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**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

Phonics checks

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Transcriber's Note: The logo at the top of the page is
Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga Ministry of Education.

Phonics checks

Phonics checks are available for all schools to carry out with all children in their first year of school. This helps teachers understand how well they are progressing with learning to read.

About phonics

Phonics is the relationship between letters and sounds.

For example, the letter "m" shows the sound mmmmm.

Children learn how to:

- recognise the sounds that letters show
- recognise combinations of letters that show one sound (such as "ch")
- blend these sounds together to make words.

Why it's important

Phonics is an essential part of learning to read. Children use it to work out new words they don't know how to read yet.

Learning to blend sounds helps beginner readers read words accurately, setting them up for future reading success.

Video: Phonics in action

<https://vimeo.com/1130050938?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

or shortened URL: <https://tinyurl.com/ke8fhret>

The video might not be accessible.

How the English phonics check works

The check is designed to be a quick activity that children find engaging.

Your child reads words out loud, one at a time. Some of the words are real and some are made-up.

If your child gets to a point in the check where they start to struggle, their teacher can stop the check after 5 wrong answers in a row.

This shows the teacher:

- which letters and letter combinations your child can read
- whether your child can blend sounds correctly to make words.

The purpose of the nonsense words is to see if children can use their knowledge of letter-sound relationships to read a word, rather than remembering a word they have read before.

When we do the checks

All schools are required to carry out two phonics checks with children in their first year of school.

The first check is done around 20 weeks, after your child starts school. That's about 6 months, or 2 terms of schooling.

The second check is done at 40 weeks which is after about 4 terms or 1 year of schooling.

Finding out the results

Your child's teacher or the principal will be best placed to let you know what you can expect in terms of a report on your child's phonics check.

We will also collect the results to build a picture of how well the education system is working for our beginning readers.

Why we introduced the English phonics check

Phonics checks have been used in countries like the UK and Australia for several years.

We're introducing them here as we move to a more structured literacy approach to raise achievement levels.

The check will help your child's teacher:

- know how your child is progressing in phonics
- plan your children's learning.

Having a standard check that all kura and schools complete will help us know how well the education system is working for our youngest learners.

Help your child with their phonics

1. Incorporate phonics into daily conversations. For example, when cooking, you can ask your child what sounds the ingredients start with.
2. Sound sorting: create a set of pictures or objects that start with different sounds. Have your child sort them into groups based on their beginning sounds.
3. Word building: use magnetic letters or letter tiles to build simple words and ask your children to sound them out.
4. Play snap with letter cards matching pairs of letters and saying the correct sounds.

You'll find slides to help you practise sounds and letters (phonics) with your child for Year 1 and Year 2. The slides may be accessible.

Practising sounds and letters in the first 6 months:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers/schools-year-0-13/parent-portal/guide-for-the-new-zealand-curriculum-years-0-to-8/first-6-months-at-school/practising-sounds-and-letters-in-the-first-6-months>

or shortened URL: <https://tinyurl.com/ybv5pfr8>

Practising sounds and letters in Year 1:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers/schools-year-0-13/parent-portal/guide-for-the-new-zealand-curriculum-years-0-to-8/year-1-new-zealand-curriculum/practising-sounds-and-letters-in-year-1> or

shortened URL: <https://tinyurl.com/2fryjuy7>

Practising sounds and letters in Year 2:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers/schools-year-0-13/parent-portal/guide-for-the-new-zealand-curriculum-years-0-to-8/year-2-new-zealand-curriculum/practising-sounds-and-letters-in-year-2> or

shortened URL: <https://tinyurl.com/2j9bdnss>

For more information, visit

<https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers/schools-year-0-13/what-happens-school/english-phonics-checks> or shortened URL

<https://tinyurl.com/bdd6m576>

End of Phonics checks