

Unlocking the Code: A Guide to the Phonics Screening Check

Partnering together to build confident,
joyful readers in Year 1.



Every child a confident reader.



Reading is the foundation of all future learning.

Our shared goal is to ensure every child has a solid base to build upon as they progress through school.

To achieve this, we use a highly effective approach called phonics.

The Science of Decoding

Phonics teaches children how to crack the code of reading through three sequential steps:



1. **Recognise:**
Identifying the sounds
of individual letters
(e.g., 's', 'a', 't').

2. **Identify:** Recognising
sounds made by different
letter combinations (e.g.,
'sh' or 'oo').

3. **Blend:** Merging these
sounds together from
left to right to read the
whole word.

Checking Our Progress



June



Late Summer Term

Screening Check

Results Shared

Who: All pupils turning 6 by the end of the school year (primarily Year 1).

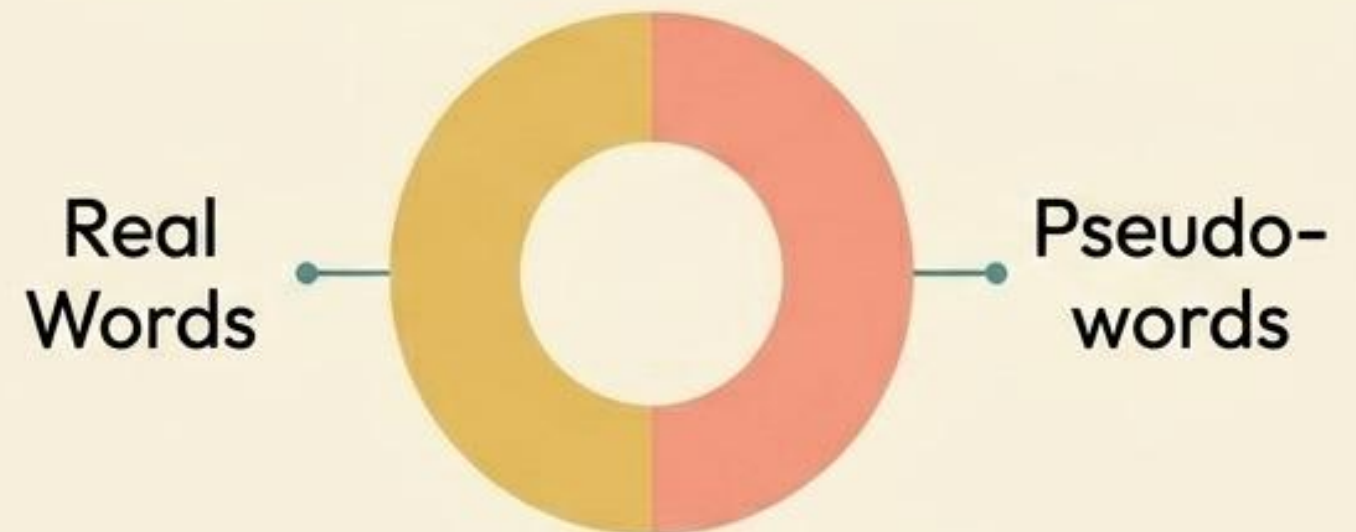
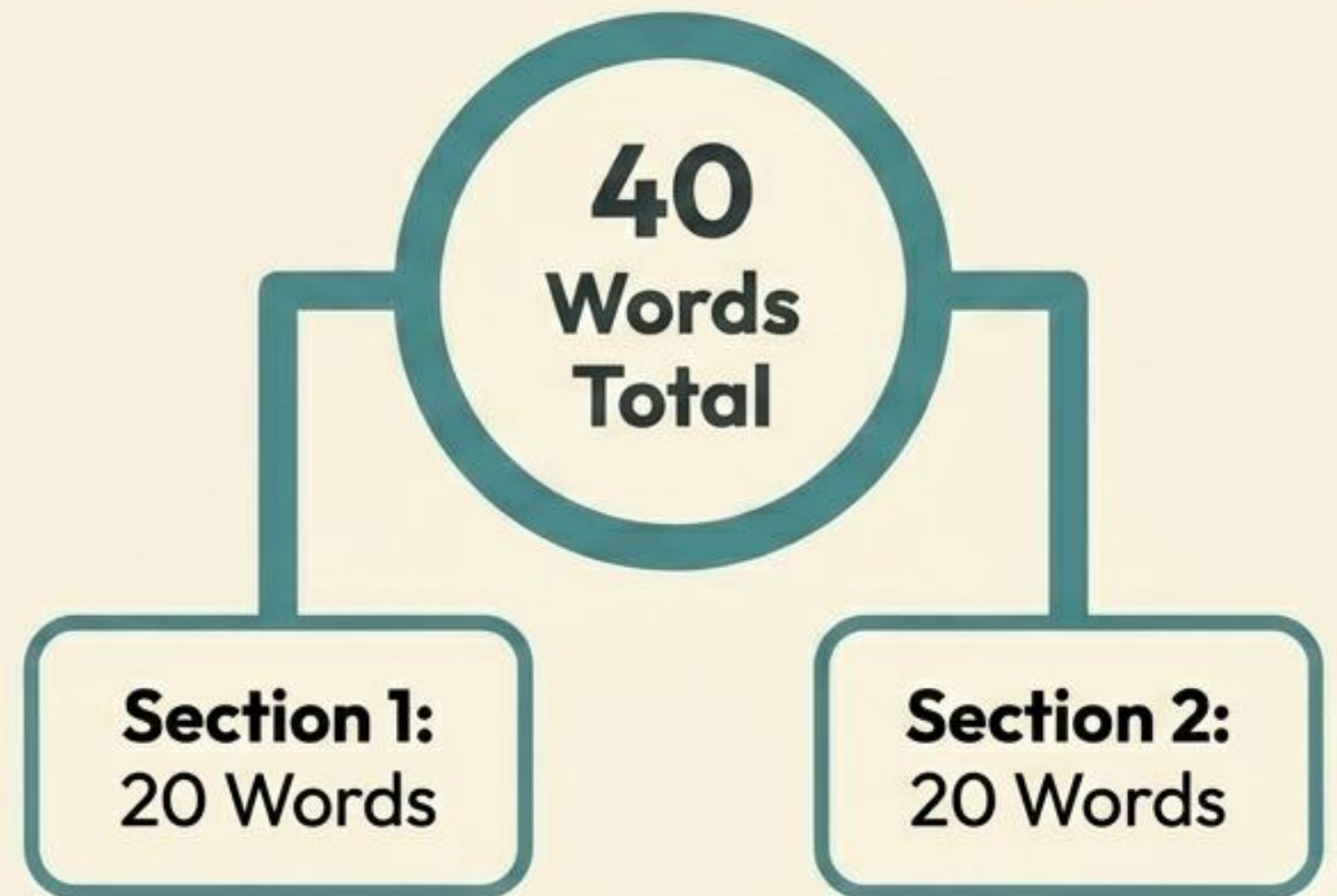
When: June of the academic year.

What: A short, 1-on-1 activity with a teacher.

Why: To confirm your child has learned phonic decoding to an age-appropriate standard, ensuring no child falls behind in vital early reading skills.

How the Check is Structured

The check is designed to be accessible and straightforward. It is divided into two sections of 20 words. Both sections contain a **carefully** balanced mixture of everyday vocabulary and imaginary 'pseudo-words'.



Real Words vs. 'Alien' Words

Real Words



cat

Standard vocabulary your child is learning to decode and understand.

Pseudo-Words



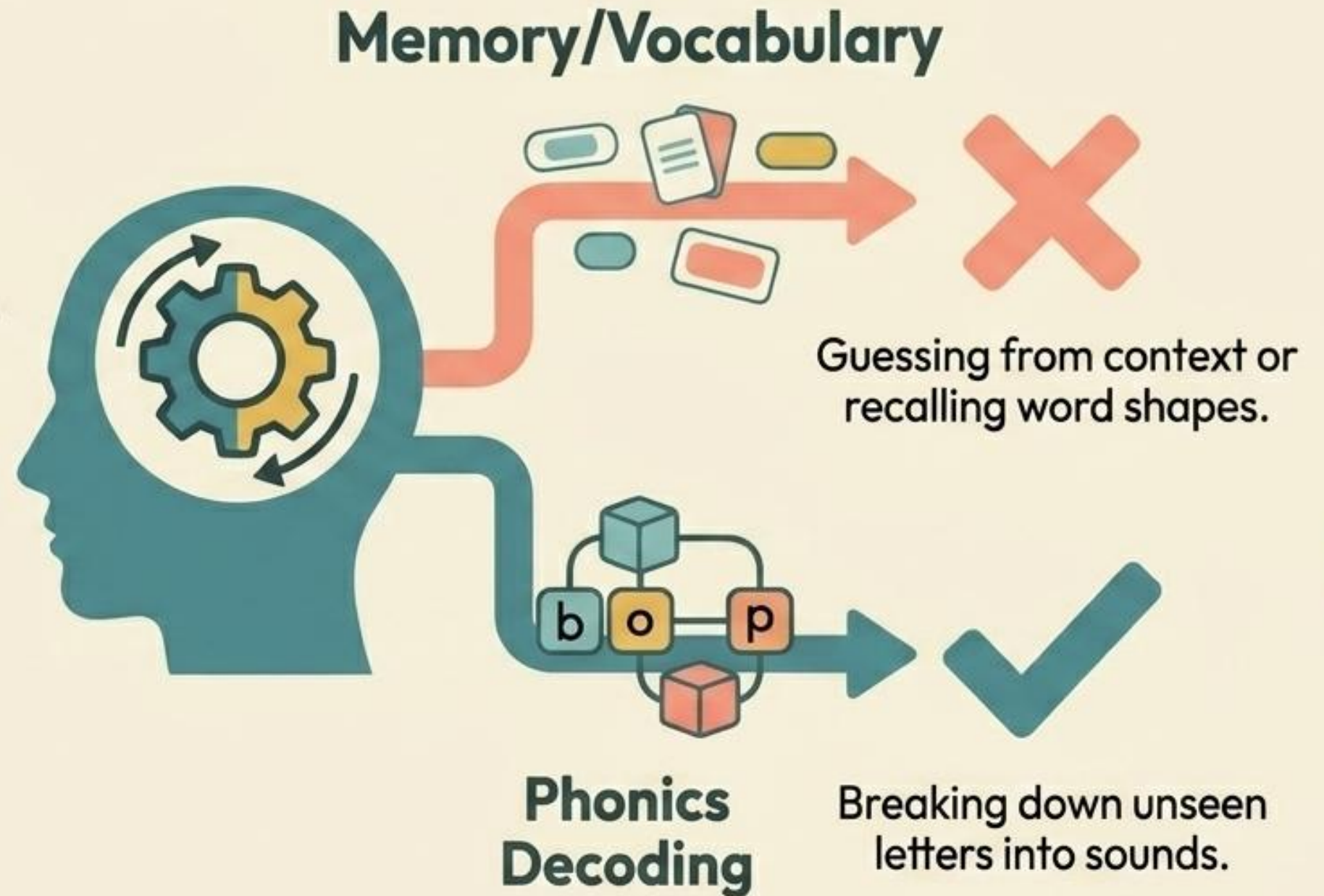
bop

Phonically decodable words with no actual meaning.

The Golden Rule: All pseudo-words are accompanied by a picture of an imaginary creature. Children are taught that the creature means it is an 'alien' word, ensuring they do not try to match it to their existing vocabulary.

Assessing the Skill, Not the Vocabulary

We include pseudo-words specifically to assess whether a child can confidently decode using their phonics skills. Because these words are completely new to them, they cannot rely on their memory of a word they already know. It proves they have mastered the mechanics of reading.



Bringing Phonics Home

Phonics works best when children are given plenty of encouragement and learn to truly enjoy reading. As parents, you play a vital role in taking phonics from the classroom to the sofa.



The Right Way to Read Together



Sounding Out & Blending

- Highlight sounds as you read (starting with 's', 'a', 't' and moving to 'ee', 'ch', 'ck').
- Encourage them to 'sound out' unfamiliar words.
- Blend the sounds together from left to right.
- Discuss what the word means afterwards to follow the story.



Guessing from Context

- Avoid encouraging your child to look at the pictures to simply guess the word.

The Right Book at the Right Time



Decodable Readers

Teachers provide books matched exactly to the phonics letters and sounds your child has learnt. This ensures they can work out new words rather than just guessing.



Communication & Records

Use the book bag and reading record to communicate with the teacher. Let us know what books they enjoyed, and any problems or successes they had at home!

How Results Are Used

Step 1: Receiving Results

Your child's score will be shared with you in the second half of the summer term.

Step 2: Identifying Support

The Department for Education does not publish school-level results. Scores are used purely to benchmark performance and ensure no child slips through the net.

Step 3: Next Steps

If your child finds it difficult, we will discuss the support we are putting in place. Children who have not met the standard simply re-take the check in Year 2.

We are here to help.



Speak to us.

Your child's Year 1 teacher will be able to answer any questions about the check or how to support reading at home.



National Guidance

For official details regarding the primary assessments, visit the Department for Education