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Dear Parent/Carer



Re: National Phonics Screening Test

We are writing to inform you about the National Phonics Screening Test which will take place in Key Stage 1 during the weeks beginning 11th June. This letter aims to explain this process, in addition to providing you with ideas to help your child with phonics at home.



Who takes the test?

All children in year 1. In addition, any child in year 2 who did not reach the required level when they took the test in year 1 will take the test again in year 2. If for any reason, we feel that there is a valid reason why your child should not take the test in Year 1, the class teacher will discuss this with you. Please note, this is only done in exceptional circumstances and your child would still be eligible to take the retake when they are in Year 2.



What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read. They are taught how to:

- Recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes
- Identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make e.g. sh and oo
- Blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.



Children can then use this knowledge to segment and blend new words that they hear or see.



Why phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way - starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex - it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read.



What is the phonics screening check?

As you may have already heard, the government introduced an annual phonics screening check to take place in the first weeks of June. This will further inform our continual assessment of the children's phonic knowledge and the results of the check will be shared with parents/carers in the end of year report.

It comprises of a list of 40 words that children read one-to-one with Mrs Ward and Mrs Sumner. The list is a combination of both real and made up, non-words which rely purely on using phonics to decode. The non-words are words that have been made up and will be shown with a picture of an imaginary creature to help them.

The phonics screening check will take place on a one to one but the children will largely be unaware of it being a test and have already participated in some practice ones.

What are nonsense words?

Your child will be told during the check which words are nonsense words (that he/she will not have seen before). Your child will be familiar with this because we already use 'nonsense-words' when teaching phonics in school. Nonsense-words are important to include because words such as 'vap' or 'jound' are new to all children. Children cannot read the non-words by using their memory or vocabulary; they have to use their decoding skills. This is a fair way to assess their ability to decode.

After the check

We will tell you about your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check as part of the end of year report. If your child has found the check difficult, we will also tell you what support we have put in place to help him or her improve as they move into Year 2. You might like to ask your child's class teacher how you can support your child to take the next step in reading.

All children are individuals and develop at different rates. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need extra help with phonic decoding.

Helping your child with phonics

Phonics works best when children are given plenty of encouragement and learn to enjoy reading and books. Parents play a very important part in helping with this.

Some simple steps to help your child learn to read through phonics:

- You can reinforce phonics at home. Look on the School website for activities and how to pronounce the letter sounds.
- You can then highlight these sounds when you read with your child. Teaching how sounds match with letters is likely to start with individual letters such as 's', 'a' and 't' and then will move on to two letter sounds such as 'ee', 'ch' and 'ck'.
- With all books, encourage your child to 'sound out' unfamiliar words and then blend the sounds together from left to right rather than looking at the pictures to guess. Once your child has read an unfamiliar word you can talk about what it means and help him or her to follow the story.
- Your child's teacher will also be able to suggest books with the right level of phonics for your child. These books are often called 'decodable readers' because the story is written with words made up of the letters your child has learnt. Your child will be able to work out new words from their letters and sounds, rather than just guessing.
- Try to make time to read with your child every day. Grandparents and older brother or sisters can help, too. Encourage your child to blend the sounds all the way through a word.
- Word games like 'I-spy' can also be an enjoyable way of teaching children about sounds and letters. You can also encourage your child to read words from your shopping list or road signs to practise phonics.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or your child's class teacher.

Thank you for your continued support

Mrs J Sumner (Literacy Leader)