Phonics Screening Check
Year 1
A Guide for Parents

What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. Children are taught **how** to recognise the sounds each individual letter makes and to identify the sounds that different contributions of letters make such as 'sh' and 'oo'. Children are taught to read by breaking down words into separate sounds or 'phonemes'. They are then taught how to blend these sounds together to read the whole word. Your child has been taught a variety of phonics (phonemes, split diagraphs and trigraphs) during daily phonics lessons. Once a child has learnt the 26 letters of the alphabet with their 44 sounds and 70 common spellings, they have the tools they will need to read words. Daily phonics activities help children to improve their spelling accuracy and gives them the confidence to sound out and spell difficult words.

Why Phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way, starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to more complex sounds, it is the most effective way of teaching children to read. It is particularly helpful for children aged 5-7. Almost all children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go onto read any kind of text fluently and confidently and for enjoyment.

What is the Phonics Screening Check?

The National phonics screening check is a statutory assessment that was introduced in 2012 to all Year 1 pupils and is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge. The Department for Education defines the checks as "short, light-touch assessments" that take about four to nine minutes to complete. You can download a sample Year 1 Phonics Screening Check from the Department for Education website to get an idea of what your child will be asked to do:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299970/phonics_screening_check_sample_materials_-_Answer_sheet.pdf

Correct Articulation of Phonemes:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqhXUW_v-1s

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J2Ddf_0Om8

Who is it for?

All year 1 pupils will take the phonics screening check in 2020 during the **month of June**.

What is in the phonics screening check?

It comprises of a list of 40 words and nonsense words. It will assess phonics skills and knowledge learnt through reception and year 1. Your child will read one-one with a teacher. It will be assessed by myself, so it is a familiar face. Your child will read up to 4 words per page and they will probably do the check in 10-15 minutes. They will be asked to 'sound out' a word and blend the sounds together. The check is very similar to tasks the children already complete during phonics lessons.

Is it stressful to test such young children?

The assessment will be age appropriate and the adult involved will be familiar. The children at Sacred Heart RC Primary School are familiar with the set up as we are constantly reviewing children's progress in similar ways. It should be an enjoyable activity for children which takes no more than 15 minutes. There will be a few practise words at the beginning to make sure your child understands the activity. I always ensure that the child is not anxious or stressed about the test- as I never tell them that we are doing one!

What are Nonsense or Pseudo words and why are they included?

These are words that are phonetically decodable but not actual words with an associated meaning e.g. brip, snorb. These words are included in the check specifically to assess whether your child can decode a word using phonic skills and not their memory. The pseudo words will be shown to your child with a picture of an alien. The children will be asked what the aliens name is by reading the word. This will make the check a bit more fun and provides the children with a context for the nonsense word. Crucially it does not provide any clues, so your child has to be able to decode it. Children generally find nonsense amusing so they will probably enjoy reading these words.

How will the results from the screening be used?

You will be informed of your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check, towards the end of the summer term. All of the children are individuals and develop at different stages. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need support with decoding.

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

How can I help my child?

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

- ✓ Let your child see you enjoy reading yourself. They are influenced by you and what you do!
- ✓ Immerse your child in a love of reading.
- ✓ As always, the best support you provide your child with is to listen to them read regularly and encourage them as much as possible.
- ✓ Please remember to encourage and praise your child. In teaching and learning phonics in this way, the aim is improve reading and writing skills in young children. We also aim to promote the love of reading in all children.
- ✓ With all books, encourage your child to 'sound out' unfamiliar words and then blend from left to right rather than looking at pictures to guess.
- ✓ Playing phonics games on the computer such as Phase 3, 4, 5 or 6 activities on the www.phonicsplay.co.uk website.
- ✓ There are many phonic games for children to access on the computer or ipad.
- ✓ You could make bingo games or domino games using the target phonics blends such as str, scr, spl, st. or sounds such as ch, sh, igh, oa, ay, ee, oo, or, ng.
- ✓ Read a selection of books and be "Sounds Detectives" hunting for the phonemes. "Can you hunt for the word with the "ee" sound in this sentence?"
- ✓ Give your child 3 sounds (ee, oa, igh) and yourself 3 sounds (ch,sh,th) and as you share a story together, count how many times each sound occurs. The winner is the person who has found the most target sounds.
- ✓ Share some e-book stories from Oxford Reading Tree E-books for free. www.oxfordowl.co.uk/

I hope this information is useful. Remember, we are here to help your child achieve their very best. If you have any questions please ask. I am always happy to help.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Mrs S Darville & Miss Urmston
Year 1 Teachers