Information & Guidance for Parents: Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

What is the Phonics Screening Check?

The national phonics screening test was introduced in 2012 to all Y1 pupils. It is a short, statutory assessment to confirm whether individual pupils have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard. It aims to identify the children who need extra help so that they can be given support by school to improve their reading skills.

At St Mary's we already identify children and provide early intervention support, however we must comply with the statutory requirement to carry out the screening check each year.

Who is it for and when does it take place?

Year 1 pupils will take the phonics screening check in June.

How is the check structured?

It comprises a list of 40 words, made up of some real words and some 'non-words' (nonsense words), which a child will read one-to-one with a teacher. Half the words cover phonic skills which are usually covered in Reception, and half the words are based on Year 1 phonics skills.

Is it stressful to test such young children?

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

Does a teacher have to carry out the screening check?

Yes, a teacher will carry out the check with the pupils in our school. Why are non-words included 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.

How long does the check take?

Every child is different but in most cases the check should take less than 10 minutes per child.

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

Schools have to inform parents towards the end of the summer term in Year 1 of their child's results in the Phonics Screening Check. At St Mary's, the results form part of the end of year reporting.

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 extra help. Schools are expected to provide extra help and children will then be able to retake the assessment in Year 2.

At St Mary's, parents will continue to be kept well informed of their child's progress in all aspects of reading including phonic development.

How can I help my child?

At St Mary's we regularly check phonic development within our approach to the assessment of reading. This screening forms part of our overall assessment procedure. However, 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, take them to the library to choose books, read to them regularly, point out texts around you e.g. in the street etc.

✓ Make time for your child to read school books to you regularly – encourage them by pointing to the words and ask them about the story they are reading.

✓ Help your child to practise reading key words and sounds when these are sent home.

✓ Communicate with your child's teacher through their Home/School reading journal or Seesaw/ Tapestry. Remember we are here to help your child to do their very best.