



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Department for Education
Standards and Testing Agency
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

17 June 2021

Dear Martin,

STATUTORY CONSULTATION: LEGISLATIVE CHANGES RELATING TO THE PHONICS SCREENING CHECK FOR YEAR 2 PUPILS IN ENGLAND FOR THE 2021/22 ACADEMIC YEAR

As you will be aware, on 6 January the Secretary of State for Education announced that, as a consequence of the move to restricted attendance in schools, all statutory National Curriculum assessments due to take place in primary schools in England in summer 2021 would be cancelled. This included the summer phonics screening check (PSC) for year 1 and eligible year 2 pupils.

We subsequently amended the Education (National Curriculum) (KS1 Assessment Arrangements) (England) Order 2004 (SI 2004/2783) (“the KS1 Order”) to disapply the requirement for schools to administer the PSC in the summer term of the 2021 academic year. Under existing statutory requirements this amendment would create a requirement for all pupils turning 7 in the 2021/22 academic year (generally year 2 pupils), to complete the PSC in 2021/22, having not completed the PSC in the school year in which they turned 6. Without further consideration, this would mean schools administering a statutory assessment in phonics to two cohorts of pupils in summer 2022.

The approach the Department took in respect of the same situation in 2020 was to introduce a statutory PSC in the second half of the autumn term, for all pupils turning 7 in the 2020/21 academic year. The intention was that only those who did not meet the standard or who were unable to take this check would then need to take a check in summer 2021. The vast majority of schools participated in this exceptional PSC.

We have consulted on options with stakeholders for 2021. On 16 June the

Secretary of State announced that a second statutory autumn PSC exercise will take place in autumn 2021, to ensure that pupils who require further support in phonics are identified, and to manage the workload burdens on schools who would otherwise have to administer the check to two cohorts in summer 2022.

This change will require schools to:

- Administer an existing past PSC test paper (available on gov.uk) to all year 2 pupils in the second half of the autumn term 2021, in order to assess which pupils are at the expected standard in phonics;
- Report to the department by the end of the 2021 autumn term, via a data return to their local authority, the results of that autumn term assessment of year 2 pupils;
- Administer the PSC in the summer of 2022, to year 2 pupils yet to meet the expected standard in phonics (based on the results of the autumn term 2021 check), or to those year 2 who did not take the check in autumn 2021, alongside the year 1 cohort.

As with the autumn 2020 PSC, data from the autumn 2021 PSC will not be used for the purposes of school accountability. This data will not be added to Analyse School Performance. Schools will be encouraged to use the assessment outcomes to help inform their own teaching and to support pupils.

For the avoidance of doubt, incoming year 3 pupils who were due to take the PSC in June 2021 as they did not meet the expected standard in Autumn 2020, will not be required to take the autumn term 2021 assessment. Schools are expected to maintain a programme of support for these pupils.

Proposed changes to legislation

In order to reflect in legislation the policy decision set out above, STA will need to amend the KS1 Order. Pursuant to section 87(6A) of the Education Act 2002, the Department is writing to seek your views on the proposed legislative changes to the KS1 Order as follows:

- Under Article 5A of the KS1 Order, which relates to the phonics screening check (PSC), a provision will be made for pupils who turn 7 in the 2021/22 academic year (i.e., those in year 2) to undertake the PSC in the autumn of 2021 and then, if they do not at that time meet the standard, again in summer 2022. These changes will mirror those introduced in 2020 for the autumn 2020 check.

Comments

I would be grateful for any comments you may have on the above proposal. The deadline for your response is 4pm 23 June 2021. We apologise for the short window for your comments but we are working to short timescales to ensure the provisions are in place in time for the new academic year. Comments should be sent to: **Policy.STA@education.gov.uk**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Watson'.

Colin Watson
Interim Chief Executive