

Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

A parent information session

Helping every child become a confident reader



Barnett Wood Infant School





Why phonics matters

In the early stages of reading, children need to understand that letters and groups of letters represent sounds. Phonics teaches them to recognise those sound-letter links, blend sounds together to read words, and segment sounds to spell words.

Builds independence

Children do not have to memorise every word by sight. They can use their phonics knowledge to work out new words.

Supports fluency

As children become quicker at decoding, they can put more attention into understanding what they read.

Creates confidence

When children can successfully read words on their own, they begin to see themselves as readers.



Phonics is not the whole of reading: children also need rich stories, vocabulary, language development, comprehension and a love of books. But phonics is a crucial foundation because it unlocks the written code.



Our phonics scheme



1. The necessary GPCs are taught before the check

By Spring 1 the Phase 5 GPCs included in the check have been covered. This means children are not meeting unfamiliar code for the first time just before the check.

2. Summer 1 is used as focused review

Year 1 Summer 1 planning is designed as review, not new teaching. It revisits Phase 5 GPCs and the word types found in the screening check, including alien/pseudo words.

3. Assessment identifies gaps early

Half termly assessments identify any gaps in GPCs taught. Children who are not secure receive Daily Keep-up, in small groups or 1:1 and are re-assessed after 3 weeks.





What is the check?

Children read 40 words:

20 real words

Examples: shop, rain, bright.
Children use phonics to read them accurately.

20 pseudo-words

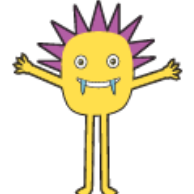
Made-up “alien words” that can be sounded out, so children cannot rely on memory.

Section 1

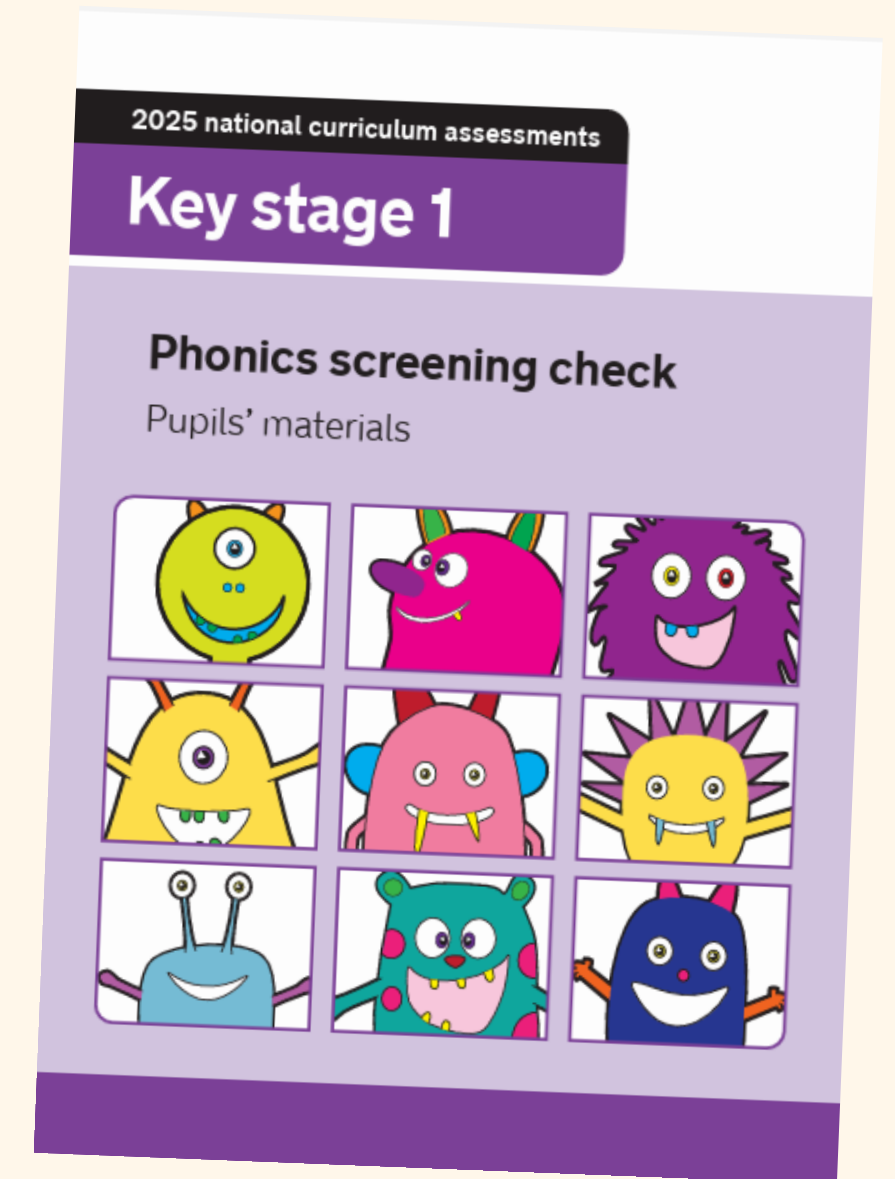
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Section 1

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What is the check?

Why pseudo-words?

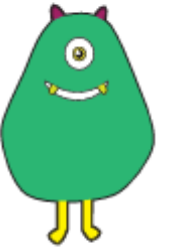
They show whether a child can apply phonics to a brand-new word.

Each pseudo-word has a little creature picture so children know it is not a real word.

The check helps teachers plan support; it is not a “high-stakes” test for children.

Section 2

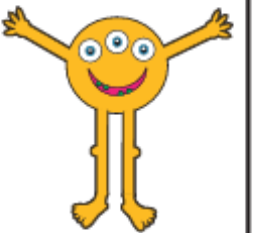
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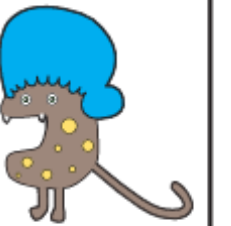
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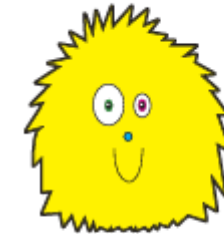
strume



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Section 2

jigh



saunt



virp



phope



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How the check is administered

It is designed to be calm, familiar and very short.

When

In 2026, schools should administer it during the week beginning Monday 8 June.

Where and who

One-to-one with a trained adult, usually someone the child knows well.

How long

There is no strict time limit; for most children it feels like a short reading activity.

What adults can say

Adults can encourage and give instructions, but cannot teach or sound out the words during the check.





What happens afterwards?

The result helps us decide the next teaching steps.

1

Check completed

Your child reads the 40 words one-to-one.

2

School scores

Each word is marked correct or not; the threshold is confirmed nationally.

3

Parents told

Results are reported to parents by the end of the summer term.

4

Support planned

If a child does not meet the standard, they receive extra phonics support and retake in Year 2.



Important message for children: **"This helps your teachers know what to teach next."**



How to help at home

Little and often is best. Keep it positive, short and playful.

- Read the school reading book regularly — it is matched to the sounds your child has been taught.
- Practise “pure sounds”: try /m/ not “muh”, /s/ not “suh”.
- Ask your child to spot known graphemes in signs, labels and story books.
- Blend together: “Can you say the sounds, then say the word?”
- Celebrate effort: “I like how you looked carefully at each sound.”

Aim for 5–10 cheerful minutes rather than one long session.





Helpful practice games

These build decoding skills without making it feel like a test.

Sound hunt

Choose a sound: “Can you find sh in this page?” Then read words containing it.

Robot talk

Say sounds like a robot: c-oa-t. Your child blends them into “coat”. Swap roles.

Alien word fun

Make up silly decodable words: vab, floop, chorn. Add a doodle creature.

Sound buttons

Dot single sounds and underline digraphs: ch ai igh. Then blend.

Reread for fluency

Read a familiar book again. Confidence grows when reading feels smoother.

Praise the strategy

Notice sounding out, checking and trying again — not just getting the word right.



What to avoid

The goal is confidence, not pressure.

Try not to...

- ➔ Use timed drills or “pass/fail” language at home.
- ➔ Ask children to memorise pseudo-words.
- ➔ Overcorrect every mistake during reading.
- ➔ Compare scores with other children.

Do more of...

- ➔ Short daily reading with warmth and encouragement.
- ➔ Talking about stories and enjoying books together.
- ➔ Using school guidance on sounds and blending.
- ➔ Letting us know if your child is worried.



Key takeaways

Thank you for supporting early reading.

- The check is short, familiar and one-to-one.
- It checks decoding — blending sounds to read real and made-up words.
- The result helps us plan teaching and support.
- At home, keep practice brief, cheerful and regular.



Questions?

Please speak to your child's class teacher if you have any worries about reading or phonics.

