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The phonics screening check is designed to see if children have learnt phonic decoding to the appropriate standard. On this page you'll find all the information you need to understand the phonics screening check. Free phonics screening check past papers are included at the bottom. Our Phonics Screening Check Papers are Free to Download with No Registration Necessary. What does the year 1 phonics screening check consist of? It is designed to be short, light-touch and non-stressful for children. It consists of 40 words – half are real, half are made up. Children will be shown each word in turn and will be asked to read it out loud to a teacher. The test normally takes around five to ten minutes per child. Children should not be aware that they are being tested, it should feel like part of their normal phonics activity. Why are made up words (non-words) included in the test? They are included so that teachers can be sure that vocabulary knowledge is not slanting the results. All children will be seeing these new words for the first time. The children are shown the non-words alongside a picture of an imaginary creature and are told it is the name of that particular creature. Example words include: Star and Shelf. Non-Words could include: Dov and Vead. What level should children reach in the year 1 phonics screening check? The threshold can vary but is normally 32 out of 40 (or around 80%). We need to be aware at this stage that the age gap between children is particularly marked at this age. Some younger and less mature children will be a year younger than some of their peers – that's about 15% at this age so can make a huge difference. As a result you can expect some children not to do as well because of their age. These age differences become less marked as children get older (in year six the year difference means there is only a 10% disparity). How can parents help their children with the year 1 phonics screening check? It isn't an exam to be passed but of course parents can get involved at an early stage, helping their children with phonics and learning to read. This is particularly important for younger children (within their year group) where they may be a full year younger than others in the same year (in year 2 this is a 15% difference in age). If parents want to help then a good start point is the international phonics alphabet which is included here: International Phonetic Alphabet. Past Phonics Screening Check Papers. Additionally, the free to download Phonics tests below can be used. There are 4 sets of past papers. Each set includes practice material, assessment materials, an answer sheet and scoring guidance. Phonics Screening Check Paper Set 1 – Practice Material, Assessment Materials, Answer Sheet, Scoring Guidance. Phonics Screening Check Paper Set 2 – Practice Material, Assessment Materials, Answer Sheet, Scoring Guidance. Phonics Screening Check Paper Set 3 – Practice Material, Assessment Materials, Answer Sheet, Scoring Guidance. Phonics Screening Check Paper Set 4 – Practice Material, Assessment Materials, Answer Sheet, Scoring Guidance. The threshold for meeting the expected standard for the Phonics Screening Check has been 32 marks out of 40 for the last two years. This can change, but historically the threshold has been set between 30 and 32 marks. Marking guidance is published close to the time of the phonics screen check each year which will indicate the threshold mark for that year. Children in Year 1 across the UK will be preparing for the phonics screening test which will take place next week. You may have some questions about the phonics screening test so here is a brief guide to help you. We also have plenty of free resources to help too. If you are looking for fun and engaging strategies for use at home and in school, why not attend one of the free Monster Phonics webinars? Select a date and book your place here. If you are a school, take a free trial for full access to lessons and resources to help you to prepare. What happens during the test? The test is a relaxed and enjoyable experience. Your teachers will also have prepared your child who will be familiar with the format of the test. We have a free interactive online Phonics Screening Test to help you practise. It's very simple. Once you start the test, click the tick if your child reads the word and the cross if they do not. If you add your email at the end of the test, the test will automatically send you a breakdown of the results. This will help you identify any areas that would be useful for your child to recap. Our paper Phonics Screen provides additional practise. It has an example word for every aspect of phonics taught. Select a section and read with your child for further preparation. Your child will be assessed on their reading of 40 words, 20 of which are real and 20 of which are nonsense 'pseudo' or 'alien' words. Pseudo words test your child's ability to decode words without the support of any memory of words that they may have come across in reading. Each page of the test has 4 words. Your child is expected to segment and blend each word on the page before moving on to the next page. Your child will go through the words at a pace that is right for them. Their teacher will allow them to take a break if they feel the focus has drifted. Once they have completed the test they go back to class. The test should last no more than between 5 and 20 minutes dependant on reading pace. What is the pass rate? The pass rate has been 32/40 since Phonics Screening began but this can change at any time. Why are children tested at this stage? The purpose of the phonics screening test is to confirm that all children have learned phonic decoding to the right age-appropriate standard. It keeps parents informed about their child's progress in developing word-reading skills and ensure that any potential gaps in learning can be addressed. When will we know the results? This differs from school to school but often you will find out if your child passed around the same time end of year reports are released. This is to ensure all scores are confirmed by the examining body. What can I do now? Familiarise yourself with the phonics jargon. Our free parent webinar gives an excellent guide to this and allows you to ask our expert panel any questions that you may have. To book click here. Spend time reading with your child daily. I would recommend between 10 and 20 minutes. Read Monster Phonics online eBooks and watch our Phonics Storytimes. Monster Phonics books are in line with curriculum and focus on phonics. Do not worry! My school uses Monster Phonics. Are the words colour-coded? Although the words are not colour coded in the screening test, your child's experience of Monster Phonics will help them to decode more effectively. As your child will have had exposure to the sound colours they will have started to internalise the graphemes and correspond them with a monster which is the most rewarding part for me. Although colour is not used within the test, children will still recognise a grapheme and associate it with the sound. For example, I sat with a child reading a non-colour coded text and they pointed to 'ea' in 'beach' and said, 'Look it's Green Froggy'. The colours may no longer be visible but the context remains. What about the pseudo words in the Phonics Screening Test. How does Monster Phonics help children to read nonsense words? The principle is the same. It is key to remember that there are lots of words that are new to your child which they come across every day. With Monster Phonics, the context and the principle is engrained and so it is then simply applied to words both familiar and unfamiliar, both real and pseudo. Our free colour-coded real and nonsense word flashcards can be used in fun flashcard games and activities to help your children improve their phonics knowledge. Will my child have time to think in the phonics screening? There are many misconceptions around the screening and that it's a pressurised test situation. Yes your child is in the room with their teacher looking at an official paper but to them, it's a game; can you help me find all the monsters? It is at the teacher's discretion if the pupil takes a break during the test and if they do they can take as long or as many breaks as they need on two conditions: Children are not integrated with any pupil who has taken or is yet to take the test. The entire test is completed on one school day. The pupil is allowed a pencil in the test to help them separate the sounds in the words. Should I be worried if they are not on track to pass? Firstly I'm a strong believer that worrying is wasteful so if you fear that your child is not on track, utilise the tools around you to help. There are various ways to incorporate phonics/reading which you can read in a future blog. If they are not on track to pass the government pass score, think about them getting the best score for them. If they make progress for themselves it's still progress! They will have a chance to retake the screening and they should receive additional support to ensure passing the second time round is more achievable. Further information about the Phonics Screen and how Monster Phonics works. We use some essential cookies to make this website work. We'd like to set additional cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services. We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services. You have accepted additional cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. You have rejected additional cookies. You can change your cookie settings at any time. The Phonics Screening Check If you're a parent of a child in Year 1 at school, you may be aware that during this academic year your child will have their 'Phonics Screening Check'. But what exactly is this assessment? When will it happen? And most importantly, how can you help prepare your child for it? Here are answers to some of the most common questions parents have when they first hear about the Phonics Screening Check. What is the Phonics Screening Check and when will your child be assessed? The Phonics Screening Check is an assessment designed to evaluate a child's ability to decode words using their phonics knowledge, including both familiar and unfamiliar words. This is the school's first formal way of checking your child's phonics progress and helps the school show the overall progress of children in Year 1. It also helps highlight if any extra support needs to be given. The test is for all children who are in Year 1 at school and takes place during the summer term, usually in June. For example, children who are currently in Year 1 will complete the assessment during the week commencing Monday, 10 June 2024. Do all Year 1 children have to do the Phonics Screening Check? The Phonics Screening Check is part of the National Curriculum Assessment Programme and is a compulsory assessment for all children in England. Although compulsory, there may be some exceptions for some children. Exceptions may apply for certain children, such as those with specific educational needs or those who have recently arrived from abroad and are not yet proficient in English. Decisions regarding exemptions are made on an individual basis by the school. Ask your child's teacher for guidance on this if unsure. What happens in the Phonics Screening Check? The screening check assesses children's ability to decode real and made-up words using their phonics skills. It's a short assessment, with no specific time limit, but usually takes under ten minutes to complete. It takes place one-to-one with a teacher or teaching assistant from your child's school and not an external examiner. The Phonics Screening Check consists of 40 words, divided into two sections of 20 words each. Both sections contain a mix of real words and pseudo-words (nonsense words), with pseudo-words accompanied by pictures of cartoon aliens to clarify they are not real words. Both sections contain a mix of real words and pseudo-words (nonsense words), with pseudo-words accompanied by pictures of cartoon aliens or monsters to help children understand they are not real. The reasoning behind the inclusion of made-up words is to test a child's ability to apply phonics rules to sound out and blend the sounds within each word. Before the teacher starts the assessment, children will be given the opportunity to practise real and made-up words. The teacher will explain to the child that made-up words are included. When the assessment begins the teacher will write down the 40 words the child says as the child reads out each word. Can a child 'fail' the test? If so, what happens? Some children do not achieve the pass mark in the Year 1 screening test. In this situation the child would be provided with additional support in learning to read using phonics and re-tested again in Year 2. How can you prepare children for the test? Parents often ask how they can best prepare their child for this assessment. Our advice would be to: - Reduce any unnecessary pressure Parents want the best for their children and as a result may inadvertently put unnecessary pressure on their child to achieve in their Phonics Screening Check. It may be better if your child is unaware that it is a formal assessment. Parents could just explain to their child that their teacher will be listening to them reading some words at some point soon and that they should try their best to show their teacher how well they can read. - Read with your child each night Schools often provide children with 'reading books' to read each evening with their parents/carers. We firmly believe that listening to your child read every evening is one of the best ways to prepare them for their Phonics Screening Check. Reading at home allows your child to practise decoding words in a natural and relaxed environment. - Past Papers If your child is keen (without any pressure) you could let them practise some of the past papers that are listed below. Sit with your child and ask them to read the words on the list out loud to you, just as they will in the real assessment. To make it more fun, you could incorporate the activity into a game, such as taking turns to read the words or adding a reward system for correct answers. - Practise reading out and about Reading practice doesn't need to be restricted to their school reading book. There are words all around us! Try gently pointing out words on signs, magazines, TV programmes, shops etc and help them practise decoding these words too. - Read new books Choosing new books together can be a great way of finding new words that they might not have read before. This provides a good opportunity for children to practise applying the phonics rules to decode the words correctly. These unfamiliar words have been made-up to ensure children are using their decoding skills rather than their existing vocabulary. The Phonics Screening Test exists to monitor phonics teaching within schools and the level of early literacy attainment among children is recorded. Below are two example words from the 2019 Phonics Screening Check: The word 'fusp' is an alien word (or nonsense word) and the word 'shop' is a real word. To help avoid children misreading alien words as similar-looking real words, each alien word is marked with a picture of a friendly alien. The Phonics Screening Test is split into two sections. Section 1 is the easier part and contains 20 words - 12 alien words and 8 real words. Section 2 is the harder part and its 20 words are split into 8 alien words and 12 real words. The Phonics Assessment held in Year 1 of primary schools throughout England has no formal time limit but it normally takes around 10 minutes to complete. The Phonics Screening Test has a pass mark (also known as threshold mark) and hence children can fail it. If a child fails their Phonics Test then they are required 're-sit' it at the end of Year 2. To help schools prepare for the 2012 Phonics Screening Test, the Department for Education published a phonic screening video to help parents and teachers understand what the Phonics Screening Test entails: Since the first Phonics Screening Test in the 2012 Phonics Screening Test, the pass mark has always been 32 out of 40. This means that children had to read at least 32 words out of 40 correctly to pass. Children that don't reach the pass mark are required to take it again at the end of Year 2. The 2025 Phonics Screening Test is taking place during the week commencing 9th June 2025. For further information about the 2025 test, see the dedicated 2025 Phonics Screening Test page. The Phonics Screening Test takes place during the week commencing 9th June 2025. Yes, all pupils in England who have reached the age of 6 by the end of the school year (i.e. Year 1) must take the national Phonics Screening Test during that academic year. Further to this, pupils who will have reached the age of 7 by the end of the academic year (i.e. Year 2) and who have not taken the test before (or who did not meet the expected standard in their previous test) must also take the test. If children are absent during the planned test week then the school is allowed to administer the test in the following week. If a child remains absent then the child is recorded as absent in their results. There are some exceptions to this and for further information parents should check the official guidance. Download Phonics Screening Tests to help your child prepare for theirs. To pass the Phonics Screening Test, children have to read at least 32 words out of 40 correctly to their teacher. Here is Exam Ninja's recommendations to help ensure your child passes their Phonics Screening Test: Preparation. The Year 1 Phonics Screening simply asks children to read 40 words. Practice their reading skills daily - then they're practising for the test without even knowing it. Download the Year one Phonics Tests above and go through a few tests with them. Experience of phonics testing will help them. In one sitting they should (in the test scenario) be able to attempt all 40 words. Patience and perseverance are crucial. Learning to read is a long and at times frustrating journey. It's crucial that you closely support your child. If in doubt, calmly remind your child to: Say each sound in the word from left to right. Blend the sounds by pointing to each letter, e.g. b in bat, or igh in high. Whilst supporting their attempts to read by: Running your finger under the letters, letter combinations or the whole word as they (or you) say it. Not rushing. Being patient and positive. Giving encouragement and praise. If your child is worrying about not doing well in their Year 1 Phonics Test, calmly remind them to simply try their hardest. Remember, persevere and be patient - early literacy and confident reading cannot be mastered overnight. Why not help us grow by sharing SATs-Papers.co.uk to your Facebook page, blog or website? To find out how easy it is, head over to our Easy Sharing page. All PDF print and MP3 audio materials © QCA/QCDA/DfE and can be reproduced, stored or translated for private study only. All other content © Ninja Alliance Ltd T/A Exam Ninja 2025. All rights reserved. Privacy Policy. We have sent %email% a confirmation email. Check your Emails. You will receive the email within 2 minutes. Open it and click on the confirmation link to enable access. Not received the email? Check your Spam/Junk folder... it could have fallen in there by accident! Pupils arrive at primary school with a vast range of speech and language abilities. Some will be happily conversing with teachers and peers, while others may need help getting a grasp of basic words and phrases. To ensure each child is given the right level of support and can be measured their progress, the phonics screening check is carried out across all Year 1 pupils. What is the phonics screening check? The phonics screening check is a test that Year 1 pupils in maintained schools, special schools or academies (including free schools) in England are required to take. The test is a statutory assessment that confirms whether or not pupils have met the expected standard in phonic decoding - and can reveal which pupils may need additional support. This mandatory test contains 40 words divided into two sections of 20 words. Both sections contain a mixture of real words and pseudo-words - those that are phonically decodable but are not actual words. Teachers administer the check one-on-one with each pupil and record whether their response to each of the 40 words is correct. Each pupil is awarded a mark between 0 and 40. Pseudo-words are included in the check specifically to assess whether the pupil can decode a word using their phonics skills. Teachers record whether their response to each of the words is correct. All pseudo-words in the check are accompanied by a picture of an imaginary creature. Children are taught that when a word has a creature next to it, it is a pseudo-word. This is to ensure that they are not trying to match the pseudo-word to a word in their vocabulary. More information on primary assessment When is the phonics screening check 2025? Schools must administer the phonics screening check to Year 1 pupils during the week commencing 9 June. What is the phonics screening check threshold for 2025? The threshold mark is not communicated to schools until after the test has been completed. However, in recent years the phonics screening threshold has been 32 out of 40 and this is not likely to change. Check materials and the threshold mark will be published on Monday 23 June. How can headteachers prepare? Headteachers should identify which pupils will reach the age of 6 before the end of the academic year (most pupils will be in Year 1) and should take the check in June. They also should consider whether any pupils will need modified versions of the test - this does not include braille versions, which can be ordered online from the national curriculum assessments helpline. Headteachers are responsible for keeping all check materials secure and confidential until the testing window begins in June. School leaders will also need to submit check results to the local authority for all eligible pupils by the deadline communicated to them by the local authority. Will I be monitored during the test? Local authorities (LAs) have a statutory responsibility to monitor the administration of the test. They must undertake monitoring visits to at least 10 per cent of their schools. The LAs will observe certain aspects of phonics screening check administration to ensure the school is following the check administration guidance correctly. At the end of the visit, monitors will meet with the headteacher, or delegated member of staff, to discuss their findings. More information on phonics How will the test results be used? Schools will have access to all of their pupils' results, allowing those pupils who need additional support to be identified and plans to be made to help them improve. The government publishes attainment data for the phonics screening test every year, which measures results by disadvantage level and gender. What if the pupil does not reach the standard in Year 1? If a pupil does not meet the expected standard at the end of Year 1, a programme of support should be put in place and their teacher will consider a retake in Year 2. Last year nearly eight in 10 (79 per cent) of pupils met the expected standard in the check in Year 1, up from 75 per cent in 2022. Those who do not pass the test are more likely to pass in their Year 2 retake, with the percentage of pupils who met the expected standard at the end of Year 2 rising to 89 per cent in 2023. Do parents receive feedback on their child's phonics check? Teachers should inform parents of their child's results by the end of the summer term. How can staff help pupils to prepare for the test? Find a range of phonics screening check teaching resources designed to help pupils prepare for the test. For the latest education news and analysis delivered directly to your inbox every weekday morning, sign up to the Tes Daily newsletter