



Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Parents & Carers

**RE: National Phonics Screening Test**

I am writing to inform you about the National Phonics Screening Test which will take place in Key Stage 1 during June. This letter aims to explain this process, in addition to providing you with ideas to help your child with phonics at home.

**Who takes the test?**

All children in Year 1. In addition, any child in Year 2 who did not reach the required level when they took the test in Year 1 will take the test again in year 2. If for any reason, we feel that there is a valid reason why your child should not take the test in Year 1, the class teacher will discuss this with you. Please note, this is only done in exceptional circumstances and your child would still be eligible to take the retake when they are in Year 2.

**What is the Year 1 phonics screening check?**

The phonics screening check is taken individually by all children in Year 1 in England. It is designed to give teachers and parents information on how your child is progressing in phonics. It will help to identify whether your child needs additional support at this stage so that they do not fall behind in this vital early reading skill.

**What sort of check is it and is it compulsory?**

It is a school-based check to make sure that your child receives any additional support promptly, should they need it. It is not a stressful situation as the teacher will be well-equipped to listen and understand your child's level of skills.

There will be a few practice words first to make sure your child understands the activity.

**What does it check?**

It checks that your child can:

- Sound out and blend graphemes in order to read simple words.
- Read phonically decodable one-syllable and two-syllable words, e.g. cat, sand, windmill.
- Read a selection of nonsense words, which are referred to as pseudo words.

**What are nonsense or pseudo words and why are they included?**

These are words that are phonically decodable but are not actual words with an associated meaning e.g. brip, snorb. Pseudo words are included in the check specifically to assess whether your child can decode a word using phonics skills and not their memory.

The pseudo words will be shown to your child with a picture of a monster and they will be asked to tell their teacher what sort of monster it is by reading the word. This not only makes the check a bit more fun, but provides the children with a context for the nonsense word which is independent from any existing vocabulary they may have. Crucially, it does not provide any clues, so your child just has to be able to decode it. Children generally find nonsense amusing so they will probably enjoy reading these words.



### **Is there a pass mark?**

The check is not about passing or failing but checking appropriate progress is being made. If children do not reach the required standard, then the teacher will be in touch to discuss plans and offer additional, tailored support to ensure that your child can catch up. Children progress at different speeds so not reaching the threshold score does not necessarily mean there is a serious problem. Your child will re-sit the check the following summer term.

### **What happens to the results?**

The school will report your child's results to you by the end of the summer term as well as to the local authority, but the results will not be published in a league table as with SATs. If you have any concerns, do talk to the teacher about this in a parents' meeting or after school.

### **Do all schools and children have to participate?**

All schools and academies in England must take part in the phonics screening check unless they are an independent school. There is a process in place for reviewing children with special educational needs, so if your child's teacher thinks there are very special reasons related to your child and their needs that make them think the phonics screening check may not be appropriate, they will decide on appropriate action and discuss this with you.

### **What can I do to help my child?**

Phonics works best when children are given plenty of encouragement and learn to enjoy reading and books. Parents play a very important part in helping with this. You can then highlight these sounds when you read with your child.

Helping your child with phonics Phonics works best when children are given plenty of encouragement and learn to enjoy reading and books. Parents and carers play a very important part in helping with this. Some simple steps to help your child learn to read through phonics:

- Step 1 – identify 'special friends'
- Step 2 – Fred talk the sounds (say each sound separately)
- Step 3 – read the word (blend sounds together)
- Use the speed sounds chart. Point to a sound and ask your child to say the sound.
- Practise a mixture of real and nonsense words for your child to practice. An example of a phonics screening check test has been included.
- Try to make time to read with your child every day.
- Practise any phonics sheets that have been sent home.









### **What should I do if my child is struggling to decode a word?**

- Say each sound in the word from left to right.
- Blend the sounds by pointing to each letter, i.e. /b/ in bat, or letter group, i.e. /igh/ in sigh, as you say the sound, then run your finger under the whole word as you say it.
- Talk about the meaning if your child does not understand the word they have read.
- Work at your child's pace.
- Always be positive and give lots of praise and encouragement.



### **What does the phonics screening look like?**

The phonics screening consists of 40 words to read. Some are real words and some are nonsense words.

Section 1	Section 1	Section 2	Section 2
chip	fod 	elbow	slimp 
hill	bep 	tailor	craint 
jars	zat 	sequins	splet 
shack	ult 	whirling	strave 
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Real words		Nonsense words	
Real words		Nonsense words	

If you have any questions, please contact the office to book an appointment with me.

Yours faithfully,



**Ms Pilard**  
**Year 2 Teacher & Phonics Lead**