

# View your response

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

## View your response

### Personal Details

First Name: Julia

Last Name: Gillen

Email: j.gillen@lancaster.ac.uk

Organisation: Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University

- Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.
- Please tick if you are responding on behalf of an organisation.
- Please tick if we can contact you in the future.
- Please tick if you would like us to acknowledge your response.
- Please tick if you would like us to inform you when the consultation results are published.

### Respondent Information Questions

Please mark an X in **one** box below that **best** describes you as a respondent.

- Parent / Carer
- Teacher

- Headteacher
- Other School Staff
- Local Authority(Please specify role)
- Child / Young person
- Professional Body / Association
- Other

Please Specify: Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University. We are a research centre with members from the Department of Linguistics and English Language and the Department of Educational Research.

## Consultation Questions

1

Do you agree that this screening check should be focused on phonic decoding as described in paragraph 3.2?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: To assess progress in reading it is most fruitful to consider reading for meaning. Reading is a complex matter that involves a number of meaning-making processes.

Tests should reflect what readers do in real life:

Effective young readers of English don't process every new word one letter at a time. They move between different sizes of unit.

- Sometimes they work words out letter by letter,
- Sometimes they look at familiar groups of letters, such as 'all',
- Sometimes they look at whole word patterns, such as 'little' or 'bottle'.

Children need to make sense of what they read and need to be engaged in the process.

- Identifying words on a list is not like reading a connected text.
- Both the reward and the central purpose of learning to read are to make sense of text.
- There is a real danger that using isolated skills as the sole index of progress leads to children failing to attend to the meaning of what they are reading.
- Children need to be engaged in the texts they read if they are to make real progress.

Decoding tests don't tell you about children's progress as readers.

- Children who perform poorly on such tests may perform much better on real text.
  - Success on digraphs, isolated words and non-words is not a predictor of reading for meaning.
-

2

Do you agree that the screening check should be a maximum of 40 items?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: Reading assessments should use authentic texts not isolated word lists. The paramount danger of the isolated item approach is that schools will move (understandably) to prioritising performance on reading decontextualised items. Research demonstrates clearly that this is less motivating to children than reading authentic, interesting texts and that reading attainment is accordingly damaged.

---

3

Do you agree that the screening check should contain a mixture of words and non-words?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: No reading test should include non words. This is for a number of reasons: a) The child should not be forced to quickly determine, from a list of decontextualised items, which are English words (that might of course follow readily simple graphical-phonological patterns or might not) and which are invented words. Taken out of any context, this non-authentic exercise has no worth. b) It would be impossible to ensure that any 'non-words' had no meaning in any of the languages or dialects spoken by children who take the test. And children may not know several of the real words, such as 'pert', 'ballot', 'strewn', 'vat'. c) It would be impossible therefore to have equivalence in tests across children/schools/areas taking the tests. d) The English language has no lack of words. It is as essential that children learn to read irregular words such as 'the' 'these' 'was' 'one' etc as well as other common words. Schools should be assisting children to gain a rich vocabulary of actual words, the meaning of which is understood with confidence. It is pointless to train children on the meaningless task of parsing non-words to pass a test rather than engage in authentic literacy activities.

---

4

Are the different elements of phonic decoding knowledge introduced in the right section of the screening check?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: Assessments of children's reading should be concerned with that, actual reading activities. No such test as the proposed phonics screening check can fulfil the avowed purpose of 'a progress check' 'telling parents what they want to know, namely how their children are reading' because

- decoding is only one part of learning to read, and is not reading itself
  - there is no evidence that parents want such a test
  - measuring progress requires at least two tests separated by a suitable interval.
- 

5

Is mid-June the most appropriate time for this screening check to be administered?

If you answered no to this question, please suggest when you think the screening check should take place

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: The danger of having a screening check in mid-June is that throughout the academic year leading up to that time teachers will be preoccupied with training children to pass the test. In addition, assessing progress immediately before the long summer break makes it difficult if not impossible to provide the additional resources promised to children in a timely manner. Much better than the system outlined in the consultation document would be one in which, in the middle of Year 1:

- teachers were required, on the basis of their professional skills, specific training they had received, and their personal knowledge of their pupils, to identify which of their pupils have not yet made a satisfactory start on learning to read, write and spell
  - resources were immediately made available to assess those children's difficulties and then to help them catch up.
-

6

Is it correct that this screening check should be administered by teachers?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: On the one hand we agree that assessments of children's reading should be carried out by professionally trained teachers who can diagnose difficulties. However, as previously explained we disagree that this proposed screening check is an appropriate method of assessment.

---

7

Should only one teacher in each school administer the screening check?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: See above. All teachers teaching this age group should be involved in assessing children's abilities in reading, writing and speaking.

---

8

Is providing video guidance to screening check administrators appropriate?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: This seems further to make this proposed check 'high-stakes', increasing pressure on teachers, children and parents to perform in a test situation which does not provide data for a meaningful assessment of reading abilities.

---

9

How long do you think the administration window should be?

- 1 day
- 2 - 3 days
- 4 - 5 days
- Other
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: The existence of this question again demonstrates the difficulties inherent in the proposed exercise. If the screening were to take place and be administered in a period longer than one day, then since the tests would be an educational objective there would be a danger that people involved would prioritise gaining measures of success, obtain the exercise and engage in training to pass the test. If the screening were to take place during one day then the pressure on children, parents, assessor and schools would be immense.

---

10

Is it necessary to have a different screening check for each day of the administration window?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: See above.

---

11

Do you agree that schools should decide on the appropriate catch-up support for each child?

- Yes

- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: Schools should be properly resourced to enable children to become successful readers. But the aim of these resources should be to assist children to read, not to pass a non-authentic test. Research demonstrates that: Decoding tests don't tell you about children's progress as readers. Children who perform poorly on such tests may perform much better on real text. Success on digraphs, isolated words and non-words is not a predictor of reading for meaning. Phonics is never enough. Phonics is not enough to teach a child to read English. As well as matching letters to phonemes (speech sounds), children learning to read English need to:

- recognise patterns of letters such as the 'all' in 'tall', 'call' and 'ball'
  - recognise one-off whole words such as 'was', 'the' and 'one'
  - search for meaning in the texts they read.
- 

12

Is it right that the repeat administration of the screening check should take place in the Autumn term?

If you answered no to this question, please suggest when you think the screening check should be repeated.

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments:

---

13

Is 10 seconds long enough to be able to conclude that the child could not read the word?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: It is far more sensible to consider children's progress in reading through hearing them read authentic texts in non-pressurised situations. In such a context, most children will,

much of the time, read any single word in much shorter a period than ten seconds. But if they encounter a novel or difficult word and spend time over it, applying a number of strategies including spelling it out according to ways they have been taught, they may take quite a time to read it out. Demonstrating this level of persistence and cognitive engagement would be a positive characteristic; it would be illogical to penalise it.

---

14

Should some element of self-correction be allowed as part of this screening check?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: Self-correction should be allowed in reading tests; it is likely to be evidence of cognitive engagement and a desire to succeed in reading (whether by adults or children).

---

Graphemes with alternative pronunciations will be included in the screening check. We propose that real words should be pronounced correctly for pupils to receive a mark (for example, 'cow' could not be pronounced to rhyme with 'blow' even though this would be a plausible attempt phonically). This approach would help to ensure that children learn accepted pronunciations of words. For the non-words in the screening check, we propose that graphemes could be pronounced in any way which is phonemically accurate (so, a non-word ending in the 'ow' vowel digraph could be pronounced to rhyme with 'blow' or 'cow').

15

Is this approach to scoring alternative pronunciations of graphemes appropriate?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: This is impossible in practice, owing to: (i) the wide variation of pronunciations across regions of words and phonemes within those words; (ii) no assessor could hold in mind all possible pronunciations of any grapheme or combination of graphemes in the English language. Therefore it would be impossible to ensure standardisation of implementation of the test and its results.

---

When determining how to make the screening check accessible for as many pupils as possible we will consider the best approach for children with visual or hearing impairments, children with dyslexia, children with speech, language and communication difficulties, and children with autism.

16

Are there any other groups we should consider in particular?

Answer: Second language learners. Children with special needs which may mitigate against high scores in a high pressure face to face testing situation of this kind

---

17

Should the minimum requirement for reporting the results to parents be a simple recognition of whether the pupil has reached the expected level?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: Reports to parents of their children's reading abilities should be more fine-tuned than this and attuned to actual reading not to performance in such non-authentic tasks as the proposed check.

---

18

Should parents be told whether the pupil had reached the standard on each section of the screening check, even if this makes it longer?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: See above.

---

19

Do you agree that it is reasonable to include the results in RAISEOnline?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments:

---

20 a)

Do you agree that parents should be informed about their school's performance?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: But the current proposal does not offer anything of value that is new, in this respect.

---

20 b)

Do you agree that school by school results should **not** be published in the Achievement and Attainment Tables?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: The proposed screening check is not an assessment tool of value and so should not be included in any tables.

---

20 c)

Do you have any comments about how best to make data available?

Answer: Parents should be in dialogue with teachers and schools about their children's progress in reading, writing and speaking. They should be reassured that any difficulties encountered are met with the proper professional support.

---

21

Do you agree that national, regional and local authority level results should be published from this screening check?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- *No Response*

Comments: The proposed screening check is not an assessment tool of value and so should not be included in any tables.

---

22

Do you have any further comments about the proposal for this screening check?

Answer: Policy makers should encourage headteachers to learn from the schools that are particularly successful in teaching children to read. By this we mean schools where children not only demonstrate a high degree of competence, but also show that they actually like reading and do plenty of it. Children who read more enter a virtuous cycle: they become even more competent at reading and develop larger vocabularies and a greater understanding of the world. Studies of schools and classrooms where children are taught to read most effectively show consistently that high achieving classes are characterized by:

(a) A balanced approach in which attention to word recognition skills is matched by attention to comprehension: understanding and effective communication, not just word recognition, are what literacy is about.

(b) Attention to individual children's literacy skills, experiences and interests through high quality interaction and close monitoring of individual progress.

(c) High levels of engagement in reading.

---