

The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School


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Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to inform you about the National Phonics Screening Test, which will take place in Key Stage 1 during the week beginning 9th June. This letter aims to explain the process, in addition to providing you with ideas to help your child with phonics at home.

Who takes the test?

All children in year 1 will take the test. In addition, children in year 2, who did not reach the required level when they took the test in year 1 will also retake it.

What is phonics?

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

- Recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes
- Identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make e.g sh and oo
- Blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can then use their knowledge to segment and blend new words that they hear or see.

Why phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way – starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex – it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read.

What is the phonics screening check?

The government introduced an annual screening check to further inform our continued assessment of the children's phonics knowledge. The results of the check will be shared with parents/carers in the end of year report.

It comprises of a list of 40 words that children read one-to-one with a teacher. The list is a combination of both real and made up, non-words, which rely purely on using phonics to decode. The non-words are words that have been made up and will be shown with a picture or an imaginary creature, so the children know they are not a real word.



Website

www.olicatschools.org

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What are nonsense words?

Your child will be told during the check which words are nonsense words (that they will have not seen before). Your child will be familiar with this because we already use 'nonsense words' when teaching phonics in school. Nonsense 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 must use their decoding skills. This is a fair way to assess their ability to decode.

After the check

We will tell you about your child's progress in phonics and how they have done in the screening check as part of their end of year report. If your child has found the check difficult, we will also tell you what support we have put in place to help them improve. All children are individuals and develop at different rates. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need extra support with phonic decoding.

Helping your child with phonics

Phonics works best when children are given plenty of encouragement and learn to enjoy reading and books. Parents play a very important part in helping with this. Here are some simple steps to help your child learn to read through phonics:

Step 1 – identify 'special friends' (2 or 3 letters that make one sound - 'ee')

Step 2 – Fred talk the sounds (say each sound separately - 'g r ee n')

Step 3 – read the word (blend sounds together – 'green')

- Use the speed sounds chart. Point to a sound and ask your child to say the sound.
- Choose 4 sounds a week to display at home that your child is unfamiliar with. Use the sound phrases first to identify the sound, then move on to just saying the correct sound.
- You can highlight these sounds when you read with your child.
- Practise a mixture of real and nonsense words for your child to practice. An example of a phonics screening check has been included.
- Make up nonsense words and ask your child to read them. Then ask your child to make up nonsense words for you to read.
- With all books, encourage your child to 'Fred talk (sound out) unfamiliar words and then blend the sounds together from left to right, rather than looking at the picture to guess. Once your child has read an unfamiliar word you can talk about what it means and help them to follow the story.
- Try to make time to read with your child every day. Grandparents, older siblings and other family members can help as well. Encourage your child to blend sounds all the way through a word.

- Word games like 'I spy' can also be an enjoyable way of teaching children about sounds and letters. You can encourage your child to read words from the shopping list or road signs to practise phonics.
- Lots of Fred talk at home!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Miller

Phonics Lead