Phonics checks: Recording results

Introduction

This document describes the steps to record the results of an English-medium phonics check in 2025.

A phonics check is marked using an Excel form, or a paper-based marking sheet. Both versions of the marking sheet and instructions for use can be downloaded from the *Phonics checks — Assessment materials* Tāhūrangi page.

The Excel document contains three tabs;

- a cover sheet,

- a marking sheet,

- a summary of results.

The process of creating each student's phonics check results file and populating the first two sheets is explained in the following sections. The summary tab is available to view a summary of the results once the check is completed.

Create a new result file

The words in the phonics checks change with each school term. A different set of assessment materials will be available on Tāhurangi each term, including an updated Excel marking sheet template.

1. Each term, download the blank marking sheet template and save it to a folder.

2. Go to your folder and open the blank marking sheet template for the current term, for example:

   Phonics-Check-Marking Sheet-Term1-2025.xlsx

3. Save this file with a new name by selecting the menu option **File** > **Save As**, or by pressing [**F12**]. Save the file to a folder which you will be able to easily locate later. Ensure the file name is unique to each student.

4. Use the unique file to complete the details and record results for each student completing a phonics check.

Cover sheet

Before commencing the phonics check, fill in the fields contained on the cover sheet.

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

English Phonics Check – Cover Sheet

Student's name

NSN

Teacher's name

MoE Employee Number

Test date

Location of check

20-week or 40-week?

Test category

Reason for stopping or not doing the check

General comment about the test

If the test was stopped, leave all subequent answers blank on the marking sheet

Test duration (minutes)

If you chose to modify the administration of this check rather than follow the guidelines, please respond below

Changes to the guidelines or script

Reason for the changes

Use the marking sheet (on the next tab) to record the results of the check
The last tab shows a summary of the scores

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- You can tab from field to field, or click inside a field to fill it in. You may use **Shift+Tab** to tab backwards through the form.

- Most of the fields are text fields where you type the information requested, for example, the student's name, the test date, comments, etc.

- Some of the fields have a drop-down list, in which case you select one of the options from the list, for example, the location of the check.
  Helpful tip: Instead of dropping down a list using the mouse, you can just press the first letter of one of the options in the list. This highlights the entry (or entries) beginning with that letter, and you can press [Enter] to select the item. This shortcut is useful if you prefer to use the keyboard and is especially useful when marking student answers to the phonics check.

- It is recommended that you look up the student's NSN in Enrol or in your school's Student Management System (SMS), and then copy and paste the NSN into this form. This will minimise errors in transferring the NSN data.

- Some basic verifications are performed on the fields as you enter them, for example, if the test date is not a valid date, an error message like this is displayed:
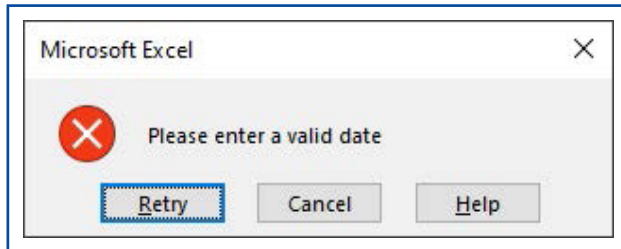
Marking sheet

The second tab in the Excel file is where you record the result of the phonics checks.

Phonics Marking Sheet		Term 1 2025 Set	
№	Item	Correct?	Comment
1	ag	Got it	
2	ip	Got it	
3	net	Got it	
4	sum	Got it	
5	san	Got it	
6	fot	Not yet	foot
7	tem	Not yet	ten
8	pon	Got it	
9	rem	Got it	
10	mid	Not yet	b / d reversal
11	hux	Got it	

- You can tab from field to field as you conduct the phonics check. There are 40 items in the list.

- As the child answers each item, tab to (or click in) the corresponding cell in the column labelled "Correct?", and select either:

  » Got it

  » Not yet

- You may add a comment against each incorrect item to describe the nature of the error, for example, "Did not blend."

- If you decide to stop the phonics check after marking five incorrect answers in a row, **leave the remaining answers blank**. Do not select any of the drop down options for the unanswered items. A blank answer indicates the point at which the phonics check was stopped, and all subsequent answers must be blank.

- Once the check is done (whether or not all items were answered), proceed with the next steps.

Complete the cover sheet

- Complete the remaining details about the phonics check on the cover sheet.

- You may add any general comments about the check on the cover sheet, and any explanation if the standard process was not followed.

- Save the file (by pressing **Ctrl+S**, or by using the menu **File** > **Save**). If you had not previously saved the file, specify a name for the file when prompted.

View a summary of the results

Once you have completed the phonics check, you can view a summary of the results on the third tab. The summary shows the student's performance for each grapheme type, as well as the total score. An example for a 40-week phonics check is shown on the next page.

Phonics summary by grapheme type

Grapheme Type	Correct	Out of	%	
VC	2	2	🟢	100%
CVC	8	9	🟢	89%
Digraph CVC	6	7	🟢	86%
CVCC & CCVC	2	3	🟡	67%
CCVCC	1	2	🟡	50%
CCCVC	1	1	🟢	100%
Vowel Digraph	3	5	🟡	60%
Closed Syllable Multisyllabic	1	1	🟢	100%
Split Vowel Digraph	1	4	🔴	25%
R-Controlled	1	3	🔴	33%
Diphthong	0	1	⚫	0%
Trigraph	0	1	⚫	0%
Two-Syllable	0	1	⚫	0%
Total	**26**			
Curriculum Expectation	**30**			

Achievement level	Threshold
Needs support	0 to 15
Progressing towards	16 to 23
Proficient	24 to 30
Exceeding	31 to 40

Choosing not to do a phonics check

If you choose not to conduct a phonics check with a child who is due for their 20 or 40 week check, it is recommended that you still record a marking sheet explaining the reason a check was not performed. This ensures reports accurately represent all students both at a school and national level. Such reports do not identify individual students. To do this:

1. Create a new result file (as described earlier)

2. Complete the cover sheet. Select one of the options to describe why you chose not to conduct the phonics check.

3. *Do not fill in any answers on the marking sheet.*

4. Save the file as described above.

Upload the results

The Ministry of Education supports whole school data-informed practice by providing regular school-level reports. When schools upload their phonics check data to the Ministry's secure data portal, they will receive a report that includes:

• a summary of progress and achievement

• demographic analyses.

• national achievement norms.

Once you have completed a round of phonics checks (with one result file per student), multiple files can be uploaded to the Ministry of Education through the Secure Data Portal (SDP). This may be done at a frequency that suits your school, but frequent uploads will ensure timely information being made available.

Instructions on the use of the SDP are provided in a document called *Phonics checks: Uploading results* on the Tāhūrangi page *Phonics checks — Assessment materials*.

Correcting errors

When result files are uploaded to the Ministry through the SDP, they undergo validation before the results are stored for reporting. A number of automated checks are carried out on the submitted data to ensure it is valid. If any of the validation checks fail, error messages are generated and reported back to the school, as described below.

- The email address of the school administrator is used to send an email with the details of errors found in the submitted file(s). If the Ministry does not have an email address for the school administrator, the email is addressed to the school principal.

- The email message contains details of the date and time the file was submitted, and the name of the file submitted.

- The body of the email contains details of each error found. No personal information is included in the email. Examples of error messages in the email:

  » Teacher's name is missing, and must be supplied

  » Invalid test date

- On receiving details of errors found, locate the original result file, correct the data (as specified), and re-submit the file using the SDP.

Paper-based marking

For accuracy and efficiency, it is best to use the Excel marking sheet on your computer while administering the checks.

You may choose to print a PDF marking sheet to record results as you administer the phonics checks. This is available on Tāhūrangi on the *Phonics checks — Assessment materials page*.

Once you have recorded the results on paper, you can copy the results to the Excel file, and then submit the results to the Ministry. Care must be taken in copying the details from the paper marking sheet to the Excel form to avoid transcription errors.

Further support

You can get further support on the phonics checks by emailing **phonics.check@education.govt.nz**.