

Parent Guide to Phonics Screening Check

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read and spell quickly and skillfully. It is the first strategy taught to help children learn to read. It runs alongside other teaching methods such as Guided Reading to help children develop key decoding skills that will lead them to becoming successful readers .

During phonics lessons your child will be taught to:

- ◆ Recognise the sound that each individual letter represents
- ◆ Identify the sounds that different combinations of letters represent (e.g. 'ch' or 'ai')
- ◆ Blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word

Words are made from small units of sounds called phonemes. Phonics teaches children to be able to listen carefully and identify the units of sound that make up each word.

For more information please follow the link to a Department of Education information for parents.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/194057/phonics_check_leaflet_2013_.pdf

Glossary of Terms

In phonics lessons children are taught using the following terms.

Phoneme – The smallest unit of sound. There are approximately 44 phonemes in English (this can depend on your accent!). Phonemes can be put together to make a word.

Grapheme – This is a way of writing down a phoneme. Graphemes can be made from 1 letter e.g. *p*. 2 letters e.g. *sh* 3 letters e.g. *tch* or 4 letters e.g. *ough*.

Digraph – a grapheme containing 2 letters that makes 1 sound (phoneme) e.g. *ch*

Trigraph – a grapheme containing 3 letters that makes 1 sound (phoneme) e.g. *igh*

What is the phonics screening check?

The national phonics screening test was introduced in 2012 to all Year 1 pupils. The check is very similar to tasks the children already complete during phonics lessons.

The focus of the check is to provide evidence of children's decoding and blending skills, not to test their vocabulary. It aims to identify the children who need extra help with certain sounds or blends so that they can be given support by school to improve their reading skills.

Who is it for?

Year 1 pupils will take the phonics screening check in the summer term. If your child is absent during the assessment week, they can take the screening check when they are back in school.

As the children in Year 2 Autumn 2020 were unable to take the test the previous academic year, they will take the test on the week beginning 16th November.

How is the phonics screening check administered?

There will be two sections in this 40-word check.

Your child will read four words per page for their teacher and they will do the check in one sitting of about 5-10 minutes.

What will it check?

It will check 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 pseudo words (which we refer to as alien words) so that they are not just reading by sight

Why are alien words included in the screening check?

Alien words are used in established assessments and are included in many phonics programmes. They are included because they will be new to all children, so there won't be a bias to those with a good vocabulary knowledge or visual memory of words. Children who can read alien words should have the skills to decode almost any unfamiliar word.

When will the results from the phonics screening check be shared?

Schools have to inform parents towards the end of the summer term in Year 1 of their child's results. At The Queen's School results will be in the end of year report. For those Year 2 children taking the test in autumn 2020, the results and score will be reported to parents by the end of that term.

What happens if a child struggles with the screening check?

The screening check will identify children who have phonic decoding skills below the level expected for the end of Year 1 and who therefore need extra help. At The Queen's School we assess phonic development throughout the year and keep you informed of your child's progress as part of our parent consultations.

How can I help my child?

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

- ✓ Let your child see you enjoying reading yourself, they are influenced by you and what you value!
- ✓ Immerse your child in a love of reading: share books and magazines with your child
- ✓ Make time for your child to read school books to you regularly – digraph spot together
- ✓ Help your child to practise reading key words and sounds when these are sent home
- ✓ Make up alien words for names of toys or things around the home
- ✓ Play games online: www.phonicsplay.co.uk or <http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/alphablocks>