader adapts to each student's reading level, so it's important that you **don't** help by answering questions for them. If you help them, Sparx Reader might think they're a very strong reader and show them books that are too difficult.
- You can however help to provide a quiet space for your child to focus on their reading homework each week.
- The best way to support your child is to ask them about the book they're reading; what aspects they're enjoying, or what characters and events they've recently read about.

How can I monitor the reading my child is doing?

- You are able to keep track of the reading your child is doing by clicking through the link to the Parent Portal in your Sparx Maths weekly homework email.
- On the Parent Portal, you can choose to view homework progress for any Sparx learning system your child is using. For Sparx Reader, you can see progress with the current and previous homework, and browse books that your child has been reading as part of their current homework.



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What support is available at Hayes?

- Homework club runs every day from 3pm to 4pm in MGH.
- The Reading Room will run every Wednesday from 3pm to 3:30pm in C1A, enabling students to complete their Sparx Reader homework if they need a device to work on, or any support with accessing the homework.
- The Library is available at break and lunch and before and after school for independent work.

What is the difference between English and Literacy? Why is my child receiving homework for both subjects?

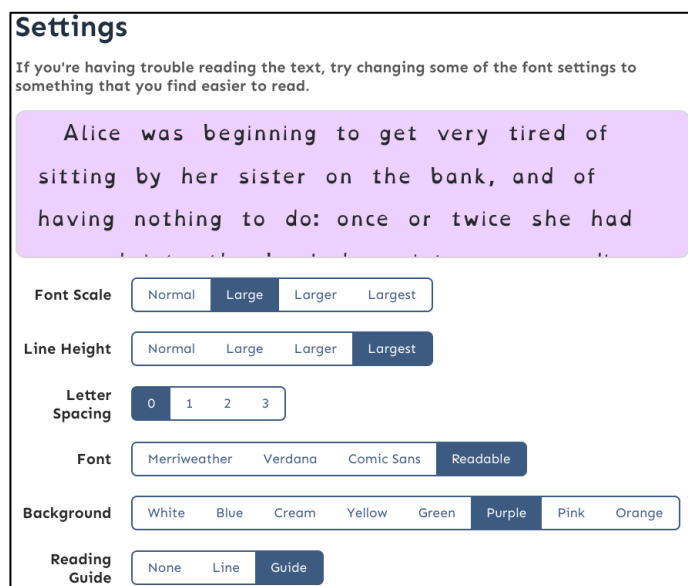
- English at secondary school is an academic subject. At Hayes, the Head of English is Ms Whittaker. She oversees the teaching of English at KS3, at GCSE and at A Level. She manages the English teachers and is responsible for teaching and learning within the department. English teachers set homework related to making progress in English.
- Literacy at secondary school is how we refer to a set of skills that are used in every subject. Ms Alexander is the Leader of Literacy Across the Curriculum and oversees Sparx Reader as well as other reading initiatives in other year groups. Ms Alexander works to ensure that students are able to access texts in all subjects. The Sparx Reader homework is set by Ms Alexander, not by your child's English teacher.

My child has dyslexia. Is Sparx Reader appropriate for use by students

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

My child is struggling with Sparx Reader.

- If your child reads carefully, the checks should be easy for her/him to pass. If your child is rushing or skim-reading, s/he will likely fail their checks, get a low accuracy score and the homework will likely take longer than expected. It is helpful to make sure your child understands that reading carefully and taking their time is the most efficient way to earn points.
- Ask your child to come to the Reading Room on Wednesdays after school. Ms Alexander will be able to watch your child doing the reading and consider whether an adjustment needs to be made. Ms Alexander will also be able to check this against other reading data that we have for the year group.
- If an adjustment is needed, Ms Alexander can manually change the difficulty level of the books your child is being offered.



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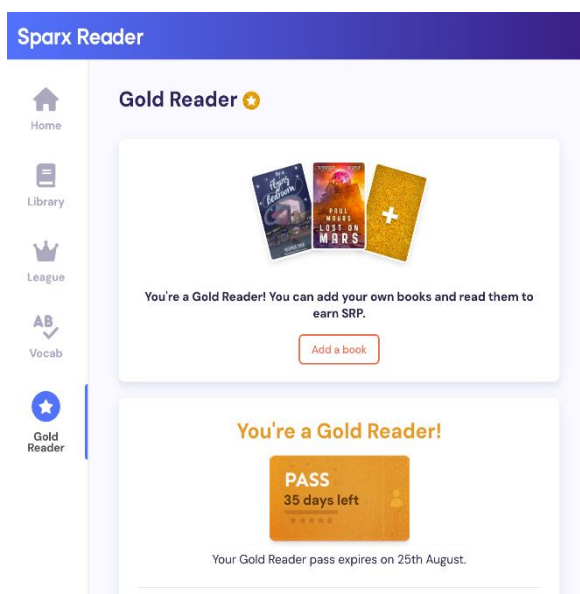
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My child is a very keen reader and I don't feel Sparx Reader is needed.

- Sparx Reader initially sits on top of any reading your child is already doing as it has a different purpose.
- Many children read before going to bed, as do many adults. This is a wonderful way to unwind after a long day, and helps many of us fall asleep quickly and reduces stress hormones. It does not, however, always entail careful, thoughtful reading.
- Keen readers often develop a strong preference for particular genres or writers. It is wonderful to see your child being able to articulate what they like about a style or fictional world. However, students who like a particular genre or writer tend to read books that are similar to ones they already like.
- When your child reads completely independently, there is no way for you to track how carefully s/he is reading. As your child's life gets busier in the teenage years, reading may well become something s/he does more quickly. This then can lead to disillusionment with reading as the engagement has decreased.
- Your child should be able to achieve and maintain Gold Reader with ease, which means s/he can continue to read books from home or the library.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms Alexander (sca@hayes.bromley.sch.uk).



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