

Ph

KEY STAGE
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National Curriculum assessments

Monitoring visits guidance for local authorities

Phonics screening check

2013



Standards
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Agency

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

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Background

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to monitor the administration of the phonics screening check.

Academies may choose whether to be monitored by their own local authority, another local authority, or STA. References to academies in this document include Free Schools, as in law they are academies. If an academy has not nominated an alternative provider of monitoring visits it will be included in its local authority's arrangements.

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

The purpose of monitoring visits

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. They also give headteachers a formal opportunity to demonstrate how the check is administered in their schools.

Guidance for delivering monitoring visits

Local authorities must make unannounced visits to schools participating in the phonics screening check before and during the check period. They may also choose to make unannounced visits after the check period. In 2013, the check period starts the week commencing 17 June. Schools have a five-day timetable variation window, so can administer the check up until Friday 28 June for any children absent during the check period.

Local authorities must visit at least ten per cent of maintained schools administering the check within their authority, including special schools and any academies which have chosen to be monitored by the local authority. Pupil referral units and hospital schools may be included in monitoring visits, where children attending these schools are still on the register at a maintained school, as these children are required to take the check.

Local authorities should not make more than one visit to an individual school unless there are concerns that have already been discussed with the local authority monitoring visit coordinator and STA.

In exceptional circumstances STA may ask the local authority to visit a particular school in their authority. STA will provide local authorities with the details of these schools in early May.

To help them plan timely visits, local authorities may consider asking schools when they will be administering the check. However, they must not inform schools if or when they plan to carry out a visit. Schools should not be bound to administer the check on the date they initially plan, but this approach should help the local authority to observe more checks.

STA recommends that each local authority identifies a person to act as monitoring visits coordinator. The monitoring visits coordinator 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 at testadmin.sta@education.gsi.gov.uk; and
- forwarding all completed monitoring visit forms, including those already emailed to STA's maladministration team, to STA's monitoring visits agency.

Local authority staff or consultants who are conducting monitoring visits

Given the sensitive nature of reviewing check security, monitoring visits should only be carried out by staff who have a clear understanding of the monitoring visit requirements and who are familiar with the guidance on check administration. 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.

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

Identification required for monitoring visitors

All monitoring visitors must carry identification that should be shown on arrival at the school. Schools may contact their local authority to confirm the identity of local authority visitors, or the National Curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 for STA staff.

Providing information to schools

Before undertaking any monitoring visits, local authorities may want to contact schools within their authority and academies which have chosen to be monitored by the local authority to explain the purpose of the visits. Local authorities 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 check period, schools should be directed to read the guidance for schools on monitoring visits for the phonics screening check, available in the Key Stage 1 section of the Department for Education's website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

Visits before the check period

STA recommends that ten per cent of monitoring visits take place in the weeks before the check period. The purpose of these visits is to check that the sealed materials are unopened and stored securely. Monitoring visitors should ask to view the school's annotated delivery note(s) to confirm the quantities of check materials that have been received. The monitoring visitor may also discuss other elements of the proposed administration such as the room in which the check will take place.

Visits during the check period

The majority, approximately 80 per cent, of monitoring visits should be made during the check period. If the school has begun to administer the check to children, the monitoring visitor should observe the administration of the check for a small number of children, between two and five checks depending on the size of the cohort.

If the school has not yet started to administer the check to children, the monitoring visitor should ensure that the check materials are stored securely. They should also check the other preparations the school has made.

Visits after the check period

Up to 10 per cent of the total number of monitoring visits should be made immediately after the check period.

Local authorities should make these visits to discuss the administration of the check and to review the accuracy of the data transfer from the marksheets.

If children are absent during the check period, schools can administer the check during the week commencing 24 June to any children that return to school in that time. A monitoring visitor may be able to observe the administration of the check in those circumstances.

Preparing for monitoring visits

All local authority staff undertaking monitoring visits should be familiar with the following guidance, which is published on the Department's website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

- 2013 Key Stage 1 *Assessment and reporting arrangements* (ARA)
- 2013 *Phonics Check administration guide* (CAG); and
- Scoring the Year 1 phonics screening check training video.

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

- the number of children being assessed at the school (they will be able to calculate an approximate figure by accessing the number of children in the Year 1 cohort on Edubase and by reviewing the school's data from the previous year, which should show any Year 2 children who are expected to take the check);
- details of the phonics screening check materials sent to the school – copies of delivery notes received by schools with their phonics screening check materials will be sent to local authorities; and
- a monitoring visit form, a sample of which is available on page 12 of this guidance and on the Department's website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

If local authorities are carrying out monitoring visits during the check period, they should download and read the check materials which will be available in the phonics section of the NCA tools website at www.education.gov.uk/ncatools from Monday 17 June. Any printed versions of these materials must be kept secure until 28 June.

What to look for during monitoring visits

Visits before the test period

On arrival at the school the monitoring visitor should ask to speak to the headteacher or the teacher responsible for the administration of the check. They should ask to see where the unopened check materials are stored and ensure that the school has received the correct number of check packs.

The number of check packs delivered to each school will be shown on the copies of the delivery note(s) sent to local authorities. Schools should be able to present annotated copies of their delivery note(s) and provide details of how many check packs were actually delivered.

The monitoring visitor should confirm that all of the check materials are sealed, stored securely and have not been previously opened.

Early opening arrangements

Schools should not need to open the materials before the check period. If it is necessary to make adjustments to the check to enable all children to access it then these should be made during the check period.

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

Ensuring that teachers are prepared

Monitoring visitors should also speak to the headteacher or the teacher responsible for the administration of the check and, where possible, the teachers who will be administering the check. This is to ensure that appropriate staff administer the check and that they fully understand the administration arrangements including how to score the check.

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

Visits during the check period

On arrival at the school the monitoring visitor should ask to speak to the headteacher or the teacher responsible for the administration of the check to discuss the arrangements for the visit.

The monitoring visitor should ask the headteacher whether any checks are being administered that he or she might observe. They should also ask the headteacher whether the particular children scheduled for the check will be comfortable to be observed. It is important that children are not put off during the check by the presence of a visitor.

If a child is likely to be put off, the visitor should observe another child instead.

The monitoring visitor should discuss 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.

If the monitoring visitor arrives before the check has been administered to any children they should ask to see where the check materials are being securely stored and verify them against the delivery note as outlined on page 15. 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 are administering the check.

If the school is administering the check when the monitoring visitor arrives, it is recommended that the monitoring visitor observes a small number of checks (between two and five depending on the size of the cohort) to ensure that they are being properly administered. The monitoring visitor should only enter the room at the beginning of a check so that they do not interrupt the check administration and so the visitor's presence can be explained to the child.

When observing the check the monitoring visitor should ensure that:

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

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, for example the visitor thinks that the teacher has not realised that an alternative pronunciation of a grapheme should be scored correctly, the monitoring visitor should discuss these issues with the teacher after the check has been administered. These issues do 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.

If the monitoring visitor arrives after the check has been administered then, where possible, they should discuss the administration of the check with the headteacher and/or the teacher that administered the check.

Schools should securely store the check materials until 28 June. The monitoring visitor should ensure that, when not in use during the check period, the opened check materials are being securely stored. They should also discuss the arrangements in place for the collation of the data and how it will be provided to the local authority. Where schools have already completed the task, monitoring visitors should make sure that the children's scores have been properly and accurately transferred to the data return sheet.

Visits after the check period

If monitoring visits are made to schools after the check period, the monitoring visitor should ask to speak to the headteacher or the teacher responsible for the administration of the check. They should discuss the arrangements in place at the school for the collation of the data and how it will be provided to either the local authority or accredited agency.

The monitoring visitor should also use the opportunity to discuss the administration of the check at the school in general.

Completing monitoring visit forms

Monitoring visitors must complete a monitoring visit form for each school visited. All questions in both sections must be answered. The monitoring visit form and instructions for completing it are included in this document. It is also available to download from www.education.gov.uk/ks1.

Reporting issues to STA

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 instances where further investigation by the local authority and/or STA is required to be identified.

If the monitoring visitor observes any irregularities, the local authority monitoring visits coordinator must scan the monitoring visit form, together with any annotated delivery notes (if applicable), and email it to STA's maladministration team at testadmin.sta@education.gsi.gov.uk as soon as possible after the visit.

All instances where schools have an 'X' or 'N' on their monitoring visit form will be followed up by STA's maladministration team.

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 check 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 to confirm the visit took place and that any feedback about the administration of the 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.

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 local authority monitoring visits coordinator. 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.

If there are no irregularities identified during the visit, the completed monitoring visit form and any annotated delivery notes must be sent to the monitoring visits coordinator immediately after each visit. The deadline for the return of the completed monitoring visit form to local authorities is Friday 28 June.

The local authority monitoring visits coordinator must send all completed forms, including those already emailed to STA's maladministration team by Wednesday 3 July, to:

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 local authorities that have not sent in copies of their monitoring visit form by Friday 28 June. 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.

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

Follow up

Where appropriate, STA will investigate with local authorities irregularities reported on the monitoring visit form. The local authority may be asked to interview school staff and to provide recommendations to STA.

Checklists

Organising your monitoring visits

- Have you identified a person responsible for ensuring the programme of monitoring visits is organised and reported?
- Have you identified local authority staff/consultants to undertake the monitoring visits? This may be different to the person with an overall strategic view of the programme.
- Have you informed all maintained schools within your local authority (and academies as appropriate) participating in the phonics screening check about the purpose of the monitoring visits before any visits are made? This can include the names of those undertaking the monitoring visits and a local authority contact for the schools, should they have any questions. You must not identify in advance any specific schools that will be visited.
- Have you identified at least ten per cent of Key Stage 1 schools administering the check for monitoring visits? You should include visits before the check period, during the check period and consider making some visits after the check period.
- Have you provided a briefing session or pack for local authority staff/consultants to ensure that the requirements are understood and that they are familiar with the contents of the 2013 Key Stage 1 ARA, CAG and the Scoring the Year 1 phonics screening check training video?

Information to take on a monitoring visit

- Do you know the number of children participating in the check at the school?
- Do you know details of the school's phonics screening check materials consignment? These can be found on the copy of the delivery note provided to local authorities.

Monitoring visits before the check period

- Have you confirmed that the storage of the unopened check materials is secure?
- Have you ensured that the stored check materials are complete by comparing them against the delivery note received with the materials and the copy of the school's delivery note provided for your visit?
- Have you asked the headteacher who is going to administer the check to the children and whether they fully understand the administration arrangements including how to score the check?

Monitoring visits during the check period

- If you have arrived before the school has started to administer the check to children, have you confirmed that the storage of the check materials is secure?
- If the school has begun to administer the check, but you have arrived before the checks have started to be administered, have you established that:
 - the room where the check is going to be administered is suitable;
 - wall displays are covered up or, if uncovered, do not offer any assistance to children; and
 - appropriate teachers are administering the check?
- When observing the check being administered, have you verified that:
 - the check is introduced to the child appropriately; and
 - no inappropriate assistance is given during the check?
- If you arrive after the check has been administered to children have you asked to see that check materials are being securely stored?
- Have you discussed the arrangements in place for the collation of data and how it will be provided to the local authority?

Monitoring visits after the test period

- Have you discussed the administration of the check with the headteacher and/or the teacher responsible for administering the check?
- Have you discussed the arrangements in place for the collation of data and how it will be provided to either the local authority or accredited agency?

Completing the monitoring visit form and the end of the visit

- Have you completed the monitoring visit form?
- Have you discussed any issues observed and, where appropriate, included any actions taken 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 and that any feedback about the administration of the phonics screening check has been given to the school?
- Have you provided a copy of the completed monitoring visit form and annotated delivery note to the headteacher or delegated senior member of staff?

- Have you provided the monitoring visit form and annotated delivery note to your local authority assessment coordinator by Friday 28 June?

Submitting monitoring visit forms and follow up

- Has the local authority monitoring visits coordinator emailed any monitoring visit forms with an 'X' or 'N' entered in any box on the form to STA at testadmin.sta@education.gsi.gov.uk?
- Has the local authority monitoring visits coordinator sent all monitoring visit forms to STA's monitoring visits agency by Wednesday 3 July?

Section A

Before, during and after the 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 which teachers are going to be administering the check to children in order to establish whether the check is going to be administered by appropriate people.

You should ask whether the teachers administering the check have read the *Check administrators' guide (CAG)* and scoring guidance, and watched the check scoring guidance video to ensure that the check is administered 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 note(s) 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 was 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 note(s) 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 opened before the statutory check week, which is during the week commencing 17 June 2013. This must be reported immediately to your local authority assessment coordinator.

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 was in accordance with the CAG.

Use **X** where there is reason to question whether children have completed the check independently and unaided, for example where inappropriate support has been given.

Completed mark sheets viewed

Use ✓ when the checks have been administered to children, the mark sheets have been properly completed and are being appropriately and securely stored before collation for data return.

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

Data collated for reporting

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

Use **X** where the data from the mark sheets has not been properly and accurately transferred to the local authority's data system.

Ensure that section A and at least one column of section B are completed.

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 local authority monitoring visit coordinator by Friday 28 June 2013.

About this publication

Who is it for?

Local authorities which have a statutory responsibility to monitor the administration of the 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?

How local authorities should carry out monitoring visits to schools administering the check.

Related information

Visit the Department's website at www.education.gov.uk/ks1 for all related information.

Statutory instruments

The Education (National Curriculum) (Key Stage 1 Assessment Arrangements) (England) (Amendment) Order 2011(SI 3057).