

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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YEAR 1 PHONICS CHECK

OUTCOMES FROM 2012 AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES

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Summary

This report aims to provide information about the outcomes of the Year 1 Phonics Check in Medway during 2012 and list actions taken since and still to be taken to raise attainment further in 2013 and beyond.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Raising attainment is a Council priority. This report is consistent with the Children's and Young People's Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 High quality teaching of synthetic phonics is considered to be a key element in developing fluent early reading skills. Schools should ensure that high quality and well paced teaching of letters and sounds occurs throughout nursery, reception and key stage 1, so that pupils are able to apply their phonic skills when reading (blending sounds into words) and writing (segmenting words into component sounds and writing the letter code which matches the sound to spell the word).
- 2.2 To assist schools in establishing high quality teaching and resources, the department for education (DfE) offered access to match funding for approved phonics schemes and resources to train all staff. This scheme was launched directly to schools without involvement of the local authority. The scheme started in September 2011 and is due to end in March 2013. On 19 January 2012, the DfE released information showing that only 4 schools in Medway had used the scheme to buy resources and book training. Further local investigation showed that more than the number published had in fact booked training, but there were delays in accessing externally facilitated training due to high demand. Additionally many schools already had phonic resources and had not seen the need to replace existing new schemes.

- 2.3 Over subsequent months this matched funding has been accessed by a further 21 schools and this has been supplemented by LA organised courses. 26 Medway schools have accessed central LA training with discrete school based training in a further 5 schools.
- 2.4 In 2011 the government announced that pupils in year 1 in June 2012 would undertake a phonics check to assess whether they had reached expected attainment in the use of synthetic phonics, i.e. they knew the letters which corresponded to the 44 sounds in the English language and could blend the sounds together to read unknown words. This was not to be a check of all reading and comprehension skills but purely of the application of synthetic phonics. This was the first year that the check had been a statutory duty for all schools.
- 2.5 The check was in two sections. The first beginning with 12 “pseudo words” (words made up using simple letter to sound matches e.g. sarps) and then 8 real words. The second section beginning with 8 pseudo words then 12 real words. The words in section two were more challenging and included polysyllabic words. The threshold mark for pupils to be deemed to have reached age expected levels was 32 marks, each correct word being awarded one mark.
- 2.6 Twenty real words were included in the check. Many of these (60 percent) were less common words to limit the use of sight vocabulary when reading the words. In the pilot project prior to the issue of the 2012 phonics check, 33.6% of pupils reached or exceeded the expected threshold mark. Pupils who correctly read the majority of the words, were deemed to be working above expectation, i.e. some words were above the expected challenge level.
- 2.7 Medway’s involvement was at the level of statutory monitoring to ensure the tests were carried out appropriately. Schools were trained on how to deliver the check in May 2012, and all check materials were stored securely in schools, unopened until the checks began. The training included issuing teachers with copies of the resources to support the check and the advice leaflet for parents. Qualified teachers who knew the pupils administered the check and results were reported to parents, as well as to Medway and then to the Department for Education. In the week before the checks, Medway carried out statutory unannounced visits to some schools to check that materials were stored securely. During the check week, 10 percent of schools in Medway received unannounced visits to observe the delivery of the checks and storage of materials. After the check week, some schools had visits to check that reporting of results had taken place and that materials remained securely stored until the end of the second week, (pupils absent in week 1 could be checked in week 2).

3. The Test

- 3.1 On 27 September 2012 a statistical first release was issued which published results of the phonics checks at national and local authority level and by pupil groups.

- 3.2 Nationally 58% of pupils achieved the threshold compared with 47% of pupils across Medway. This placed Medway as the lowest performing of all local authorities in England, with Peterborough, Brighton and Hove, Nottingham and the Isle of Wight also below 50%. None of these other four authorities were in the group where funding access was low in January 2012, in fact Peterborough was one of the authorities where up take was highest.

Analysis of Medway Compared to National

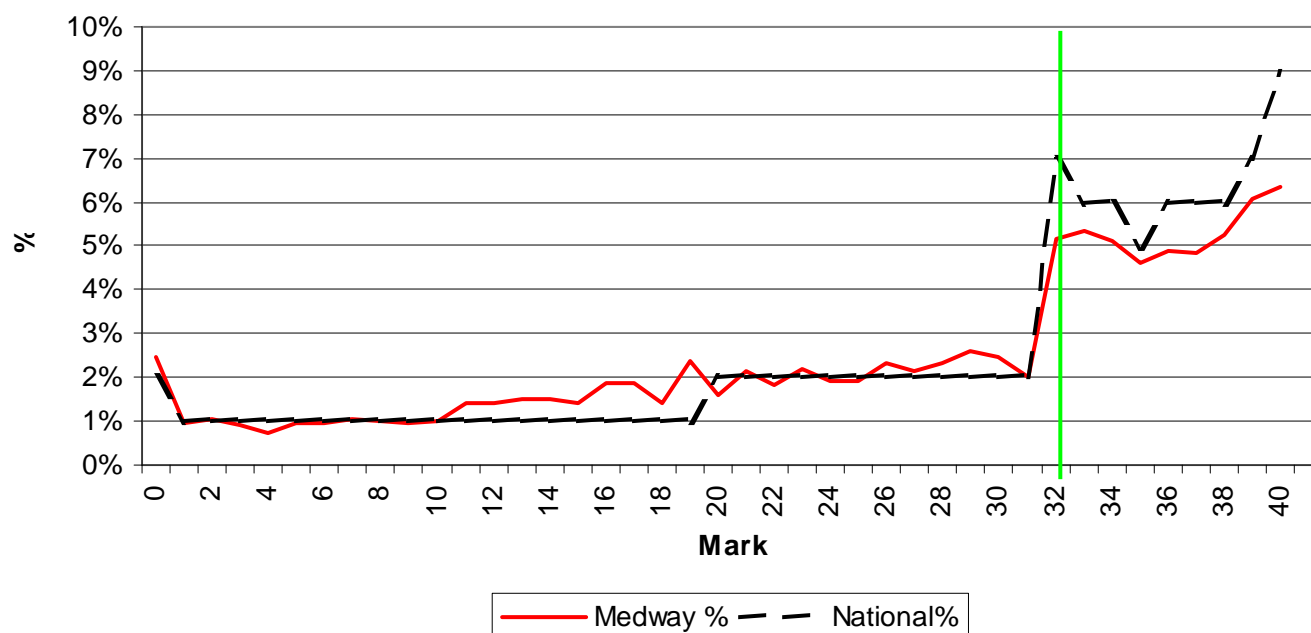
- 3.3 Medway outcomes were analysed using National as a benchmark:

	National			Medway			Gap (Medway - National)		
	All Pupils	Boys	Girls	All Pupils	Boys	Girls	All Pupils	Boys	Girls
Percentage of pupils achieving the threshold	58%	54%	62%	47%	44%	50%	-11%	-10%	-12%
Eligible for Free School Meals	44%	40%	49%	32%	28%	36%	-12%	-12%	-13%
Not eligible for Free School Meals	61%	58%	65%	51%	48%	54%	-10%	-10%	-11%
No SEN	65%	63%	67%	56%	56%	56%	-9%	-7%	-11%
All SEN Groups	24%	24%	23%	17%	18%	16%	-7%	-6%	-7%
School Action	25%	25%	24%	17%	15%	19%	-8%	-10%	-5%
School Action Plus	25%	25%	25%	19%	22%	12%	-6%	-3%	-13%
Statements	12%	12%	10%	12%	x	x	0%	X	X
First Language Believed to be English	58%	54%	62%	47%	44%	50%	-11%	-10%	-12%
First Language Other Than English	58%	54%	62%	47%	44%	51%	-11%	-10%	-11%

As can be seen from the table above, the gaps between Medway and National are significant overall and for all groups by type, although pupils with SEN have smaller gaps from national than the other groups.

- 3.4 Benchmarking Medway schools' results against the national average:
- 19 schools met or exceeded the national average for all pupils with results in the range 58% - 83%
 - A further 6 schools had results where boys achieved or exceeded national boys, but girls were below the national girls, resulting in below national for all pupils
 - 24% of infant schools had results at or above the national average compared to 45% of primary schools.
- 3.5 The percentage of pupils achieving each mark on the phonic check was compared with national, and the chart shows the plotted results for Medway and national:

Year 1 Phonics 2012, Percentage Mark Distribution Medway c.f. National



3.6 The chart shows that there were more pupils in Medway gaining 29-31 points and not achieving the threshold of 32 points. Also too many pupils in Medway only achieved between 11 – 20 points.

3.7 Medway offered schools the opportunity to have their pupils individual responses to the phonics check entered and analysed over the summer. Analysis was returned to schools in September 2012. 24 schools sent in their individual pupil marksheets, a total of 1323 pupils across Medway, 41% of the cohort. This was an offer made to schools to provide additional support from Medway. Some schools have carried out their own analysis. Where we have been working with schools, we have encouraged schools to redo the check so there is up to date information in schools.

3.8 There is no correlation between schools achieving the national phonic threshold and achieving the KS2 threshold.

4. Analysis

4.1 Given that these same children were age appropriate when measured on their Early Years Foundation Stage profile, matching individual pupils phonics check results back to their end of foundation stage profile scale point scores showed that:

- 204 of the pupils scoring 28-31 i.e. close to achieving the threshold had left reception with scale point scores of 7,8,9 in linking sounds and letters, i.e. working within phase four of letters and sounds and on track to achieve well by the end of year 1. This would have increased the percentage achieving the check to 53%, if they had reached their expected level.

- A further 125 pupils who had 8 or 9 scale points in linking sounds and letters did not reach the threshold and some had scores below 10 marks. Including these pupils in the modelling: 57% of pupils would have achieved the threshold.
- 173 pupils who achieved scale point 7 in linking sounds and letters had marks in the 20-27 range.
- 116 pupils did not have any matched foundation stage results, and 108 of these had entered their Year 1 school since the June of reception i.e. within the last year, 28% of this group achieved the threshold for the check.

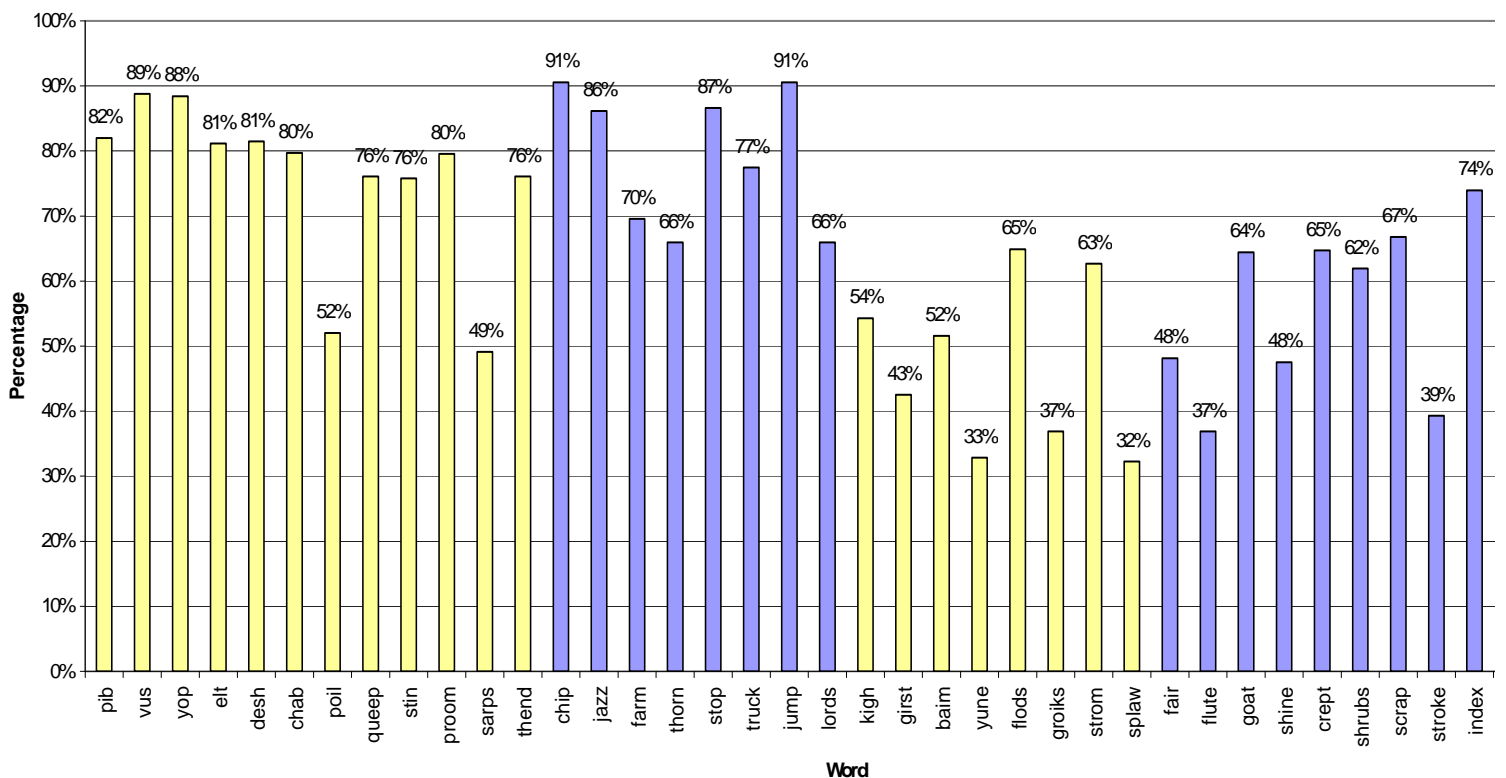
4.2 It is apparent that there needs to be improved transition between reception and key stage 1 so that the pace, acquisition and rigour in assessing the teaching and learning of phonics learning is maintained. Teachers and leadership teams need to be using assessment information and monitoring of teaching forensically to:

- raise expectations of teachers,
- challenge any slippage in attainment during year 1, particularly for pupils entering the key stage at scale points 7,8,9.
- intervene promptly to ensure that any barriers to learning are addressed
- monitor and evaluate the application of phonics in both reading and writing

Item Level Analysis

4.3 Using the results of the 1323 pupils submitted for analysis shows that some pseudo words were not read correctly by the majority of pupils:

KS1 2012 Year 1 Phonics Percentage Correct Answers By Word (Medway Sample 1320 pupils)



- 4.4 In section 1, “poil” and “sarps” caused particular problems, boil was a common response and scraps for sarps.
In section 2, “yune”, “groiks” and “splaw” had low correct answers.
Real word errors included: “flute”, “shine” and “stroke” suggesting that more work needs to be done to embed understanding of split vowel digraphs.
- 4.5 Schools have been invited to complete a survey on how they teach phonics, of the 63 mainstream schools in Medway, 48 have responded. The remaining 15 are being reminded. Of the 48 only 21 had accessed match funded training for phonics, as delivered by DfE. Overseeing outcomes and developing post check action plans, appears to have been led by senior leaders and English leads.
- 4.6 When asked what Medway could do to support further: responses tended to be around providing more funding for resources and training and offering training to schools.

5. Action being taken

- 5.1 Phonics and spelling training is already being offered to schools and 31 schools to date have either attended in school sessions or central training.
- 5.2 Key actions taken or being taken include:
- Item level analysis to understand the gaps in pupil knowledge.
 - Key data matching from EYFS to KS1 to better support transition, tracking, and appropriate expectations.
 - Promoting use of match funded packages.
 - Link to high achieving LAs to glean best practice.
 - Early delivery of CPD re phonics and reading.
 - Challenge poor performing schools (2011) over what they are doing differently to prepare and teach current YR1 children.
 - Early years advising teachers aiding the transition to YR1 via direct advice and guidance.
 - Expert consultancy planned for early new year to target phonic teaching in poor/under performing schools.
 - ‘Top tips’ for screening and teaching to ensure curriculum covered.
 - Broker high quality consultancy to support the development lead phonics teachers across Medway to create a sustainable system of schools working together to improve teaching and learning in phonics.
- 5.3 Good transition between Early Years and key stage 1 is encouraged and both teams reinforce good practice advice.
- 5.4 Ongoing work is needed to provide advice and guidance to schools so that the teaching of phonics is improved and phonics skills are applied in both reading and writing.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Medway will continue to reinforce with schools the need for high quality leadership and management of the teaching of phonics. All Medway officers working with schools are reinforcing the key messages about effective phonic

teaching, including the promotion of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of phonic teaching by governors.

- 6.2 Specifically. the following is needed In order to raise achievement in phonics by the end of year 1 with School Leadership Teams ensuring that they:
- 6.3 Strengthen transition between reception and year 1, especially the use of assessment information from linking sounds and letters, so that the pace of acquisition of phonics is maintained.
- 6.4 Closely monitor and evaluate the impact of phonics teaching, both through observation of phonics lessons and through hearing readers, and book scrutinies to ensure that skills are being applied in both reading and writing.
- 6.5 Plan for a balance between the use of pseudo and real words for blending and segmenting activities, so that pupils are adept at decoding both.
- 6.6 Use the analysis from 2012 phonics check to intervene and address misconceptions and gaps in learning for pupils in year 2 who did not reach the threshold so that learning is accelerated.
- 6.7 Use the pupil matched pivots to identify patterns in learning for pupils between end of foundation stage results and year 1 phonics outcomes and adjust provision for underachieving groups.
- 6.8 Governing bodies to request a regular item in the headteachers report on the quality of phonics teaching and outcomes of tracking information throughout the year and whether the school has accessed matched funding offer by DfE.
- 6.9 All schools to have accessed matched funding and booked phonic training and resources or to have a clear rational for not ie already have an accredited programme in place and achieving above national.

7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Children continue to underperform at the end of year 1 in phonics	Children do not acquire the skills needed to decode words in the phonics check.	Signpost schools to good practice and experts who can be brokered to provide training	high

8. Financial and legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal or financial implications as a result of this report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The committee is recommended to note the report.

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Background papers

None