

KS1 PHONICS SCREENING

We often get asked about children with SM and the KS1 Phonics Screening which takes place in June, so I thought it would be useful to put together a post. All the photos are screenshots from the Government website. [KS1 Phonic Screening Gov Website](#)

Section 4.2 states that it is the headteacher's decision as to whether a child should take it or not (*in reality, I would like to think this has involved a discussion with parents, teacher & SENCO*)

Section 4.2 also specifically mentions children with SM as being exempt "if they do not give verbal responses aloud in school... Selectively mute pupils may demonstrate their knowledge at home informally with a family member who can discuss the outcome with the teacher. This arrangement will ensure the pupil has had a similar experience to their peers and gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills."

However, Section 6.3 lists the Access Arrangements for those with "specific needs" and Section 6.4 does actually specify that an alternative location, such as home, may be used! Although these two sections imply different things, I would argue that SM is a "specific need" and that, if your child is able to speak to a teacher somewhere other than school, these rules DO allow it.

Some schools already are quite generous with their accommodations for a child with SM around this screening, which is great, but hopefully, this information will give you what you need to have a conversation with your teacher or SENCO should you require it.

Remember, these tests are nothing major and a pass or fail is not really going to affect your child's future. As a teacher myself, I would hope that colleagues would not base their teaching on a single assessment! They are really an indicator, to the Government, of how well the school are teaching phonics. So whatever the outcome, don't let it worry you!

Extracts From Gov.co.uk

4.2 Pupils who should not take the check

Headteachers make the final decision about whether it is appropriate for a pupil to take the check. In any instances where pupils are not entered for the check, schools should explain their decision to the pupil's parents. If appropriate, they should provide the parents with documentary evidence to support their decision. If the headteacher decides not to administer the check to a pupil, schools should also explain how they are helping the pupil learn to decode using phonics.

If it is not appropriate for a pupil to take the check, it is important teachers are aware of that pupil's progress in phonics so they can plan the next steps in their teaching.

You may want to provide a similar experience for pupils who will not formally participate in the check. You could do this by modifying the practice sheet to include only single letters or simple 2-letter blends so they can demonstrate their skills. Check materials, including the practice sheet, are available on the PAG from Monday 10 June.

Schools must submit data for all pupils, including those who do not take the check. Pupils who do not take the check should be marked as 'D' (headteacher decided it was inappropriate for the pupil to take the check).

Pupils who are non-verbal or selectively mute

Pupils who are non-verbal or selectively mute are unable to participate in the check if they do not give verbal responses aloud in school. They may be able to identify the words but will not be able to demonstrate that knowledge by speaking the answers aloud.

Selectively mute pupils may demonstrate their knowledge at home informally with a family member who can discuss the outcome with the teacher. This arrangement will ensure the pupil has had a similar experience to their peers and gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

To avoid a potential security risk to the check materials, this arrangement may only take place after the check period ends on Friday 21 June.

6.3 Access arrangements

You may need to adapt the check for some pupils. You must base adjustments on normal classroom practice for pupils with specific needs. You do not need to request permission from STA to make adaptations, but you must ensure any modifications do not advantage pupils.

Those who may need adjustments include pupils:

- for whom provision is being made in school under special educational needs and disability (SEND) support and whose learning difficulty or disability significantly affects access to the check
- with an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- with a disability (as defined in section 6(1) of the [Equality Act 2010](#)) that does not give rise to a special educational need but requires alternative access arrangements
- who are unable to sit and work for a sustained period because of a disability or behavioural, emotional or social difficulty

It is not possible to list all the circumstances in which pupils may need adaptations. If you need to discuss access arrangements to meet a pupil's specific needs, you should use the 'Message us – access arrangements' form on the PAG. For general enquiries, you should contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

Rest breaks

The check is not timed but we expect it will take each pupil between 4 and 9 minutes to complete. You should give pupils enough time to respond to each word. If you believe a pupil will find it difficult to concentrate, or may experience fatigue during the check, you may use rest breaks to make it more manageable. You can give rest breaks whenever they are needed.

When planning for the check, consider when it would be most appropriate for the pupil to take a break. If the pupil is likely to need a rest break more frequently than between the 2 sections of the check, or at the end of a page, we recommend you modify the materials so there are fewer words on each page. You must keep the pupil separate from the rest of the cohort during a rest break. The check must be completed on the same day.

6.4 Administering the check at an alternative location

At the headteacher's discretion, the check can be administered at an alternative location. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring the integrity, security and confidentiality of the check is maintained and that the check is administered according to this check administration guidance. This may include administering at a pupil referral unit or at the pupil's home, as long as the pupil is in a fit state.

There is no requirement to notify or apply to STA to administer the check at an alternative location.

On the day of the check, take out a copy of the check materials from the pack and immediately put it into a sealed windowless envelope. Reseal the rest of the check materials in their original package and return them to the box, reseal the box then put it back in the secured cupboard until you are ready to administer the next check to a pupil.

Transport the check materials in the envelope to the alternative location and administer the check to the pupil following the check administration guidance. We recommend having 2 check administrators present. When the check has been administered, seal the check materials immediately in a windowless envelope and return it to the school.

Schools must not administer the check virtually to pupils.

If schools need specific advice on administering the check at an alternative location, they should contact STA using the 'Message us – access arrangements' form on the PAG.