

Phonics screening check: administration guidance

April 2019

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1 About this document

This guidance is for schools administering the 2019 phonics screening check. It expands on section 8 of the 2019 key stage 1 (KS1) assessment and reporting arrangements¹ (ARA).

The information is relevant to:

- school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies and free schools
- · maintained nursery schools that have eligible pupils
- local authorities (LAs)

Schools should administer the check during the week beginning Monday 10 June. Section 8.2 of the 2019 KS1 ARA contains a list of important dates.

There are no significant changes to check administration from previous years.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/2019-key-stage-1-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara

2 Headteachers' responsibilities

Headteachers at maintained schools and academies must:

- identify which pupils should take the check
- consider whether any pupils will need braille versions
- consider whether any pupils will need modified versions and download them from NCA tools² (excluding braille) during the check period
- keep check materials secure until Monday 24 June
- know what to expect if they receive a monitoring visit³
- ensure all check administrators are appropriately trained
- ensure the check is administered once to each pupil
- ensure pupils' responses are scored accurately and consistently
- ensure that any pupils who do not meet the expected standard continue to receive support in phonics
- report any incident that affects the integrity, security or confidentiality of the check to the Standards and Testing Agency (STA)
- follow the annual statutory data collection requirements by <u>submitting check</u>
 <u>results to the local authority</u>⁴ for all eligible pupils, by the deadline communicated
 to them by the local authority (LA)
- complete and submit the headteacher's declaration form (HDF)

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² https://ncatools.education.gov.uk

³ www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-and-phonics-screening-check-monitoring-visits

⁴ www.gov.uk/guidance/phonics-screening-check-data-collection

3 Maladministration

A school could be subject to a <u>maladministration investigation</u>⁵ if it does not follow:

- the 2019 KS1 ARA
- this check administration guidance
- instructions provided with the check materials

Maladministration investigations can lead to changes to, or annulment of, results for a whole cohort, groups of pupils or an individual pupil.

Allegations of maladministration can come from misunderstandings about correct check administration. To help avoid this, make sure all staff, pupils and parents understand how and when the check will be administered.

Schools must report any issue with the administration of the check, or any allegations of maladministration, by contacting the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stages-1-and-2-investigating-allegations-of-maladministration

4 Participating pupils

All pupils in year 1 must take the check, unless they have no understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences. This includes pupils who join the school just before, or during, the check window.

Pupils in year 2 should take the check if they:

- did not take it in year 1
- took the check in year 1 but did not meet the expected standard
- started school in year 2

The common transfer file (CTF) should include information about whether a pupil joining the school in year 2 met the expected standard in year 1. If this information is not provided, you should contact your LA or use <u>Key to Success</u>⁶ to search for the pupil by their unique pupil number (UPN).

If you cannot establish whether the pupil took the check in year 1, the pupil should take the check in year 2.

4.1 Eligible pupils in maintained nursery schools

Pupils in maintained nursery schools who will reach the age of 6 before the end of the school year and have completed the year 1 programme of study must take the check.

4.2 Pupils absent during check week

If a pupil is absent during the check week, you can administer the check to them until Friday 21 June. Any pupil who is absent from school for this entire period should be recorded as absent in the results data.

4.3 Pupils who should not take the check

Headteachers may decide it is not appropriate for a pupil to take the check. Where this is the case, you should explain this to the pupil's parents. If appropriate, you should provide the parents with documentary evidence to support your decision. The headteacher's decision regarding participation is final.

You may want to provide a similar experience for pupils who will not formally participate in the check. You could do this by modifying the practice sheet to include only single

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⁶ www.keytosuccess.education.gov.uk

letters or simple 2-letter blends so they can demonstrate their skills. The practice sheet and 2019 phonics screening check will be available in the 'Test materials' section of NCA tools from Monday 10 June.

If a pupil is unable to access the check, it is important that teachers are aware of that pupil's progress in phonics so they can plan the next steps in their teaching.

Pupils working below the standard

If a pupil has shown no understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, they should not participate in the check. If pupils in year 2 still do not understand grapheme-phoneme correspondences, or are unable to access the materials, you are not required to administer the check to them.

Pupils for whom English is an additional language

If a pupil has limited fluency in English, you may decide they should not take the check. If a pupil has recently moved to the UK and is unable to understand letters and sounds in English, they should not take the check.

Pupils who use British Sign Language

You should consider whether it is appropriate for pupils who use British Sign Language (BSL), or other sign-supported communication to spell out individual letters but are not using phonics in the sense of linking letters and sounds, to take the check.

Pupils who are selectively mute

Pupils who are selectively mute are unable to participate in the check if they do not give verbal responses in school. They may be able to identify the words but will not be able to demonstrate that knowledge by speaking the answers aloud.

These pupils may demonstrate their knowledge at home informally with a family member who can discuss the outcome with the teacher. This arrangement will ensure the pupil has had a similar experience to their peers and gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

To avoid a potential security risk to the check materials, this arrangement may only take place after the check period ends on Friday 21 June.

For reporting purposes, the pupil should be recorded as 'D' (pupil did not take the check) as their results cannot be validated.

5 Receiving and storing materials

You should ensure your school has adequate space to store materials securely. STA will deliver materials to school addresses taken from Get Information About Schools⁷ so you must make sure that your school details are up to date by logging in via DfE Sign-in⁸.

We will deliver check materials between Monday 20 May and Friday 24 May. If your school will be closed and you have not entered your holiday dates on NCA tools, or contacted us to arrange an alternative delivery date, notify the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

Schools do not need to order standard versions of the phonics screening check.

Materials are sent to schools based on the year 1 spring census data. You will receive one set of materials per 30 pupils.

Each set of materials will contain one:

- copy of 'Phonics screening check: pupils' materials'
- pad containing 30 copies of the 'Phonics screening check: answer sheet'
- copy of 'Phonics screening check: practice sheet'
- copy of '2019 Phonics screening check: scoring guidance'

You can download <u>practice materials</u> to see what the check looks like.

There is no need to contact us for additional materials. If you need more copies of the 'answer sheet', you may photocopy it or download and print copies from the 'Test materials' section of NCA tools from Monday 10 June.

If you have not received materials by midday on Friday 24 May, if a delivery is incomplete, or if check packs arrive unsealed or damaged, you should contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013. You may be asked to send a photograph of any damaged packages.

5.1 How to check your delivery

The headteacher is responsible for checking their school's delivery against the delivery note to ensure the correct number of check materials have been received. If the

⁷ https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk

⁸ https://sa.education.gov.uk

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-practice-materials

headteacher is not available, they must delegate this activity to a senior member of staff who understands the process.

When you receive your materials, you should open the box and check the number of packs against the delivery note. Make sure a second member of staff witnesses this. Leave the inner packs unopened and store your delivery securely until Monday 10 June.

5.2 Security of check materials

Schools must follow the guidance on keeping materials secure. Check materials must be treated as confidential from when schools receive them, or download them from NCA tools, until Monday 24 June.

Check packs must not be opened before Monday 10 June. They must only be opened when the check is going to be administered for the first time.

To maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the check, check administrators must not discuss the content with anyone or use the check words to prepare pupils. In particular, they must not discuss specific content that could compromise the check online or on social media.

If you suspect a breach of security, you should report the incident immediately to the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013. STA will investigate the incident and take action, where appropriate.

6 Preparing to administer the check

6.1 Check administrators

A member of staff who is trained in phonics and known to the pupil must administer the check on a one-to-one basis. The role requires professional judgement about which responses are correct. The check should not be administered by a teaching assistant or a higher-level teaching assistant unless they are trained in phonics and have experience delivering phonics sessions to pupils. The check administrator must not be a relative, carer or guardian of the pupil taking the check.

Check administrators should familiarise with this guidance and with:

- guidance on <u>how to keep check materials secure</u>¹⁰
- the printed instructions for administering the check
- guidance on how to score pupils' responses¹¹
- the check video and practice materials 12

6.2 Preparing rooms

Administer the check in a room that is quiet and provides a comfortable, well-lit space. Rooms should be prepared before pupils are admitted.

Displays or materials that could help pupils must be removed or covered for the duration of the check. If more than one adult is administering the check to pupils at the same time, you may need more than one room to ensure pupils taking the check do not disturb or distract one another.

6.3 Access arrangements

You may need to adapt the check for some pupils. Adjustments must be based on normal classroom practice for pupils with specific needs. You do not need to request permission to make adaptations, but you must ensure that any modifications do not advantage or disadvantage pupils.

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-and-2-tests-and-phonics-screening-check-security-advice

¹¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-2018-materials

¹² www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-sample-materials-and-training-video

Those who may need adjustments include pupils:

- for whom provision is being made in school under special educational needs (SEN) support and whose learning difficulty or disability significantly affects access to the check
- with an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- with a disability (as defined in section 6(1) of the <u>Equality Act 2010</u>¹³) that does not give rise to a special educational need but requires alternative access arrangements
- who are unable to sit and work for a sustained period because of a disability or behavioural, emotional or social difficulty

It is not possible to list all the circumstances in which pupils may need adaptations. You should contact the national curriculum assessments helpline if you need advice on specific situations or use 'Message Us' in the 'Access arrangements' section of NCA tools.

Rest breaks

The check is not timed but we expect it will take each pupil between 4 and 9 minutes to complete. You should give pupils enough time to respond to each word.

If you believe a pupil will find it difficult to concentrate, or may experience fatigue during the check, you may use rest breaks to make it more manageable. Rest breaks can be given whenever they are needed.

When planning for the check, consider when it would be most appropriate for the pupil to take a break. If the pupil is likely to need a rest break more frequently than between the 2 sections of the check, or at the end of a page, we recommend you modify the materials so there are fewer words on each page.

The pupil must be kept separate from the rest of the cohort during a rest break. The check must be completed on the same day.

Cued speech

If the pupil is familiar with cued speech, it can be used by a professional skilled in its use and by the deaf pupil to make their responses clear for all words. If the deaf pupil would prefer to speak the words, then cued speech should be used to help clarify what sounds they were aiming for.

¹³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6

Visual phonics

These techniques can be used to help pupils make their responses clear, if this is normal classroom practice.

Sound buttons

If a pupil uses sound buttons to help them decode words as part of normal classroom practice, they may use them during the check.

You must give the pupil a clean copy of the check so they can mark the sound buttons against the graphemes themselves. You must not mark the graphemes for the pupil.

Readers

Readers are not allowed.

Adapting check materials

The check materials are provided in font 'Sassoon Infant', style 'regular' and size '60'. Most pupils will use standard versions of the phonics screening check, but you may need to adapt check materials to meet pupils' specific needs.

Schools can download check materials from NCA tools from Monday 10 June. This includes the mark sheet and modified versions (excluding braille), including word versions with colour images, word versions with black and white images, and word versions without images. The materials are designed so that schools can modify them to meet the needs of individual pupils and their own approach to teaching phonics. Examples of modifications may include:

- changing the font
- changing the font size
- having fewer words per page
- removing the imaginary creatures for any pupils who might find them distracting

Coloured overlays

You may use a coloured overlay if this is normal classroom practice.

6.4 Braille versions

You can order braille versions by contacting STA's modified test agency on 0300 303 3019. Braille orders placed by Friday 10 May will be delivered to schools by Friday 24 May. If a pupil is identified as needing braille materials after Friday 10 May, you should contact the modified test agency for advice.

7 Administering the check

Pupils must only attempt the check once during the check window. You should introduce the check as consistently as possible, bearing in mind some pupils may require more explanation to understand the instructions.

The check materials include a double-sided practice sheet with 4 pseudo-words and 4 real words on each side. You can use this to familiarise pupils with the check. If a pupil is struggling to decode the words on the practice sheet, you should stop and discuss with your headteacher whether that pupil should participate in the check.

The following text provides an example of how you could introduce the check:

"In this activity, I am going to ask you to read some words aloud.

You may have seen some of the words before and others will be new to you.

You should try to read each word but do not worry if you cannot. If it helps you, you may sound out the letters before trying to say the word.

This practice sheet shows you what the words will look like.

Have a go at reading these 4 words aloud, which you should have come across before [in, at, beg, sum].

The words on this side [turn over practice sheet] are not real words. They are names for types of imaginary creatures. You can see a picture of the creature next to each word.

Can you read out the words on this page for me? [ot, vap, osk, ect]

Now you are going to start reading out the words in this booklet and I am going to write down what you say on my sheet.

In this booklet, there are 4 words on each page. I will tell you at the start of each page whether they are real words that you may have seen before or names for types of imaginary creatures.

The first page has names for types of imaginary creatures and you can see their pictures.

Can you start reading the words to me?"

It is important to tell the pupil whether they are real words or types of imaginary creatures on each page.

7.1 Assistance

You must ensure that nothing you say, or do, during the check could be interpreted as giving pupils an advantage.

If a pupil is likely to be confused by the standard introduction, you may develop your own. Your instructions may refer to the practice words but must not refer to words within the check itself.

You can point to whole words to indicate which word comes next, but you must be careful not to point to the words in a way that indicates how to decode them. For example, avoid pointing from left to right or hovering over letters.

During the practice, you can give further guidance to ensure pupils understand the task. For example, you may remind the pupil that the word must be blended, guidance which would not be allowed during the check itself.

Pupils should be given as long as necessary to respond to a word, although in most cases 10 seconds should be enough. You should not indicate whether a pupil has decoded a word correctly, or not, during the check, but you may offer encouragement. You should decide when it is appropriate to tell the pupil to move onto the next word, taking care not to do so while they are still trying to decode the word.

7.2 Problems or queries during the check

Most pupils should be able to attempt all words in the check. However, it is important that they do not become distressed or have a negative experience. If a pupil is struggling, you should consider stopping the check before the end.

Similarly, if a pupil is showing signs of fatigue, you should consider using a rest break. If a pupil needs frequent, lengthy rest breaks, think about stopping the check completely. When making the decision to stop, ensure that the pupil has been given a full opportunity to show what they can do. If the check is stopped before the end, you should report the pupil's score for what they have attempted.

7.3 Completing the answer sheet

You should use the answer sheets to record each pupil's responses during the check so that you have an accurate record of how many words a pupil read correctly.

You can also use them to record your own comments, for example any graphemes a pupil did not recognise or when blending was difficult. This may help you plan future phonics teaching.

If you are not familiar with the answer sheets, past materials are available on GOV.UK.

7.4 Scoring the check

Instructions for scoring the check will be included with the check materials. You should score the check as the pupil says each word. Make a record on the answer sheet of whether the pupil said each word correctly or not. You should consider the following points when scoring the check:

- If a pupil sounds out the phonemes but does not blend the word, they must not be prompted to do so and this must be scored as incorrect.
- Pupils may elongate phonemes but if they leave gaps between phonemes and do not blend them, this must be scored as incorrect.
- Alternative pronunciations must be considered when deciding whether a response
 is correct. For real words, inappropriate grapheme-phoneme correspondences
 must be marked as incorrect (for example, reading 'blow' to rhyme with 'cow'
 would be incorrect).
- Alternative pronunciations of graphemes will be allowed in pseudo-words. The scoring guidance gives some alternative pronunciations, but the list of acceptable pronunciations is not exhaustive.
- A pupil's accent should be considered when deciding whether a response is acceptable but there must be no bias for or against a pupil with a particular accent.
- Any pronunciation difficulties should be considered when deciding whether a
 response is acceptable. For example, a pupil unable to form the 'th' sound who
 instead usually says 'fw' should have this scored as correct.
- If a pupil shows their ability to decode by revising an attempt, this should be marked as correct. However, pupils must not be prompted to 'have another go' and the final attempt must be scored, even if this is incorrect and a previous attempt had been correct.

8 After the check

8.1 Headteacher's declaration form

Headteachers must complete and submit the HDF after your school has completed the check, as detailed in the Education (National Curriculum) (Key Stage 1 Assessment Arrangements) (England) Order 2004¹⁴ (as amended by the Education (National Curriculum) (Key Stage 1 Assessment Arrangements) (England) (Amendment) Order 2011¹⁵). You must still complete the HDF if all pupils are working below the standard of the check.

The HDF confirms that either:

- your school has administered the check according to the published guidance
- the statements in the HDF cannot be confirmed and you have reported any issues to STA

You, or a delegated senior member of staff, must complete and submit the HDF online after the last check has been administered. The HDF will be available in the 'Headteacher's declaration forms' section of NCA tools from Monday 10 June and must be submitted by Thursday 27 June.

Failure to complete the HDF by the deadline may result in a maladministration investigation. If you, or an authorised senior member of staff, cannot complete the HDF or need help completing it, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline. You cannot amend the HDF after submission.

8.2 Recycling unused check materials and packaging

The Secretary of State for Education announced the single-use plastic reduction initiative in December 2018¹⁶. Check materials provided by STA are packaged in low-density polyethylene bags (marked as LDPE4). While this material is recyclable, not all LAs will process it so schools should check their local refuse and recycling policy. Alternatively, many of the larger supermarkets offer plastic wrapping recycling facilities. Schools using an independent commercial waste disposal service should confirm recycling provision with their supplier.

¹⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/2783/contents/made

¹⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/3057/contents/made

The cartons that the check materials are delivered in are made from recycled cardboard and can be recycled again after removing any tape. Unused check materials and the delivery note can be safely recycled via your usual paper recycling facility.

9 Results and reporting

The threshold mark will be available on GOV.UK from Monday 24 June. Check administrators should compare each pupil's score against the threshold to establish whether they have achieved the expected standard.

9.1 Providing results data to local authorities

Schools must report their pupils' check scores to the LA by their submission deadline. Results must be submitted for all pupils in year 1, and any in year 2 who are eligible to take the check, using the following codes:

Description	What to record	
Pupil took the check and met the expected standard	Score – record in the phonics mark field	
Pupil took the check and did not meet the expected standard	Score – record in the phonics mark field	
Absent	A – record in the phonics outcome field	
Headteacher decided it was inappropriate for pupil to take the check	D – record in the phonics outcome field	
Pupil has left the school	L – record in the phonics outcome field	
Check subject to maladministration	Q – record in the phonics outcome field	

The LA will tell you how to submit your data and by when. Management information system (MIS) suppliers have been advised of the data requirements for the check. Your LA or MIS supplier, depending on local arrangements, may offer support for these systems.

If a pupil moves schools after taking the check, their result should be submitted by the school where they took the check and provided to the new school in the CTF.

Local authorities should submit check results data to DfE by using COLLECT¹⁷ by Friday 26 July. Data received by DfE after Friday 26 July will not be included in the provisional release of data from Analyse School Performance¹⁸.

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¹⁷ https://sa.education.gov.uk

¹⁸ www.analyse-school-performance.service.gov.uk

9.2 Reporting results to parents

Headteachers must report the pupils scores to parents by the end of the summer term. This should include whether or not their child has met the expected standard to ensure they are aware of their child's progress in developing phonics decoding skills. If a pupil has not met the expected standard, headteachers should outline the support that will be put in place to help the pupil progress.

Headteachers can choose how to communicate results to parents, which should be provided in the context of their overall attainment and progress. Headteachers must provide reports for all pupils, including those who have left the school or were absent during the check.

9.3 Pupils who do not meet the expected standard

The Department for Education (DfE) has published <u>guidance</u>¹⁹ on what schools should do if a pupil does not meet the expected standard.

Pupils who have not met the expected standard at the end of year 1 must be considered for a retake in June 2020. Schools are expected to maintain a programme of support for these pupils.

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¹⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-responding-to-the-results

10 Further information

10.1 General enquiries

For general enquiries about check administration and access arrangements, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or assessments@education.gov.uk.

10.2 Message us

For queries relating to access arrangements to meet a pupil's specific needs, schools can 'Message us' via the 'Access arrangements' section of NCA tools.



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About this publication:

enquiries <u>www.education.gov.uk/contactus</u> download <u>www.gov.uk/government/publications</u>

Reference: STA/19/8111/e ISBN: 978-1-78644-872-9



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