

Phonics Screening Check

Dear Sycamore parents,

As you may be aware, this June all of our Year 1 children will be taking the statutory Phonics Screening Check. Year 1 children and any children due to re-take the test in year two will take the phonics screening check in the week beginning 10th June.

All year 1 children across the country will be doing this screening during the same week. It is part of a national drive to improve literacy skills. It will be used to confirm whether individual children have developed phonic decoding to an appropriate standard.

Phonics continues to hold a high profile within our school. 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. We use the Read Write Inc. programme to teach phonics. We are very aware of those children across the school that require further support and intervention with phonics and this has been implemented effectively; these children will have received 'Keep Up' Read Write Inc. sessions and peer to peer support. If we feel it is not appropriate for your child to carry out the screening check, we will contact you to discuss this.

Although we have a firm grasp on the assessment of phonics, this screening check will provide us with useful further evidence for each child. The test will be carried out with a teacher on a 1:1 basis and will take approximately 10 minutes per child, although all children are different and will complete the check at their own pace.

The test will consist of 40 words; 20 words will be real and 20 will be nonsense; we call nonsense words alien words and they are accompanied with an alien image. This provides the children with a context for the pseudo word which is independent from any existing vocabulary they may have. The nonsense words are phonetically decodable but not actual words with an associated meaning e.g. *florb*. These words are included in the test specifically to assess whether you child can decode a word using phonic skills. These words will be new to all pupils; they do not favour children with a good vocabulary knowledge or visual memory of words. The children will be asked what the alien's name is by reading the word. The skill being assessed is blending; the nonsense/alien words do not provide any clues, so your child has to be able to decode it. The check is very similar to procedures used within phonics sessions so it should be an enjoyable experience for the children. There will be a few practise words at the beginning to familiarise your child with the process.

We will inform you of your child's result in a sealed envelope, stating how many words they got correct and how many they attempted. If your child does not achieve the pass standard in year one, then they will have the opportunity to have another attempt in year 2 and further support will be put in place.

Please be assured that your child's teachers have a very firm grasp of their individual progress in reading and phonics. Our rigorous assessment procedures will continue as normal, however we will be carrying out this screening check as a statutory process.

Please continue to support your child with their reading and spellings. The spellings are linked to the sounds that the children need to focus on. Please remember to take a look at our phonic support, which includes information on how we teach phonics at Verwood C of E First School and some fun games for you to play with your child at home. This can be found on our school website. We would appreciate it if you could make phonics and reading a real focus for home learning over the next few weeks. Thank you for your support. Please feel free to speak to your child's literacy teacher if you would like any further information on this.

Rebecca Boyle (Phonics Leader)