

Year 1 Phonics Screening Check- A Guide for Parents

What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. Children are taught how to recognise the sounds each individual letter makes and to identify the sounds that different contributions of letters make such as 'sh' and 'oo'. Children are taught to read by breaking down words into separate sounds or 'phonemes'. They are then taught how to blend these sounds together to read the whole word.

Why Phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way, starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to more complex sounds, it is the most effective way of teaching children to read. It is particularly helpful for children aged 5-7. Almost all children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently and for enjoyment.

What is the phonics screening check?

The National phonics screening check is a statutory assessment that was introduced in 2012 to all Year 1 pupils and is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge.

Who is it for?

All Year 1 pupils will take the phonics screening check, this takes place in June.

What is in the phonics screening check?

It comprises of a list of 40 words and nonsense words. It will assess phonics skills and knowledge learnt through Reception and Year 1. Your child will read one-one with a teacher. It will be your child's current teacher so it is a familiar face. Your child will read up to 4 words per page and the check lasts for about 10-15 minutes. They will be asked to 'sound out' a word and blend the sounds together. The check is very similar to tasks the children already complete during phonics lessons.

Is it stressful to test such young children?

The assessment will be age appropriate and the adults involved will all be familiar. The children at Our Lady of the Wayside School are familiar with the set up as we are constantly reviewing children's progress in the same way. It should be an enjoyable activity for children which takes no more than 15 minutes. There will be a few practise words at the beginning to make sure your child understands the activity.

What are Nonsense or Pseudo words and why are they included?

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

The pseudo words will be shown to your child with a picture of an alien. The children will be asked what the alien's name is by reading the word. This will make the check a bit more fun and provides the children with a context for the nonsense word. Crucially it does not provide any clues, so your child has to be able to decode it. Children generally find nonsense amusing so they will probably enjoy reading these words.

How will the results from the screening be used?

You will be informed of your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check, towards the end of the summer term in their annual school report.

What happens if a child struggles with the screening check?

The screening check will help to identify children who have phonic decoding skills below the level expected for the end of Year 1 and who therefore need help. Schools are expected to provide extra help and children will then be able to re-take the assessment in Year 2.

How can I help my child?

There are a number of things that parents can do to support early reading development:

- Let your child see you enjoy reading yourself. They are influenced by you and what you do!
- Immerse your child in a love of reading.
- Make time for your child to read their school book to you.
- With all books, encourage your child to 'sound out' unfamiliar words and then blend from left to right rather than looking at pictures to guess.

There are many phonic games for children to access on the computer, for example:

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

www.lettersandsounds.com

We hope this information is useful. Remember, we are here to help your child achieve their very best. If you have any questions please contact your child's class teacher or Miss Jackson (Lower Phase Manager).