

Dear Parents / Carers

Re: National Phonics Screening Test

We are writing to inform you about the National Phonics Screening Test which will take place in Key Stage 1 during the weeks beginning 11th June.

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 phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read. They are taught how to:

- Recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes
- Identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make e.g. sh and oo
- Blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.
Children can then use this knowledge to segment and blend new words that they hear or see.

Why phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way – starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex – it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read.

What is the phonics screening check?

As you may have already heard, the government introduced an annual phonics screening check in 2013. This will further inform our continual assessment of the children's phonic knowledge and the results of the check will be shared with parents/carers in the end of year report.

It comprises of a list of 40 words that children read one-to-one with a teacher. The list is a combination of both real and made up, non-words which rely purely on using phonics to decode. The non-words are words that have been made up and will be shown with a picture of an imaginary creature to help them.

The phonics screening check will take place on a one to one but the children will largely be unaware of it being a test and have already participated in some practice ones.

What are nonsense words?

Your child will be told during the check which words are nonsense words (that he/she will not have seen before). Your child will be familiar with this because we already use 'nonsense-words' (monster words) when teaching phonics in school.

Nonsense-words are important to include because words such as 'vap' or 'jound' are new to all children. Children cannot read the non-words by using their memory or vocabulary; they have to use their decoding skills. This is a fair way to assess their ability to decode.

After the check

We will tell you about your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check as part of the end of year report. If your child has found the check difficult, we will also tell you what support we have put in place to help him or her improve. You might like to ask your child's class teacher how you can support your child to take the next step in reading.

All children are individuals and develop at different rates. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need extra help with phonic decoding.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Stylianou or your child's class teacher.

Yours faithfully

Lisa Kelly
Acting Headteacher