

Year 1 phonics screening check FAQs

FAQ

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What is the year 1 phonics screening check?

The Year 1 phonics screening check is a short, light-touch assessment to confirm whether individual pupils have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard.

It will identify the children who need extra help so they are given support by their school to improve their reading skills. They will then be able to retake the check so that schools can track pupils until they are able to decode.

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Who is it for?

Year 1 pupils in maintained schools, academies and Free Schools will take the phonics screening check in 2012 between 18 and 22 June.

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When does it happen?

Schools will be able to administer the check at any time that suits them during the week of the 18 to 22 June 2012.

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Is it compulsory?

Yes. It will be a statutory requirement for all schools to carry out the screening check.

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Where can I find more information?

Information on the [phonics](#) page of our website explains how the check was designed for the pilot.

A summary of the independent [evaluation](#) of the pilot, which took place in June 2011, is also available. We will continue to consult with Ofqual about the details of the check, in line with their regulatory requirements. After the regulations are introduced later this year, an assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA) document for the phonics check will be published and sent to schools. This will tell schools everything they need know to administer the check.

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How is the check structured?

It will be a short, simple screening check to make sure that all pupils have grasped fundamental phonics skills and to see that nobody slips through the net. It comprises a list of 40 words and non-words, which a child will read one-to-one with a teacher. Find out more about the type of [words and non-words](#) that may be used.

Schools will have a one-week window to complete the check with all pupils.

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Isn't it stressful to test such young children?

The assessment will be age-appropriate, with children sitting with a teacher who they know and reading one-to-one. It should be an enjoyable activity for children that takes no more than a few minutes.

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Do pupils with SEN have to take the screening check?

It should be taken by as many pupils as possible, and we have worked closely with SEN specialists to make this happen. Where necessary, adjustments will be made and appropriate guidance provided.

For pupils who are working well below the level of the screening check (for example, if they have shown no understanding of letter-sound correspondences), there will be a disapplication process so they do not have to take part. Parents should be informed if a child is disapplied.

Further information will be made available in the phonics check *Assessment and reporting arrangements*.

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Why have you included non-words in the screening check?

Non-words are an established assessment method in many schools, and are included in many phonics programmes. They are included because they will be new to all pupils, so there won't be a bias to those with a good vocabulary knowledge or visual memory of words. Pupils who can read non-words should have the skills to decode almost any unfamiliar word. The evidence from the pilot showed that a significant majority of teachers agreed that including non-words in the assessment was suitable.

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But weren't children confused by the non-words?

The evaluation shows that children generally enjoyed the pseudo- or non-words. Of course, it is important that children understand the difference between real words and non-words. Some teachers in the pilot reported that some pupils were confused, and we'll take steps to address this, including helping teachers to introduce pseudo-words clearly.

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How will the results from the phonics screening check be used?

Schools' results will not be published, although schools will have to tell parents their child's results. Schools will be given the flexibility to inform parents in the way they think most suitable. Data will be available on RAISEOnline, for use by school, local authorities, and Ofsted as part of their inspections process.

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How have the phonics checks been developed?

The phonics screening check has been developed by phonics experts and in consultation with headteachers, teachers and other experts. It has been piloted in around 300 schools and independently evaluated.

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Do academies have to undertake the phonics checks?

Yes – this will be a statutory screening check which academies have to carry out according to the terms of their Funding Agreement.

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Does a teacher have to carry out the screening check?

Yes, we expect the class teacher to carry out the check with most pupils, although schools may involve other teachers such as literacy coordinators, as long as the child knows the teacher. Administering the phonics check requires a teacher's professional judgement, and a significant majority of respondents to our public consultation agreed that a teacher should do the check. However, there may be exceptional cases for the teaching assistant or specialist teacher to be also present while a particular child is being assessed.

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Will there be information available to help teachers administer the check?

Yes. Detailed information will be published in the assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA) document for the phonics check, to be published later this year. Following recommendations from pilot schools, we also intend to produce a video guide to help teachers administer the check.

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How long does the check take?

Every child is different, but most in the pilot took between four and nine minutes to complete the assessment.

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Will there be funding associated with this policy?

Schools will not receive funding for the phonics screening check as national assessments are a part of their core work. Schools wanting to buy phonics products or training to support their teaching can receive match-funding of up to £3000 when they purchase through an approved catalogue. This catalogue will be available shortly. Please see the Phonics pages on the Department's website for further details.

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Do schools need to register for the phonics check or order any materials?

No. All Key Stage 1 schools are required to take part. We will send materials to schools based on school census data.

Further information will be available in the phonics check *Assessment and reporting arrangements*.

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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. Schools will be expected to provide extra help and children will then be able to re-take the assessment in Year 2.

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