

Year 1 Screening Check

Guide for Parents



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.

What Happens During the Screening?

The Phonics Screening Check is designed not to be stressful for your child. The school should have prepared children well for it beforehand and it will not be referred to as a 'test'.

The test contains 40 words. Some of these words are real words and some are 'non-words' or 'nonsense words'. Children will be prepared for the fact that some of the words will not be real words and these words are identifiable during the test by having a small image of an alien next to them. These 'non-words' are important because all children will need to use their decoding skills to read them as they will have not been learnt by sight.

The test will take around 10 minutes per child, although children are allowed to work at their own pace and there is no time limit. If your child is struggling, the teacher can stop the check. Each child will sit one-to-one with an adult and will be asked to read the 40 words out loud.

Reporting to Parents

Schools must report the results of the Phonics Screening Check to parents before the end of the summer term. They should advise you on how your child has scored and if your child has struggled to meet the expected standard in the test. They may also tell you what support has been put in place to help your child. 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 I Help?

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

- 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.
- Encourage them with plenty of praise and try to make your reading time enjoyable.
- Play lots of word games like 'I Spy'.
- Help your child with their reading by identifying the different sounds in words. For example, in 'cat', say 'c-a-t', then blend these sounds together to say the word 'cat'.
- Discuss the meanings of the words that your child is reading.
- Talk to your child's teacher. Find out where your child might need extra support and what you can do to help them.

