

## **Learning to read through phonics and the phonics screening check**

### **Information for parents**

#### **What is phonics?**

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

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes;
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make - such as 'sh' or 'oo'; and
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can then use this knowledge to 'de-code' new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read. If you would like to find out more about phonics, visit [www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/phonics](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/phonics) or search for 'phonics' on the Department for Education website at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk).

#### **Phonics schemes**

We use: 'Letters and Sounds' and 'Read, Write Inc'.

#### **Reading schemes**

We use: Oxford Reading Tree, Bug Club, Lighthouse and Project X.

By using a selection of schemes, we are able to take the most effective parts from each scheme and use these creatively, allowing us to maximise the childrens' learning.

#### **What is the phonics screening check?**

The phonics screening check is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge. It helps your school confirm whether your child has made the expected progress.

In 2015 the check will take place during June.

#### **Who will be taking the screening check?**

All Year 1 children and some Year 2 children will be taking the screening check. If your child is in Year 2 you will be informed if this is necessary.

#### **How does the check work?**

Your child will sit with a teacher he or she knows and be asked to read 40 words aloud. Your child may have read some of the words before, while others will be completely new.

The check normally takes just a few minutes to complete and there is no time limit. If your child is struggling, the teacher will stop the check. The check is carefully designed not to be stressful for your child.

**What are 'non-words'?**

The check will contain a mix of real words and 'non-words' (or 'nonsense words'). Your child will be told before the check that there will be non-words that he or she will not have seen before. Many children will be familiar with this because many schools already use 'non-words' when they teach phonics.

Non-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**

Your school should tell you about your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check in the last half-term of Year 1. If your child has found the check difficult, your child's school should also tell you what support they have put in place to help him or her improve. You might like to ask 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.