

What is the Phonics Screening Check?

The PSC is a test which assesses children's word reading skills. This is sometimes called decoding. During the Phonics Screening Check, children are asked to read (decode) 40 words. These are a mixture of real words and pseudo-words. Pseudo-words are included to ensure that children are using their decoding skills, and not just relying on their memory of words they've read before. Because some children may misread these pseudo-words based on their similarity to words in their existing vocabulary, each pseudo-word is clearly identified with an image of an alien. Most teachers and children, therefore, refer to pseudo-words as 'alien words'. There are 2 sections to the test, the first half consisting of simpler words which contain phonemes children learn earlier on. The second section provides more of a challenge level.

How is the PSC administered?

Children take the PSC in a one-to-one setting with a teacher. This will be a familiar teacher who knows the child well. There is no time limit for the Phonics Screening Check, but it usually takes approximately 10 minutes. At CNPS, we administer regular practice tests (roughly every half term). This is so children are accustomed to the format and setting of the test, and also so we can monitor each child's progress, and take action if they appear to be making less progress than expected.

Who takes the PSC and when?

The PSC is usually taken by all Year 1 children each June; the DfE will give a particular week in which all PSC tests are to be administered. Any children in Year 2 who did not pass the previous year will also take their re-take PSCs during the week.

What is the pass mark?

The pass mark is usually 32/40 (it has been this ever since the first PSC).

What happens if my child does not pass the PSC?

They will be identified for extra phonics intervention (this most likely will already be happening before they take the PSC), and you will be advised on how to support at home (again, this will probably already have been communicated to you). Children who do not pass the test will re-take it in the following June.

What does the PSC look like?

Section 1	Section 1	Section 2	Section 2
fip 	shed	braft 	grand
pon 	long	thrant 	cloaks
hab 	soil	sprop 	scrap
ulb 	chart	strow 	strike

