

National curriculum assessments

KEY STAGE

1

YEARS

1-2

Monitoring visits guidance for local authorities

Phonics screening check

2014



Standards
& Testing
Agency

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2014 Key stage 1 monitoring visits guidance for local authorities: phonics screening check

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This publication is also available for download at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

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1. Introduction

Local authorities (LAs) have a statutory responsibility to monitor the administration of the phonics screening check. The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) may also make monitoring visits to schools.

This guidance explains how LAs should carry out monitoring visits to schools administering the check.

Monitoring visits help to ensure that the security and confidentiality of the check materials are maintained, and that the check is administered correctly and consistently in accordance with the published guidance. Monitoring visits also give headteachers a formal opportunity to demonstrate how the check is administered in their schools.

Academies have to choose whether to be monitored by their own LA, another LA or STA. References to academies in this document include free schools, as in law they are academies.

For the purposes of this document all references made to schools include maintained nursery schools with registered children who will reach the age of six before the end of the school year.

2. Guidance for delivering monitoring visits

LAs must make unannounced visits to schools participating in the phonics screening check before, during and after the check period. The check period starts on Monday 16 June.

For any children absent during the check week, schools have until Friday 27 June to administer the check. These two weeks are referred to as the check period.

LAs must visit at least 10 per cent of schools administering the check within their authority, including any:

- participating pupil referral units (PRUs) or special schools;
- academies that have chosen to be monitored by the LA; and
- maintained nursery schools with registered children who will reach the age of six before the end of the school year.

LAs should not make more than one visit to an individual school unless there are concerns that have already been discussed by the LA monitoring visits co-ordinator and STA.

STA may request that an LA visits a particular school in their authority. STA will provide LAs with details of these schools in early April.

2.1 Arranging monitoring visits

STA recommends that each LA identifies a person to act as monitoring visits co-ordinator. The monitoring visits co-ordinator should take responsibility for:

- arranging monitoring visits;
- providing monitoring visitors with copies of school delivery notes;
- emailing any monitoring visit forms where an 'X' or 'N' has been entered in any box to STA's maladministration team; and
- forwarding all completed monitoring visit forms, including those already emailed to STA's maladministration team, to STA's monitoring visits agency.

2.2 Selecting and preparing monitoring visitors

Given the sensitive nature of reviewing the administration of the phonics screening check, monitoring visits should only be carried out by staff who have a clear understanding of the requirements of the visits. They should also be familiar with the following guidance on check administration which is published on the Department for Education's (DfE's) website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

6 Monitoring visits guidance for local authorities

- 2014 key stage 1 'Assessment and reporting arrangements'
- 2014 key stage 1 'Check administrators' guide: phonics screening check'
- 'Key stage 2 tests and phonics screening check: keep materials secure' web page
- 'Year 1 phonics screening check training video'

All staff involved in monitoring visits must be briefed on the purpose, scope and procedures involved in conducting the visits and in the administration of the check.

Monitoring visitors should take the following information with them for each monitoring visit.

- The number of children being assessed at the school including any year 2 children who are expected to take the check. LAs should review the data submitted by schools in 2013 in order to identify children in year 2 who should be taking the check.
- Details of the check materials sent to the school. Electronic copies of delivery notes received by schools with their check materials will be sent to LAs in May; and
- A monitoring visit form, a sample of which is available on page 10 of this guidance and on the DfE's website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

All monitoring visitors must also carry identification that should be shown on arrival at the school.

If the monitoring visit is carried out by an individual other than the LA monitoring visits co-ordinator, the monitoring visitor should discuss their findings with the co-ordinator as soon as possible after the visit has taken place.

2.3 Providing information to schools

Before undertaking any monitoring visits, LAs may want to contact all schools within their authority, and academies which have chosen to be monitored by the LA, to explain the purpose of the visits. LAs may give the names of individuals involved in the visits, but they must not identify in advance any specific schools that will be visited.

Before the phonics screening check period, schools should be directed to read the information about monitoring visits that is on the DfE's website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

If schools receive a visit and wish to confirm the identity of their visitor(s) they should contact their LA, for LA visitors, or the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 if the visitor is a member of STA's staff.

3. What to look for during monitoring visits

3.1 Before the check week

STA recommends that approximately 10 per cent of monitoring visits take place in the weeks leading up to Monday 16 June. The purpose of these visits is to make sure that the sealed check materials are unopened and stored securely.

The monitoring visitor should ask to see where the unopened packs of check materials are stored. They should check that all of the packs are stored securely and have not been opened.

Monitoring visitors should confirm that the school has received the correct number of packs of check materials. The delivery note(s) sent electronically to LAs will show the number of packs delivered to each school. Schools should be able to show an annotated copy of their delivery note(s) and provide details of the number of packs that were actually delivered.

The monitoring visitor may also discuss other elements of the proposed administration such as the room(s) where the check will take place.

3.1.1 Damaged check packs

If a school has received damaged check packs, the monitoring visitor should advise the headteacher to contact the national curriculum assessments helpline immediately on 0300 303 3013.

3.1.2 Opening materials early

Schools must not open the materials before the phonics screening check period. If schools need to make adjustments to the check so that children can access it, these should be made during the check period.

3.1.3 Ensuring that teachers are prepared

Monitoring visitors should speak to the headteacher, or the teacher responsible for the administration of the phonics screening check, to ensure that appropriate staff will be administering it and that they fully understand the administration arrangements, including scoring.

The check must be administered on a one-to-one basis by a teacher who is known to the child. It must not be administered by a teaching assistant, including higher level teaching assistants, because the role requires a teacher's professional judgement about which responses are correct. The teacher must not be a relative or carer of the child taking the check.

3.2 During the check week

The majority, approximately 80 per cent, of monitoring visits should be made during the phonics screening check week, Monday 16 June to Friday 20 June. These visits are to ensure the check is being administered correctly and that the check materials are being stored securely when not in use. The monitoring visitor should also check the preparations the school has made for submission of data.

The monitoring visitor should speak to the headteacher or the teacher responsible for the administration of the check to discuss the arrangements for the visit.

If the monitoring visitor arrives before the check has been administered they should carry out the checks relating to visits before the check period. They should also establish that:

- the room for the check is suitable;
- wall displays are covered up or, if uncovered, do not offer any assistance or distraction to children; and
- appropriate teachers will be administering the check.

3.2.1 Becoming familiar with the check content

Monitoring visitors should read the check materials before they visit so that they are familiar with the words children will be asked to decode. This will help them to judge whether any children are given inappropriate assistance.

The materials will be available to download from the 'Phonics' section of the NCA tools website at www.education.gov.uk/ncatools from Monday 16 June. Any printed versions of these materials must be kept secure until Friday 27 June.

The monitoring visits co-ordinator will need their registered email address and password to access NCA tools. Information about how to log into NCA tools is available on the DfE's website at www.education.gov.uk/assessment.

3.2.2 Choosing children to observe

Monitoring visitors should aim to observe between two and five checks (depending on the size of the cohort) to ensure they are being properly administered.

They should confirm with the headteacher, or teacher responsible for the administration of the check, whether any children will be uncomfortable being observed. It is important that children are not put off by the presence of a visitor. If a child is likely to be distracted, the monitoring visitor should observe another child instead.

The monitoring visitor should agree with the headteacher and / or the teacher administering the check whether their presence should be explained to the child who is going to be observed.

3.2.3 Observing the check

The monitoring visitor should only enter the room before the child starts the check. This is so that the administration of the check is not interrupted and the visitor's presence can be explained to the child, if this is appropriate.

When observing the check the monitoring visitor should ensure that:

- it is introduced to the child appropriately; and
- no inappropriate assistance is given.

Monitoring visitors are not expected to score any checks that they observe in parallel with the teacher administering the check. Monitoring visitors might consider discussing the scoring decisions with the teacher, but they should not overrule the teacher's judgement on a child's responses to the check.

If a monitoring visitor observes what they consider to be misconceptions of phonics and / or the scoring of the check, the monitoring visitor should discuss this with the teacher after the check has been administered. (For example, a visitor may think that the teacher has not realised that an alternative pronunciation of a grapheme should be scored correctly.) This would not need to be reported to STA.

After the check has been completed the monitoring visitor should discuss the administration of the check with the teacher.

3.2.4 Check has already been completed

If the monitoring visitor arrives after the check has taken place they should carry out the checks relating to visits after the check period.

3.2.5 Storage of opened check materials

Schools must store the check materials and 'answer sheets' securely until Friday 27 June. The monitoring visitor should carry out the checks related to visits after the check week.

3.2.6 Collation of children's scores and return of data

The monitoring visitor should discuss the arrangements in place for collation of the children's scores into the data return sheets, and how this data will be provided to the LA. Where schools have already completed this task, monitoring visitors should make sure that the data return sheet has been completed correctly.

3.3 After the check week

Up to 10 per cent of monitoring visits should be made immediately after the phonics screening check week, from Monday 23 June. LAs should make these visits to discuss the administration of the check and confirm arrangements for submission of data.

3.3.1 Collation of children’s scores and return of data

The monitoring visitor should ask to be shown where the ‘answer sheets’ and other materials are stored and check that they are secure. They should discuss the arrangements in place at the school for collation of the data and how it will be provided to the LA.

LAs should review the accuracy of any data transfer from answer sheets.

3.3.2 Timetable variations

If children are absent during the check week, schools can administer the check until Friday 27 June. Children must only attempt the check once during the check period.

Monitoring visitors may be able to observe the administration of the check under these circumstances. The guidance in the ‘Visits during the check week’ section should be followed.

3.4 Completing monitoring visit forms

Monitoring visitors must complete all sections on the monitoring visit form for each school visited. All questions in both sections must be answered.

The LA monitoring visits co-ordinator’s name must be provided in case STA has any questions about the visit(s).

The monitoring visit form is available to download from the DfE’s website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

Monitoring visits co-ordinator	Local authority
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2014 key stage 1 phonics screening check monitoring visit form

Standards & Testing Agency

Section A and Section B of this form must be completed in all cases (see instructions overleaf). A copy must be left with the school's headteacher. Return the original to your monitoring visits co-ordinator.

School name	Date of visit
DfE number	

Section A: General administration	Y/N	Notes
Q1. Is there evidence to show that the consignment was checked on arrival?		
Q2. Are check materials stored securely?		
Q3. Are appropriate staff administering the check?		
Q4. Have administrators received appropriate training to administer the check?		
Q5. Is the room where the check is being, or is going to be, administered appropriate?		

Section B: Check-specific information	Unopened pack storage	Check administration observed	Completed answer sheets viewed	Data collated for reporting
Please refer to the notes overleaf and indicate the status of all check materials				

If you have entered an X or N in Section B, or have observed any other irregularities during the visit, describe below what issue you have observed and where appropriate, any actions taken.

Name of monitoring visitor	Headteacher
Signature	Signature

You must make sure that Section A and at least one column of Section B are completed.

Section A

Before, during and after the phonics screening check period, it should be possible to view the school's annotated delivery note to confirm that the correct quantities of check materials have been received by the school. You should be able to view the secure storage of the check materials before and after the check.

For visits before, during and after the check period you should ask the headteacher, or delegated member of staff, who will administer the check. Administrators must be teachers that are known to the child, but not relatives or carers of the child. You should ask whether the teachers administering the check have read the 2014 key stage 1 'Assessment and reporting arrangements', the 'Check administrators' guide (CAG), 'Phonics screening check: scoring guidance' and watched the 'Year 1 phonics screening check training video' so that they know how to administer the check properly.

You should also ask to view the room where the check is being, or will be, administered to ensure that it has been prepared properly, that displays that could help children in the check have been removed or covered and that the room itself is appropriate for the administration of the check.

Section B

Unopened check pack storage

You should request to view the school's annotated delivery notes to confirm that the correct quantities of check materials were received and that they are securely stored in a locked cupboard.

Use ✓ to indicate that the correct number of unopened check packs have been observed in a secure location.

Use N where the number of check packs listed on the delivery note and the number observed do not correlate. You should include a marked-up copy of the school's delivery notes when you return the monitoring visit form. Please note, where the distributor is clearly at fault, this should be advised on the form.

Use X where a check pack has been

- tampered with; or
- opened before the statutory check week (week commencing 16 June).

Check administration observed

You should make sure that:

- the check is being administered by an appropriate teacher;
- no inappropriate assistance is given during the check; and
- displays / materials have been removed or covered, as appropriate.

Use ✓ when the check administration observed during the monitoring visit is in accordance with the 2014 CAG. Use X where there is reason to question whether children have completed the check independently and unsaided, for example where inappropriate support has been given.

Completed answer sheets viewed

Use ✓ when the answer sheets have been properly completed and are being securely stored before collation for data return.

Use X where the answer sheets have not been properly completed and are not being securely stored before collation for data return.

Data collated for reporting

Use ✓ when the data from the answer sheets has been properly and accurately transferred to the local authority's (LA) data system.

Use X where the data from the answer sheets has not been properly and accurately transferred to the LA's data system.

Ask the headteacher or delegated member of staff to sign the monitoring visit form to confirm the visit and that any feedback about the administration of the phonics screening check has been given to the school.

Please return the form to your LA monitoring visit co-ordinator by Friday 27 June 2014.

LA monitoring visits co-ordinators must return this form to:
STA's monitoring visits agency, c/o Customer Intentions, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), Stag Hill House, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XJ

If an 'X' or an 'N' is entered on the monitoring visit form, or any other irregularities are noticed during the visit, the monitoring visitor must record details of the issue and any actions taken on the form. This will enable STA to identify instances where further investigation is required.

3.5 At the end of the visit

Before leaving the school the monitoring visitor should meet with the headteacher or delegated member of staff to discuss the findings of the visit. If the monitoring visitor has placed an 'X' or 'N' in any box on the monitoring visit form, they should advise whether the school should make changes to its administration procedures for any remaining checks. If the monitoring visitor did not find anything that gave them cause for concern, they should make this clear.

Both the monitoring visitor and the headteacher, or delegated member of staff, should sign the monitoring visit form. This confirms that the visit took place and that any feedback about the administration of the phonics screening check has been given to the school.

A copy of the monitoring visit form and any annotated delivery notes should be left with the headteacher or delegated member of staff. Monitoring visitors must not add any additional detail or make changes to the monitoring visit form after this point.

4. After the visit

If the monitoring visitor has placed an 'X' or an 'N' in any box on the monitoring visit form, the issue should be discussed immediately with the LA monitoring visits co-ordinator. The monitoring visit form and any annotated delivery notes (where applicable) should be scanned and emailed to STA's maladministration team at testadmin.sta@education.gsi.gov.uk.

In instances where schools have an 'X' or an 'N' on their monitoring visit form, STA's maladministration team will identify whether further investigation is required.

If no irregularities were identified during the visit, the completed monitoring visit form must be sent to the LA monitoring visits co-ordinator immediately after the visit. The deadline for returning completed monitoring visit forms to the monitoring visits co-ordinator is Friday 27 June.

The LA monitoring visits co-ordinator must send all completed forms to STA's monitoring visit agency by Wednesday 2 July. This includes any emailed to STA's maladministration team. Delivery notes do not need to be forwarded to STA's monitoring visits agency unless there are issues of concern noted on the monitoring visit form.

STA monitoring visit agency
c/o Customer Intentions
Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
Stag Hill House
Guildford
Surrey
GU2 7XJ

STA's monitoring visits agency will contact all LAs that have not forwarded copies of their monitoring visit forms by Wednesday 2 July

LAs should consider keeping copies of the monitoring visit forms for their own reference.

4.1 Follow up

STA's maladministration team will work with LAs to investigate any irregularities reported on the monitoring visit form.

Results may be discounted if STA has doubts about whether a child's answers represent their own independent and unaided work.

5. Checklists

5.1 Organising monitoring visits

Monitoring visits co-ordinator

- Have you identified LA staff / consultants to undertake the monitoring visits? These may be different to the person responsible for organising and reporting monitoring visits.
- Have you informed all maintained schools, and academies where appropriate, within your LA that are participating in the phonics screening check about the purpose of the monitoring visits before any visits are made? You may give the names of those undertaking the monitoring visits and an LA contact; however you must not identify in advance any specific schools that will be visited.
- Have you identified at least 10 per cent of schools administering the phonics screening check? This must include any school selected by STA for monitoring and academies that have chosen to be monitored by your LA
- Have you planned for visits to take place:
 - before
 - during; and
 - immediately after the check week?
- Have you put together a briefing session or pack for LA staff / consultants to ensure they understand the requirements and are familiar with the published guidance on administering the check?

5.2 What to take on a monitoring visit

Monitoring visitors

- Do you know how many children are participating in the phonics screening check at the school?
- Have you checked the 2013 phonics check data to identify whether any year 2 children are taking the check at the school?
- Do you have details of the check materials that have been sent to the school? These can be found on the electronic copies of the delivery notes provided to LAs in May.

5.3 Before the check week

Monitoring visitors

- Are the unopened check packs securely stored?
- Have you confirmed that the school has checked their consignment(s) against the delivery note(s) received with the check materials?
Does the number of packs correspond to the information on the copy of the delivery note(s) provided for your visit?
- Do you know who is going to administer the check? Are they teachers known to the children and do they fully understand the administration arrangements, including how to score the check?

5.4 During the check week

Monitoring visitors

- Have you read the check materials prior to the visit? These are available to download from the 'Phonics section' of the NCA tools website at www.education.gov.uk/ncatools. If you print them they must be kept secure until Friday 27 June.
- If you have arrived before the school has started to administer the check, have you checked that the materials are stored securely?
- Have you established that:
 - the room where the check is going to be administered is suitable, in particular that displays / materials are covered up or, if uncovered, they do not offer any assistance to children?
 - appropriate teachers are administering the check?
- Before observing the check, have you discussed with the headteacher and / or the teacher responsible for administering the check whether particular children will be uncomfortable with being observed and whether your presence will be explained to the child?
- When observing the check being administered:
 - was the check introduced to the child appropriately?
 - was any assistance given to the child appropriate?
- If you arrive after the check has been administered, have you confirmed that the opened check materials are securely stored?
- Have you discussed the arrangements in place for the collation of data and how it will be provided to the LA?

5.5 After the check week

Monitoring visitors

- Have you confirmed that the check materials and 'answer sheets' are securely stored?
- Have you discussed the administration of the check with the headteacher and / or the teacher responsible for administering the check?
- If the school is administering the check to a child that was absent during check week, have you carried out the checks relating to 'Monitoring visits during the check week'?
- Have you discussed the arrangements in place for the collation of data and how it will be provided to the LA?

5.6 Completing the monitoring visit form and the end of the visit

Monitoring visitors

- Have you completed all sections on the monitoring visit form?
- Have you recorded any issues observed and, where appropriate, recorded any actions taken on the monitoring visit form?
Have you discussed these with the headteacher, or delegated member of staff?
- Has the headteacher, or delegated member of staff, signed the monitoring visit form to confirm the visit took place and that any feedback about the administration of the phonics screening check has been given to the school?
- Have you given a copy of the completed monitoring visit form and annotated delivery note(s) (if applicable), to the headteacher or delegated member of staff?

5.7 Submitting monitoring visit forms and follow up

Monitoring visitors

- Have you forwarded the monitoring visit form and annotated delivery note(s) to your LA monitoring visits co-ordinator by Friday 27 June?

Monitoring visits co-ordinator

- Have you emailed any monitoring visit form(s) with an 'X' or 'N' entered in any box on the form to STA at testadmin.sta@education.gsi.gov.uk?
- Have you sent all monitoring visit forms to STA's monitoring visits agency by Wednesday 2 July?



About this publication

Who is it for?

This guidance is for local authorities (LAs) that have a statutory responsibility to monitor the administration of the 2014 key stage 1 phonics screening check.

Schools are also advised to read this guidance so they are familiar with how monitoring visits will take place.

What does it cover?

This guidance explains how LAs should carry out monitoring visits to schools administering the check.

Related materials

2014 key stage 1 'Assessment and reporting arrangements'

2014 key stage 1 'Check administrators' guide: phonics screening check'

'2014 Phonics screening check: scoring guidance'

'Key stage 2 tests and phonics screening check: keep materials secure' web page

'Year 1 phonics screening check' training video

For more copies

A PDF version of this document can be downloaded from the Department for Education's (DfE's) [website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1](http://www.education.gov.uk/ks1).