



Standards  
& Testing  
Agency

Standards and Testing Agency

Cheylesmore House

5 Quinton Road

Coventry, CV1 2WT

Tel: 0300 303 3013

[www.gov.uk/sta](http://www.gov.uk/sta)

Email enquiry form:

[www.education.gov.uk/contactus/sta](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus/sta)

21/07/2020

Dear Deborah,

## **LEGISLATIVE CHANGES RELATING TO THE PHONICS SCREENING CHECK FOR YEAR 2 PUPILS IN ENGLAND FOR 2020/21 ACADEMIC YEAR ONLY**

### **Background**

On 18 March 2020 the Secretary of State for Education announced that statutory national curriculum assessments would not take place in 2019/20 academic year due to the Covid19 pandemic. This included the 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 to administer the PSC in the 2019/20 academic year. We recognised at the time we made these amendments that the cancellation of the 2019/20 assessments would create a requirement for all pupils turning 7 in 2020/21 (generally year 2 pupils), having not completed the PSC in the school year in which they turned 6 as a result of the cancellations, to complete the PSC in 2020/21. That is because, under the existing statutory requirements, all pupils turning 7 in the current school year who were not assessed in phonics in the previous school year when they turned 6, must be assessed in the current school year.

### **Policy proposal**

STA informed schools (in an email sent on 14 July 2020) of our proposal for the PSC for year 2 pupils for the 2020/21 academic year. We proposed not to require all year 2 pupils to take the existing summer term PSC in 2021, but instead 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 2020, in order to assess which pupils are at the expected standard in phonics;
- Report to the department, via a data return to their local authority, the results of that autumn term assessment of year 2 pupils;

- Administer the PSC only to year 2 pupils yet to meet the expected standard in phonics (based on the results of the autumn term 2020 check), in summer 2021 at the end of year 2 (alongside the year 1 cohort).

STA recognise that the proposed autumn term 2020 assessment will create a new reporting requirement for schools, which will be in place for one year only. The intention of the assessment is to ensure no child falls through the gap for support in learning to read, by virtue of having missed the end of year 1 PSC. The autumn term 2020 assessment is designed to be more flexible in approach, in order to reduce the burden that may otherwise have arisen from a requirement to administer a statutory assessment in phonics to two whole year groups of pupils in the summer term 2021.

The data from the autumn term 2020 check will not be used for any school accountability purpose; as such the data from the autumn term check will not be added to Analyse School Performance. Schools will be encouraged to use the assessment outcomes to help inform their own teaching and support to pupils. Incoming year 3 pupils who were due to take the PSC in June 2020 will not be required to take the autumn term 2020 assessment. Schools are expected to maintain a programme of support for these pupils, which should be informed by formative assessment.

### **Proposed changes to legislation**

In order to reflect in legislation this proposed policy approach set out above, we will need to amend the KS1 Order and the Education (School Performance Information) (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/2324) (“the 2007 Regulations”). The proposed amendments to these statutory instruments will bring into effect the proposed changes in respect of the PSC for year 2 pupils for the 2020/21 academic year only, returning to the existing statutory arrangements for 2021/22.

### **Your views**

We would like to seek your views on the proposed policy and legislative approach as described above.

The Department is seeking your views pursuant to section 87(6A) of the Education Act 2002 and section 408(5) of the Education Act 1996.

The deadline for responses is 28 July 2020, we apologise for the short notice and timeline for this request, which is necessary due to the proximity to the 2020/21 academic year.

Please send your response to [Rebekah.Edgar@education.gov.uk](mailto:Rebekah.Edgar@education.gov.uk)

Rebekah Edgar  
Head of Assessment Policy, STA