

Guidance for Statutory Key Stage 1 National Curriculum Assessment Phonics Screening Check 2024-25

February 2025



 **RESET**

 **RESHAPE**

 **RESTART**

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A. Phonics Screening Check Overview

This guidance details guidance for the 2024 to 2025 statutory assessments and the updated reporting and assessment arrangements for this period.

Assessments at the end of KS1 became non-statutory from the academic year 2023 to 2024. There is separate [guidance](#) on the optional tests and [teacher assessment frameworks](#) that schools may wish to utilise to support in the measurement of pupil achievement, to help identify where pupils need additional support or to inform classroom practice.

Relevant documents:

- **Standards and Testing Agency (STA) 2025 assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA) phonics screening check** (October 2024) Select link - [Select link - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-phonics-screening-check](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-phonics-screening-check)
- **Phonics screening check administration guidance** (to be updated March 2025) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-phonics-screening-check-administration-guidance-includes>:
 - [Guidance](#)
 - [Monitoring visits](#)
 - [Maladministration](#)

This document includes information about keeping phonics screening check materials secure.

Introduction

Head teachers have a duty to ensure that the National Curriculum assessment arrangements are implemented in their school. Head teachers must ensure their schools, teachers and other staff comply with all aspects of the Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (Phonics Screening Check, October 2024) and should take note of the further responsibilities indicated in Section 4 and Section 9. This includes the issue of a privacy notice to parents that explains how pupils' personal data is processed. Where head teachers do not comply with the provisions of the ARA and other published guidance this could result in the school being investigated for maladministration.

Head teachers also have a responsibility to comply with the KS1 monitoring processes conducted by the Services For Education, School Support Service on behalf of Birmingham Local Authority, and the data collection processes conducted by the LA Data and Intelligence Team.

LAs must:

- ensure that their schools administer the statutory assessment and reporting arrangements appropriately.
- ensure that their schools understand and follow the statutory requirements.

All children in Year 1 must be considered for the phonics screening check as well as those children in Y2 who were not assessed, or who did not meet the required standard in Y1 in 2024.

It is possible for Head teachers to withdraw children from the check, if the child has not shown any understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences. However, most children are expected to be able to access the check – see ARA section 5.2.

Schools should explain their decision to parents, providing any relevant documentary evidence, and explaining how their child is being helped to learn to decode using phonics. The Head teacher does not need to inform STA nor follow a formal process to withdraw a child from the check. Where a head teacher has decided it was not appropriate for the pupil to take the check, schools should record code **D** for that child.

Children who recently arrived and not able to understand letters and sounds in English should not take the phonics screening check. Year 1 pupils must be considered in the following year i.e., June 2026. Pupils who use British sign language or other sight-supported communication boards or who are mute or selectively mute, should not take the check. (See ARA, Section 5.2 for further information)

The phonics screening check can be taken at any time during the week commencing Monday **9th June**. If a child is absent that week, they may take the screening check at any time until **Friday 20th June**. Any child who is absent for the entire period should be recorded as absent, **A**, when submitting data.

Pupils must only attempt the check once during the check window.

Academies and Free schools

Academies and Free schools are required to comply with the guidance issued by the Secretary of State in relation to statutory assessments.

Academies and free schools must have a written agreement in place with their chosen LA to confirm arrangements for monitoring of the phonics screening check. All academies will be presumed to be working with their geographical LA. Those academies and free schools who choose a non-geographical LA, must report this information to STA via the Primary Assessment Gateway. The deadline for this is **Friday 10th January 2025**.

If your school became an academy on, or after Monday 2nd September 2024, you will automatically be part of your closest geographical LA's arrangements.

The Standards and Testing Agency will provide a list of academies to local authorities for confirmation of their written agreement arrangements.

Should Academies and Free schools wish to purchase these services from the School Support Service (who work on behalf of Birmingham LA) please contact schoolsupport@servicesforeducation.co.uk or 0121 366 9950.

Primary Assessment Gateway

Schools should use the Primary Assessment Gateway to:

- submit holiday dates to help inform deliveries of check materials
- download additional phonics screening check materials (excluding braille)
- submit headteacher's declaration form (HDF) for the phonics screening check

Head teacher's declaration form (HDF)

Head teachers **must** complete and submit the HDF to the Standards and Testing Agency via the Primary Assessment Gateway for the phonics screening check. The *HDF* form will be available from Monday 9th June and must be completed by **Monday 30th June 2025**.

Failure to complete the HDF by the deadline may result in a maladministration investigation.

Schools may contact the national curriculum assessments **helpline on 0300 303 3013** for help with completing the HDF.

Phonics Screening check materials

Materials will be sent automatically to each school in the week commencing Monday 19th May – there is no need to register children. Each school will be sent extra packs to cover children in Y2 who will be taking the check. Additional materials may be downloaded from Primary Assessment Gateway from Monday 9th June 2025. **Braille** materials must be ordered from the national curriculum assessment helpline on 0300 303 3013, by **Tuesday 22nd April 2025**.

Schools with no pupils working at the standard of the phonics screening check should decline phonics screening check materials on the Primary Assessment Gateway by the deadline of Friday 15th November 2024.

Security

All check packs must remain secure and unopened before the check week.

Head teachers are responsible for the security of the checks in their school. They or a delegated senior member of staff should:

- Check the delivery against the delivery note by opening the box to count the unopened packs
- Re-seal the box
- Sign and retain the delivery note
- Store the unopened packs in a secure cupboard
- Ensure that the packs are not opened until Monday 9th June **and only when the check is going to be administered for the first time.**

- Ensure the materials are stored securely in between sessions and throughout the week/s the checks are being administered. For example, if the checks are administered to pupils in the mornings, at the end of the session, all materials must be returned to be stored securely until the following morning.
- Ensure security and confidentiality of the materials is maintained until the end of the administration window on Monday 23rd June 2025.

Please refer to [ARA 5.7](#) for guidance on keeping materials secure: [Key stage 1: phonics screening check administration guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Schools must follow the phonics screening check administration guidance published in March 2025. Administrators must be trained in phonics, have experience of delivering phonics sessions and should be known to pupils.

The checks should be administered in a room that is free from excessive noise and provides a comfortable space for the child. Any displays or materials that could help the children in the check **must** be covered or removed.

The local authority is required to make **unannounced check monitoring visits** to 10% of schools. These will be conducted before, during and after the check window, on behalf of the LA by Denise Harris, Helen Grundy, Simone Whitehouse, Jo Perrin, Lucie Welch and Emma Mudge.

Preparing for the phonics screening check

The Check Administrators' Guide for the 2025 check period will be published online in March and must be read, followed, and understood by all administrators. In order to avoid allegations of maladministration, teachers must also view the training video which shows how to score the check

[Select link - https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/phonics-screening-check-administration](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/phonics-screening-check-administration)

Parental Requests

Parents may sometimes request that their child should not be included in the KS1 checks. Headteachers would need to consider such a request but would only be able to meet it if satisfied that appropriate circumstances applied, such as those covered in these notes. Such a request cannot be met purely on the basis of parental objections to the checks. Head teachers have a statutory duty to ensure that National Curriculum assessments are carried out as appropriate for each eligible pupil.

The Standards and Testing Agency 2025 phonics screening check *assessment and reporting arrangements*, check participation, Section 5.2, states: '**Head teachers make the final decision about whether it is appropriate for a pupil to take the check**'. Schools must inform and explain their decision to the pupil's parents and use code 'D' for the submission of pupil data.

B. Reporting phonic check results

Introduction

The following guidance details the statutory requirements for the reporting of phonics screening check scores.

Relevant Documentation:

Standards and Testing Agency 2025 phonics screening check assessment and reporting arrangements (October 2024) [Select link -](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-phonics-screening-check>

Phonics screening check administration guidance (updated March 2025)

[Select link - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-phonics-screening-check-administration-guidance](#)

Information concerning the use of Common Transfer Files is available at:

[Select link -](#)

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmin/ims/datatransfers/ctf>

It is the head teacher's responsibility to ensure that the information sent to the LA is accurate. It is imperative that you take the time to check your results on input and as reported back to you from the LA and notify them of any errors as soon as possible. Failure to do so may cause incorrect data to be sent to the DfE which cannot be amended after the DfE deadline.

The LA Data and Intelligence Team will publish further guidance about how to return your assessments to the LA. This guidance will be posted to [Select link - https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/primarydata](#) (webpage will be updated May 2025)

Reporting phonics results to the local authority

As in previous years, phonics information will be submitted to the Data and Intelligence Team via a CTF file generated from your school Management Information System or other suitable software. You are required to submit outcomes for both Year 1 and any relevant Year 2 pupils to the LA. The assessment codes used to report on each child are published in the Check Administrators' Guide (March 2025). Schools do not need to wait until the threshold mark is published to submit data.

The deadline for submission to the LA issued by the Data and Intelligence Team is **Monday 23rd June 2025**. For further guidance about recording the assessments and creating the file containing the assessments, please contact your software support. The Data and Intelligence

Team will publish further guidance about how to return your assessments to the LA in May 2025. This guidance will be posted to [Select link - https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/primarydata](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/primarydata)

Schools should check with their local IT provision in advance to ensure they can record the assessments and produce the necessary files for submission of phonics to the LA.

Reporting the phonic screening check results to parents

Written reports should be provided to parents/carers at least once during a school year. For maintained schools, reports should cover pupils' general progress in statutory subjects, including religious education. Details of reporting requirements are contained in the *Assessment and Reporting Arrangements, Section 7, (October 2024)*.

The phonics screening check outcome, including check score or where applicable, absence, non-participation, or any reason why a pupil has not received a result, e.g., maladministration, must be reported to parents. This also applies to those year 2 pupils who take the check in June 2025.

Threshold marks will be published on **Monday 23rd June** on GOV.UK.

DfE does not publish school-level results for the phonics screening check in performance table, however these will be available in Analyse School Performance (ASP). Schools will also have access to national and LA check results to allow them to benchmark their pupils' performance.

For information, in 2024 nationally **78.9%** of children 'met the standard' by the end of year 1 and **88.5%** met the standard by the end of year 2. The figures for Birmingham are **79.1%** and **87.7%** respectively.

Pupils who transfer to a new school

Headteachers at maintained schools, including maintained special schools, must ensure the statutory requirements for the transfer of records between schools are fulfilled, including the completion of the common transfer CTF. This requirement is set out in the Education (Pupil Information) Regulations 2005 and the amendments in 2008 and 2016. If a pupil moves to another school in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, the pupil's CTF and educational records must be passed to the new school. Academies are not subject to these regulations but are expected to adhere to the following protocols as a matter of good practice.

Detailed information is available in *Assessment and Reporting Arrangements* [Select link - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-phonics-screening-check](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-phonics-screening-check) and at [Select link - http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmin/ims/datatransfers/ctf](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmin/ims/datatransfers/ctf)

Maladministration

‘Maladministration’ refers to any act that:

- affects the integrity, security or confidentiality of the phonics screening check
- could lead to results that do not reflect pupils’ actual ability or unaided work.

Phonics Check maladministration

A school could be subject to investigations of maladministration if it does not comply with the current:

- Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA)
- Check Administration Guidance

STA have a statutory duty to investigate any matter brought to their attention relating to the accuracy or correctness of any pupil’s check results. [Select link - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-and-2-maladministration-investigation-procedures](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-and-2-maladministration-investigation-procedures)

Maladministration can lead to changes to, or annulment of, results for a whole cohort, groups of pupils or individual pupils.

Once an investigation has finished STA are responsible for deciding whether the school’s assessment is accurate. They may void all or some of the school’s check outcomes if they conclude that there is doubt about the accuracy of pupils’ assessments.

You should contact the national curriculum assessments helpline **T: 0330 303 3013** to report any issue with the administration of the phonics check and/or any allegations of maladministration.

The local authority has a statutory duty to monitor at least 10% of schools for the administration of the phonics screening check and the security of the related materials.

C . Enquires and Contact Information

Enquires to: Services for Education, School Support Service,

Denise Harris 0121 366 9950 / 077669 23204

denise.harris@servicesforeducation.co.uk

To contact Birmingham City Council regarding Key Stage 1

Data and Intelligence Team – Children & Families Directorate
educationdata@birmingham.gov.uk