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Dear Parents of Year 1

As you may well be aware, the DFE (Department for Education) ask that all children throughout the country undertake the Phonics screening test before the end of Year 1. This statutory assessment 'is designed to confirm whether individual children have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard.'

This screening test will be administered by the class teachers during the weeks of 12 and 19 June 2023. Each of the children will be expected to read 40 words on a one to one basis. The list is a combination of both 'real' and 'alien' words which rely purely on phonic decoding. The 'alien' words are made up and will be shown alongside a picture of an imaginary creature eg sturg, zom.

Although the test will be carried out during one week the children will be largely unaware of it and I am sure will enjoy someone to one time with their teacher. We will aim to test all of the children in the week beginning 10 June, however if they are ill we will test them the following week but aim to have all tests completed by Monday 17 June.

Last year the children were expected to be able to read 32 of the words. The pass rate of the test from the schools nationally in 2023 was 79% of all children. At St Peter's our pass rate was 69%. If the children do not reach the expected level they will be re-tested in June 2025.

What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read. At St Peter's we use a synthetic phonics scheme called Essential Letters and Sounds alongside a whole host of different resources. The information regarding this has been shared in newsletters. The information shared at the Parents Workshop regarding the teaching of phonics in school is on the website. Through this system the children are taught how to:

- Recognise the sounds each individual letter makes
- Identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make eg sh and oo
- Blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word

Children use this knowledge to decode new words they hear and see. Research suggests that phonics teaching is effective when it is taught in a structured way such as this. Of course there are other methods which some children use to help them read such as using picture cues, learning the shape and size of the word and whole words.

If you would like to read more about phonics please use this link to the Department for Education website:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/phonics or search for 'phonics' on the DFE website at www.education.gov.uk

What are we doing in school in preparation?

At St Peter's, we have been teaching synthetic phonics for some years. The children are taught phonics every day at a level suitable for their needs, in different groups. This has been successful in ensuring the children progress through the phonics stages. They have been learning how to read 'real' and 'alien' words using a whole manner of resources.

This term, the children will be working as hard as ever to continue to develop their phonics within school and at home. Please do support your child working on the spellings and sounds that come home on a weekly basis.

- Practice reading real and alien words that you make up such as chom, terg, spron.
- Highlight sounds that the children are learning through their reading.
- Encourage the children to 'sound out' unfamiliar words and blend the sounds together.

- Play word games such as I-spy, reading road signs, shopping lists, simple newspaper reports, etc.
- Use the BBC website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy/> and others that have been on the weekly newsletters to read from as well.
- Use of one of the websites we use in school especially for 'alien' words is www.phonicsplay.co.uk

After the test

The school is obliged to provide you with details on how your child is progressing in phonics and the score your child achieved from the test. We will also inform you of the next steps your child would need to make to improve their phonics knowledge, understanding and application if they did not reach the expected threshold. This will be sent out towards the end of July along with the children's reports.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact either myself or the class teachers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.D. Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Paul D Smith
Executive Head Teacher