

Phonics Screening Check 2023

What is Phonics?

Phonics is an established way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. Usually beginning in the early years, your child will be taught how to:

- distinguish sounds in words;
- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes;
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make, such as 'sh' or 'oo';
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can use this knowledge to 'decode' new words that they hear or see. They will then develop skills in segmenting for writing, breaking the word into sounds to spell it out.

What is the Phonics Screening Check?

The Phonics Screening Check takes place in year 1, usually in June. Children throughout the country will all take the test during the same week. If they are absent from school during that week, they will take it within the specified time frame. Children in year 2 will also take the check if they did not achieve the required outcome when in year 1 or if they have not taken the test before. It is up to individual headteachers to decide whether some pupils within their school might be exempt from taking the Phonics Screening Check.

The Phonics Screening Check is designed to allow schools to assess whether children have made expected progress within their phonics learning and have reached an appropriate standard. It can help teachers to identify gaps in children's phonics knowledge and gives the school a picture of where children may be excelling or requiring extra support.

How does the Phonics Screening Check work?

The Phonics Screening Check is defined by the DfE as "short, light-touch assessments." During the Phonics Screening Check, children are asked to read (i.e. decode) 40 words. Most of these words are real words, but some are also pseudo-words. A pseudo-word or 'alien' word is a fake or nonsense word that features strings of letters that resemble real words.

Children do not need to know the meaning of the words but do need to be able to sound out and correctly blend the words.



There isn't a time limit for the Phonics Screening Check, but it usually takes around eight to ten minutes. Teachers will support children who need to take longer or take the test in small sections. Children have been practising in school and will be practising this over the next few weeks in preparation.

Most children pass their Phonics Screening Tests. If a child doesn't pass and doesn't meet the expected standard, they will be given the appropriate support with their phonics to help them eventually reach the expected standard. They will then re-take the Phonics Screening Check the following year.

Reporting to Parents

Once data is collected nationally, the pass mark is given to schools. We will then share this result with parents in your child's report at the end of the Summer Term.

Children who do not pass the Phonics Screening Check in year 1 will go on to retake it in year 2, unless there are mitigating circumstances.

How can you help your child prepare for the Phonics Screening Check?

Parents play an enormous part in fostering a love of books and an enjoyment of reading in their children.

We have added some practise flashcards and activities on the phonics page of our website for you to use at home. Please access these resources [here](#). If you would like printed copies of these resources, please ask your teachers.

- Play lots of listening games at home with your child.
- Read with your child as often as possible. Read to them and get them to read to you.
- When you listen to your child read, allow them time to attempt to decode unfamiliar words using the strategies they have learnt in school, before jumping in to help them. If they continue to struggle you may support them by pointing out the sounds (not the letters) in a word. For example, the word 'sheep' would be 'sh-ee-p.' or 'rain' would be 'r-ai-n'. It is important that once your child sounds out the word they then say the word correctly. E.g. 'r-ai-n – rain'.
- When you read to your child, model how you would attempt an unfamiliar word.
- Encourage them with plenty of praise and try to make your reading time enjoyable.
- Play lots of word games like 'I Spy' and 'Hangman'.
- Help your child with their reading by identifying the different sounds in words. For example, in 'bird', say 'b-ir-d', then blend these sounds together to say the word 'bird' or 'midnight' supporting your child to see two syllables 'mid' and 'night' and then decoding each syllable, 'm-i-d' and 'n-igh-t' before saying the whole word 'midnight'.
- Contact your child's teacher. They will be able to inform you of where your child might need extra support and what you can do to help them.