

Phonics Checks

2025

Deb Masters

The phonics checks

About the phonics checks

Doing the checks

Implementation support

Q&A

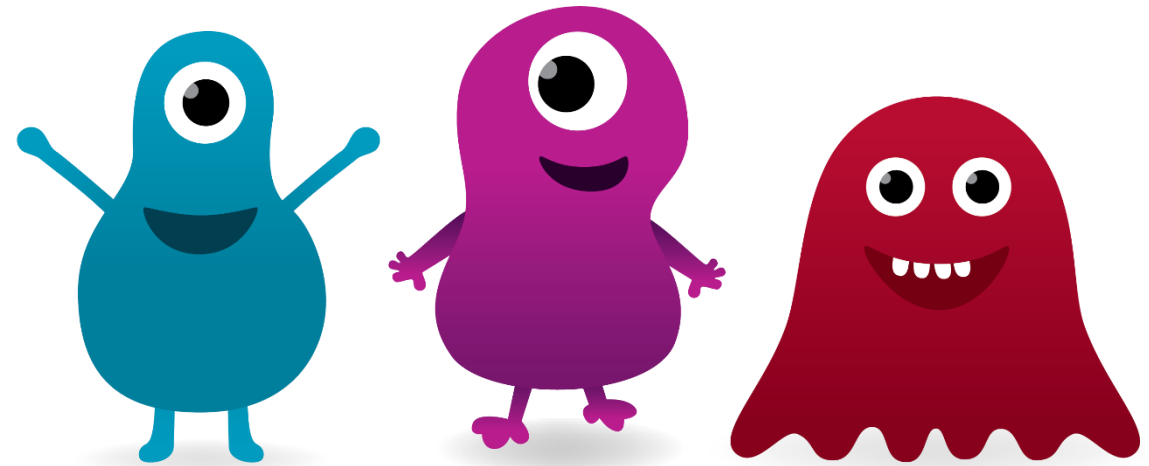


Phonics Checks | Hihiria Weteoro

We are implementing phonics checks in all schools and kura this year.

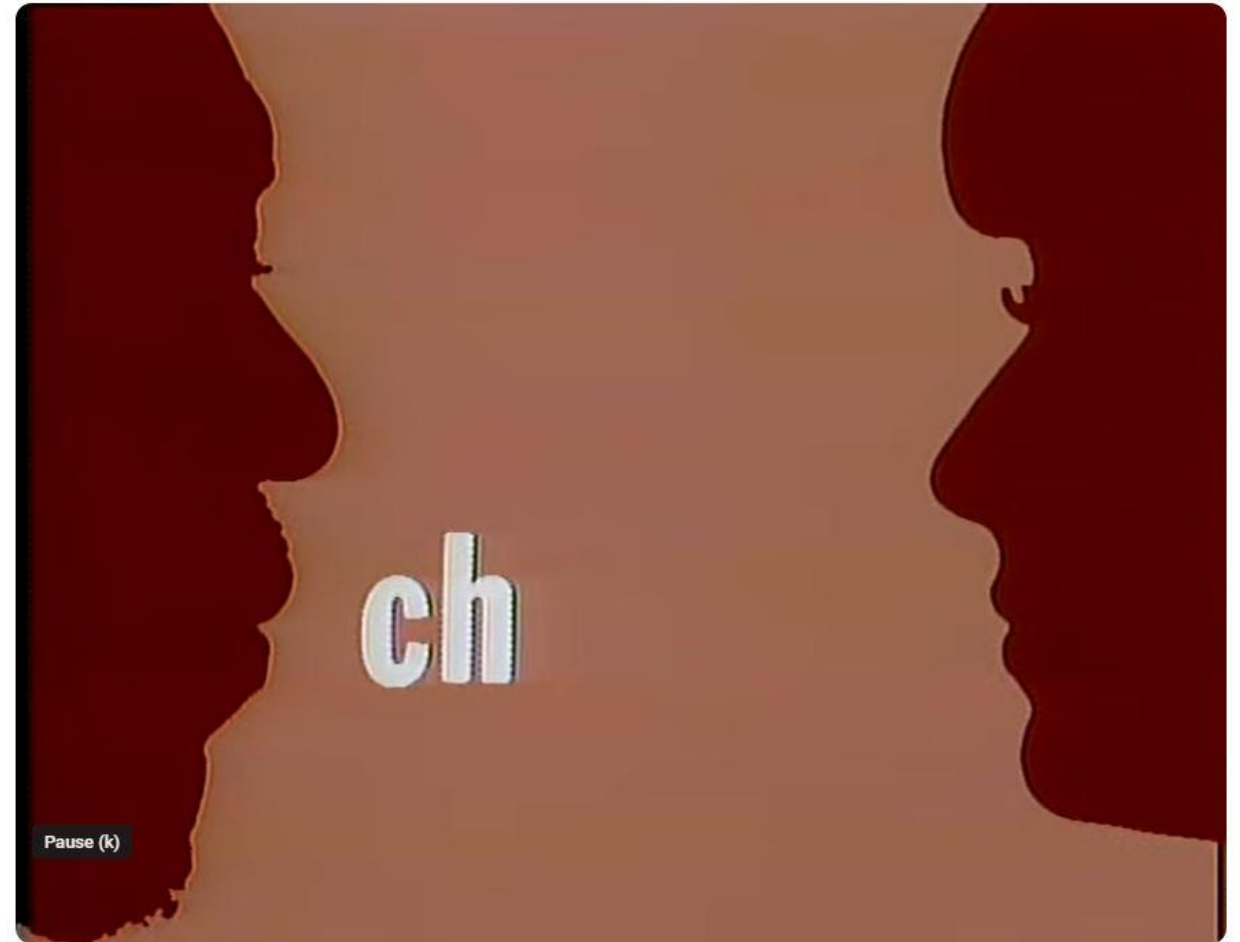
A phonics checks supports the government's education priorities;

- **Smarter assessment and reporting**
- **Stronger learning support**
- **Greater use of data**



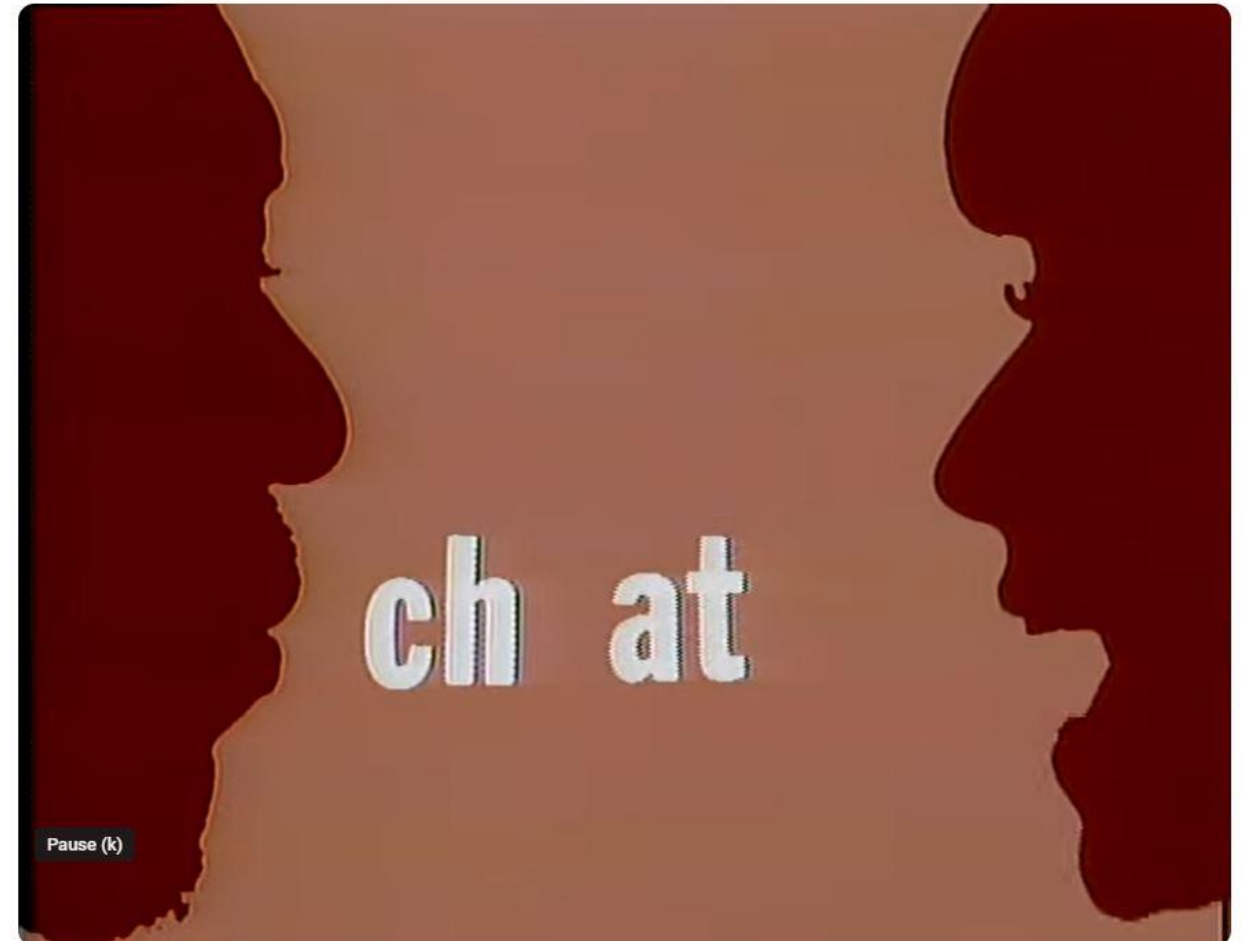
What is Phonics?

- Phonics is the relationship between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes).



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- Phonics knowledge and skills are critical for all students' reading and spelling



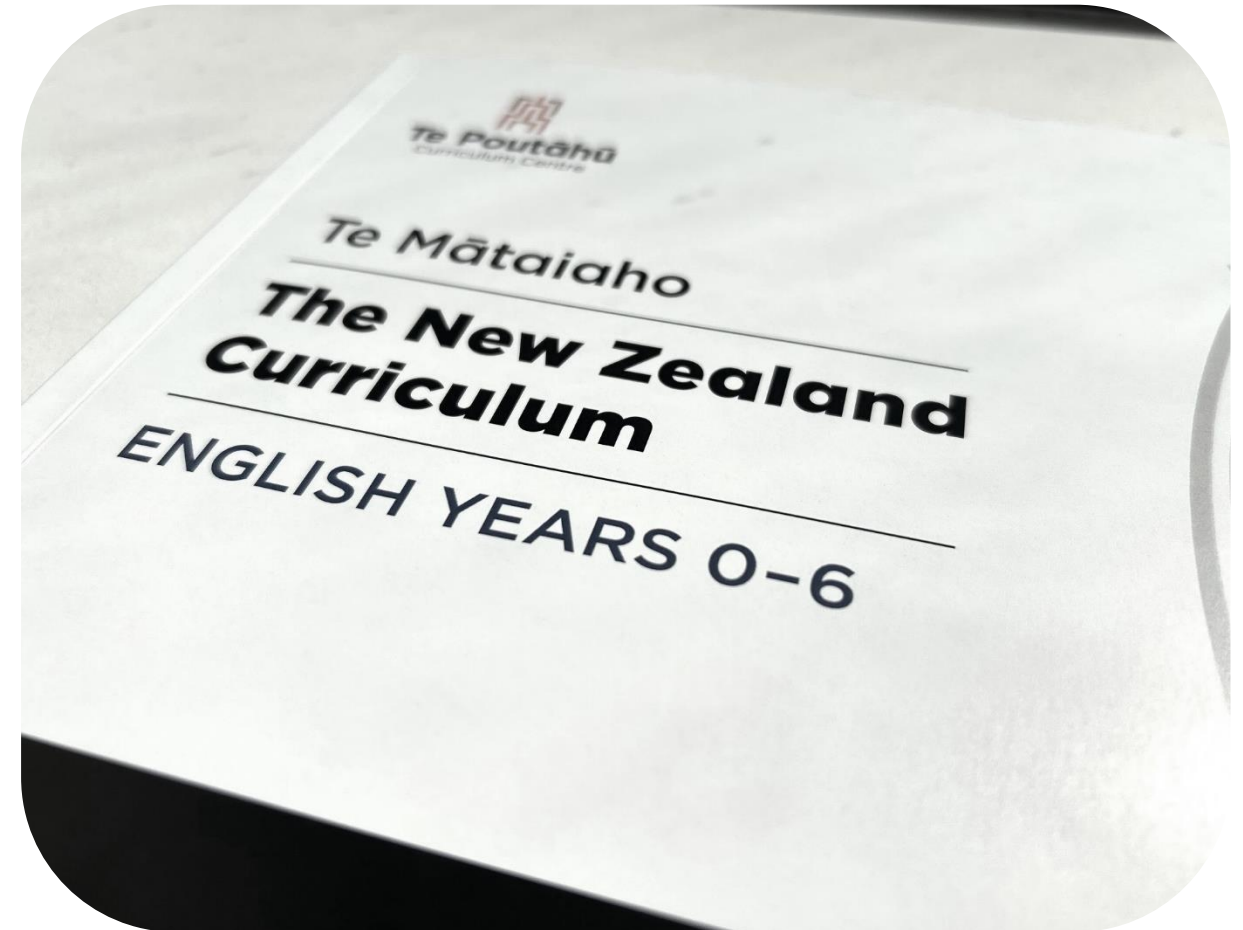
What is Phonics?

- Phonics is the relationship between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes).
- Phonics knowledge and skills are critical for all students' reading and spelling
- Phonics knowledge is predictor of later reading and spelling success.



Teaching Phonics

- Phonics instruction should be aligned to the English learning area



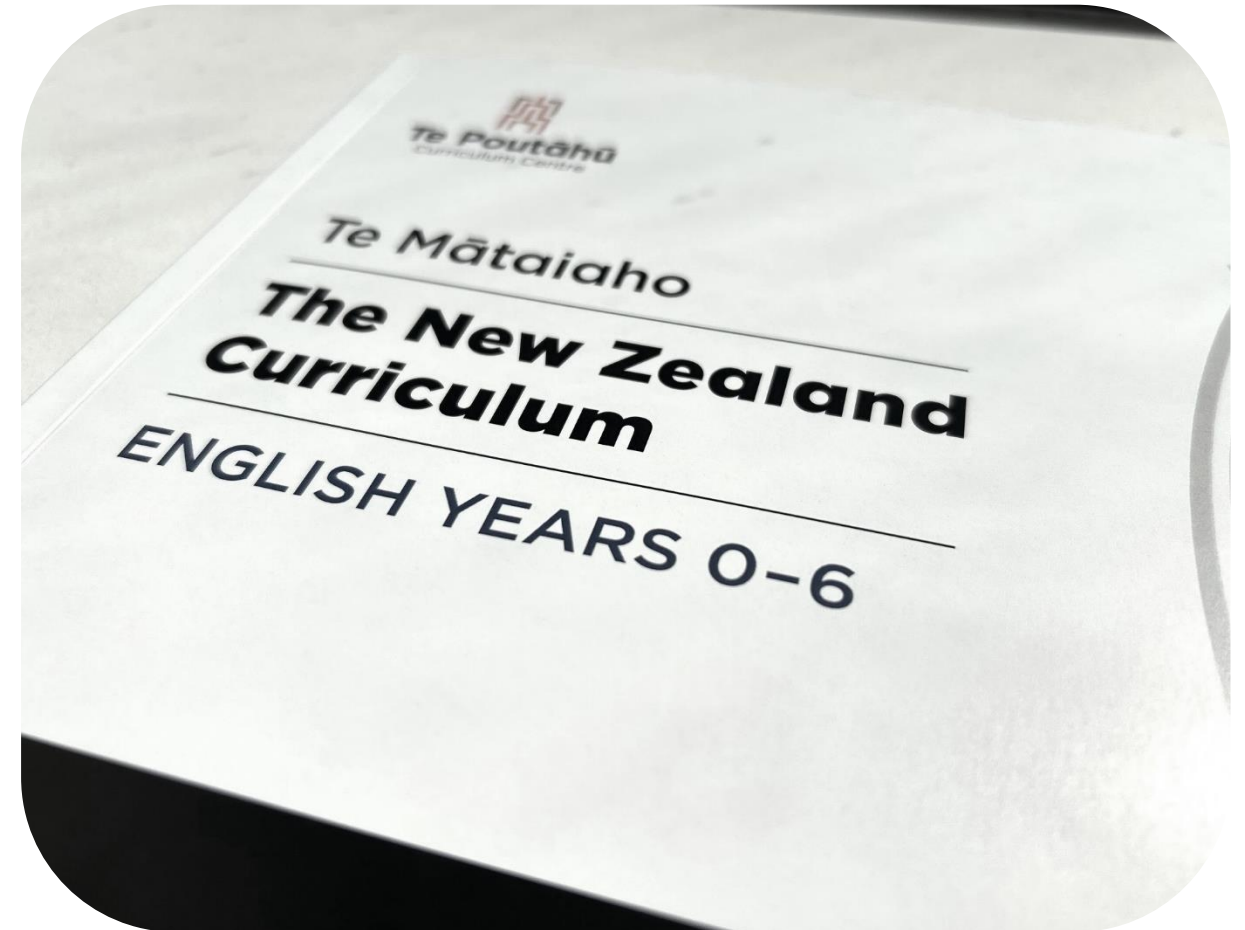
Teaching Phonics

- Phonics instruction should be aligned to the English learning area

	alphabet and match letters to consonant and short-vowel phonemes	lor.
Decoding	› decode consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words in isolation and in connected text, using their phonics knowledge	› dec adj cons som in co their
	› decode CVC words with the suffix -s, using their phonics and morpheme knowledge	› deco suffi usin r

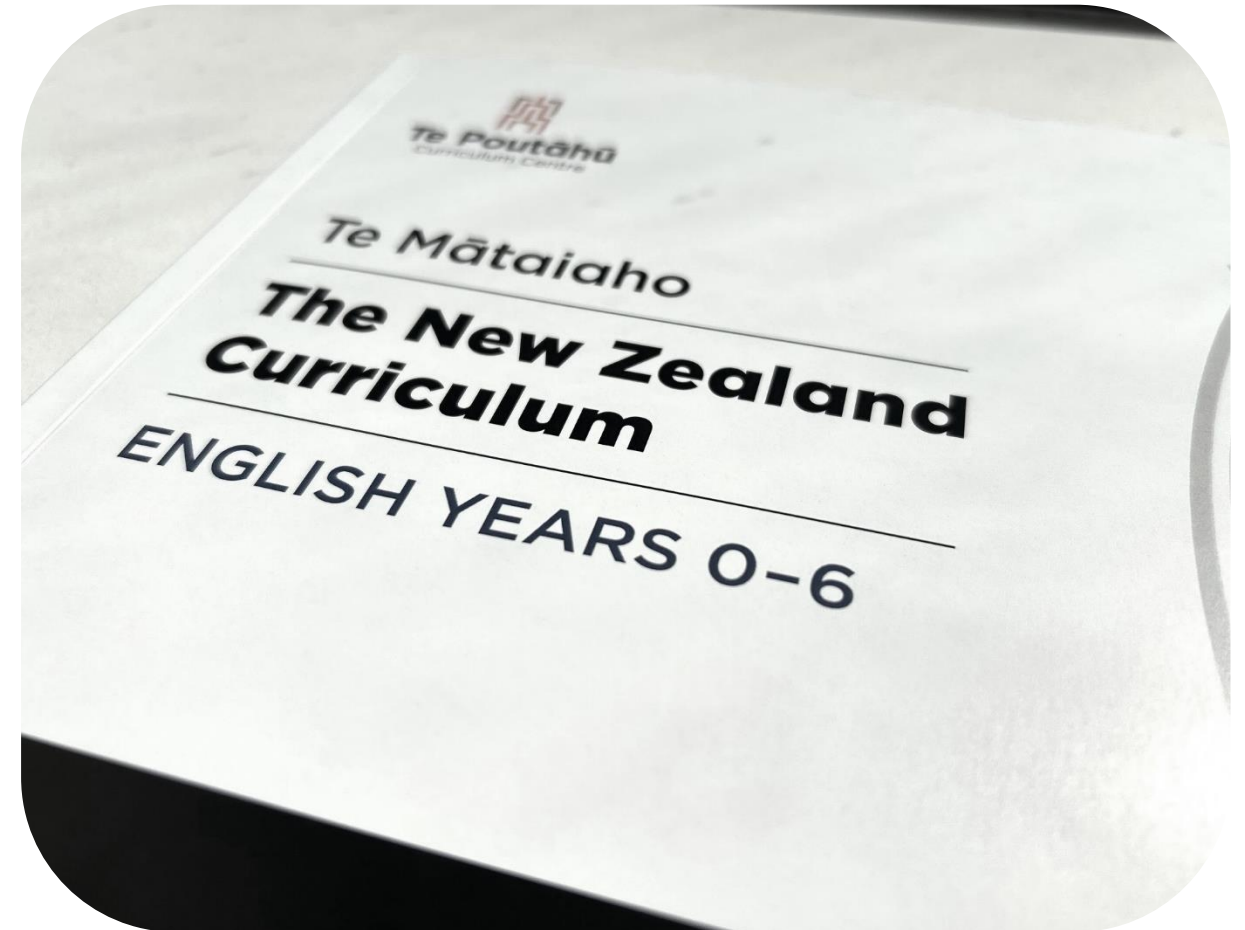
Teaching Phonics

- Phonics instruction should be aligned to the English learning area
- Synthetic phonics should be taught explicitly – segmenting and blending



Teaching Phonics

- Phonics instruction should be aligned to the English learning area
- Synthetic phonics should be taught explicitly – segmenting and blending
- **Teacher manuals for SLA available from Term 2**



What are the phonics checks?

- A phonics check is a short assessment that measures a child's phonic knowledge and skills.



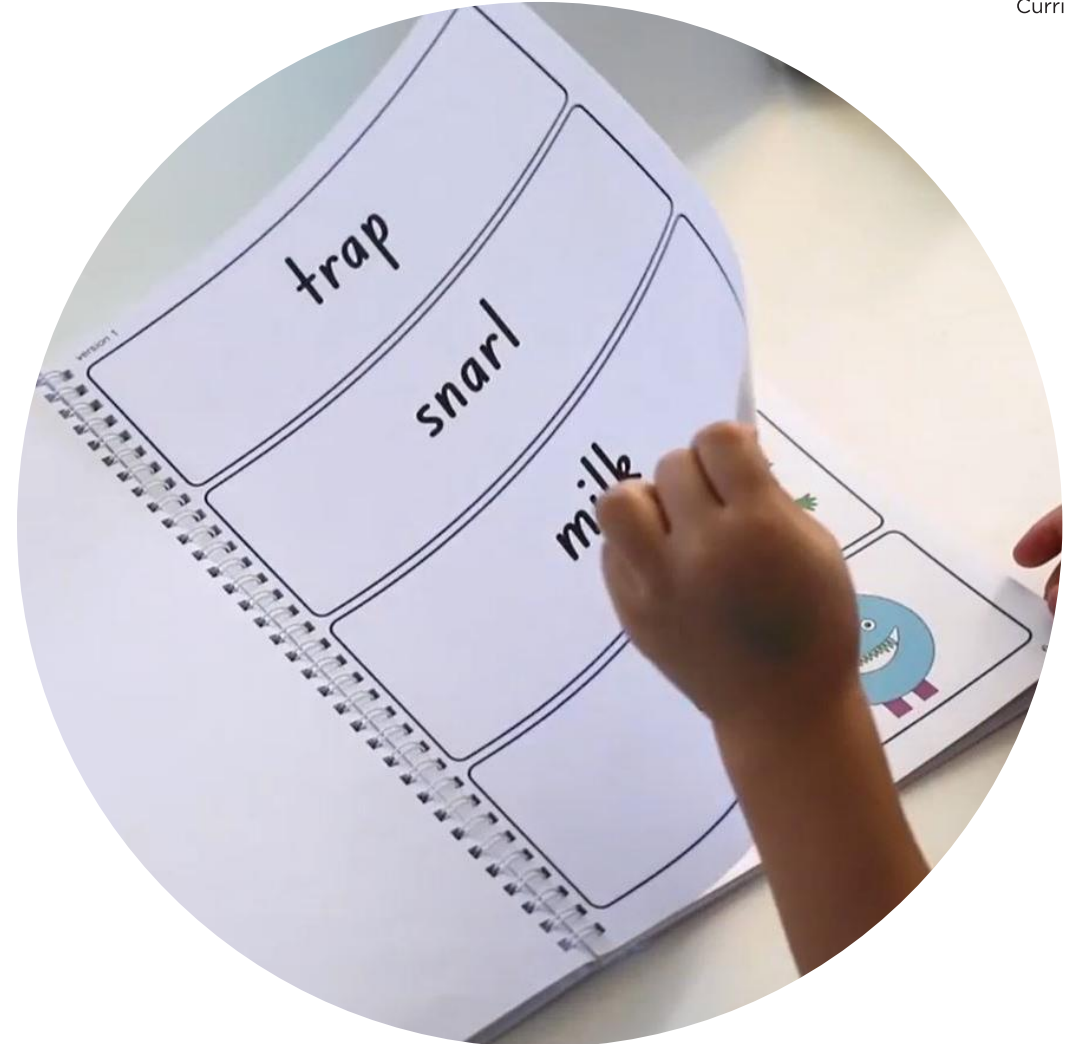
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- Phonics check take about 5-10 minutes and are done 1:1



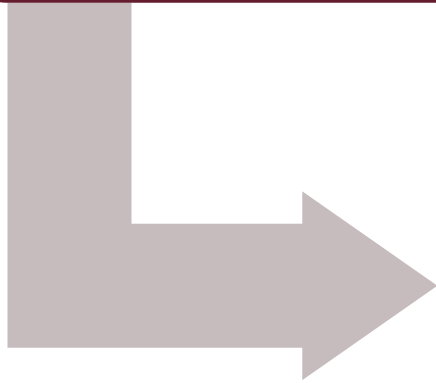
What are the phonics checks?

- A phonics check is a short assessment that measures a child's phonic knowledge and skills.
- Phonics check take about **5-10 minutes** and are done 1:1
- Learners will have a phonics check 20 and 40 **school weeks** after starting school



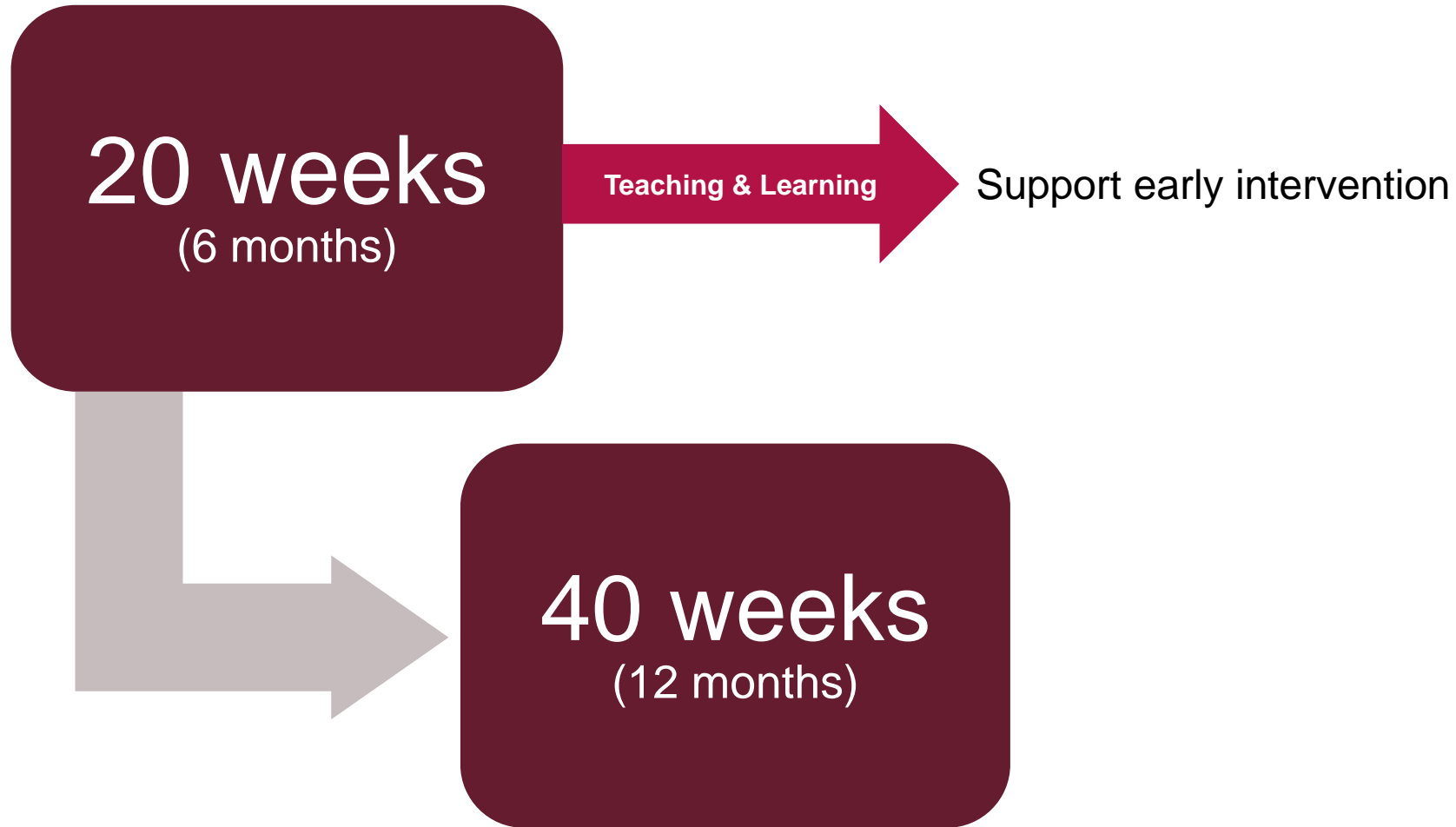
Why do we check at these times?

20 weeks
(6 months)

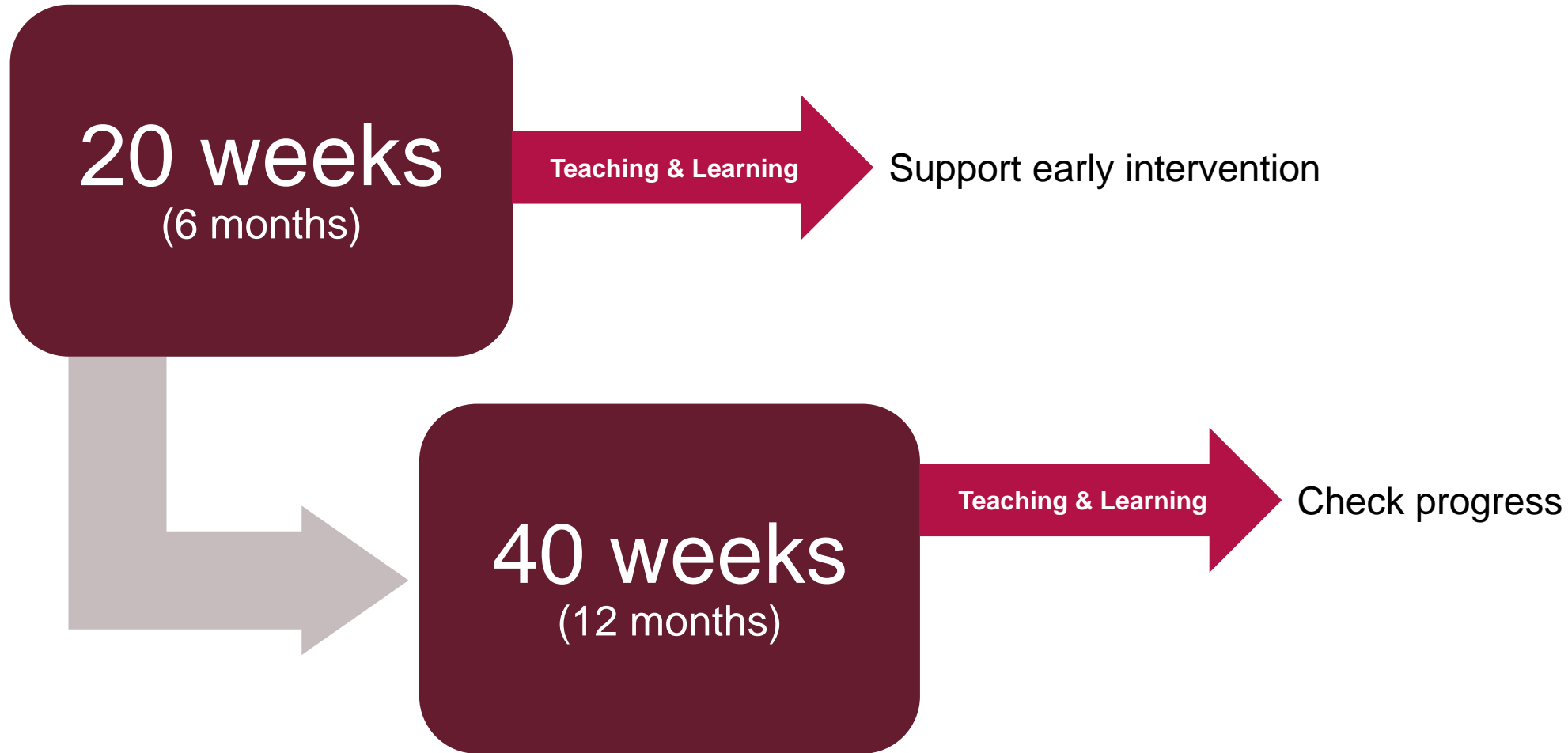


40 weeks
(12 months)

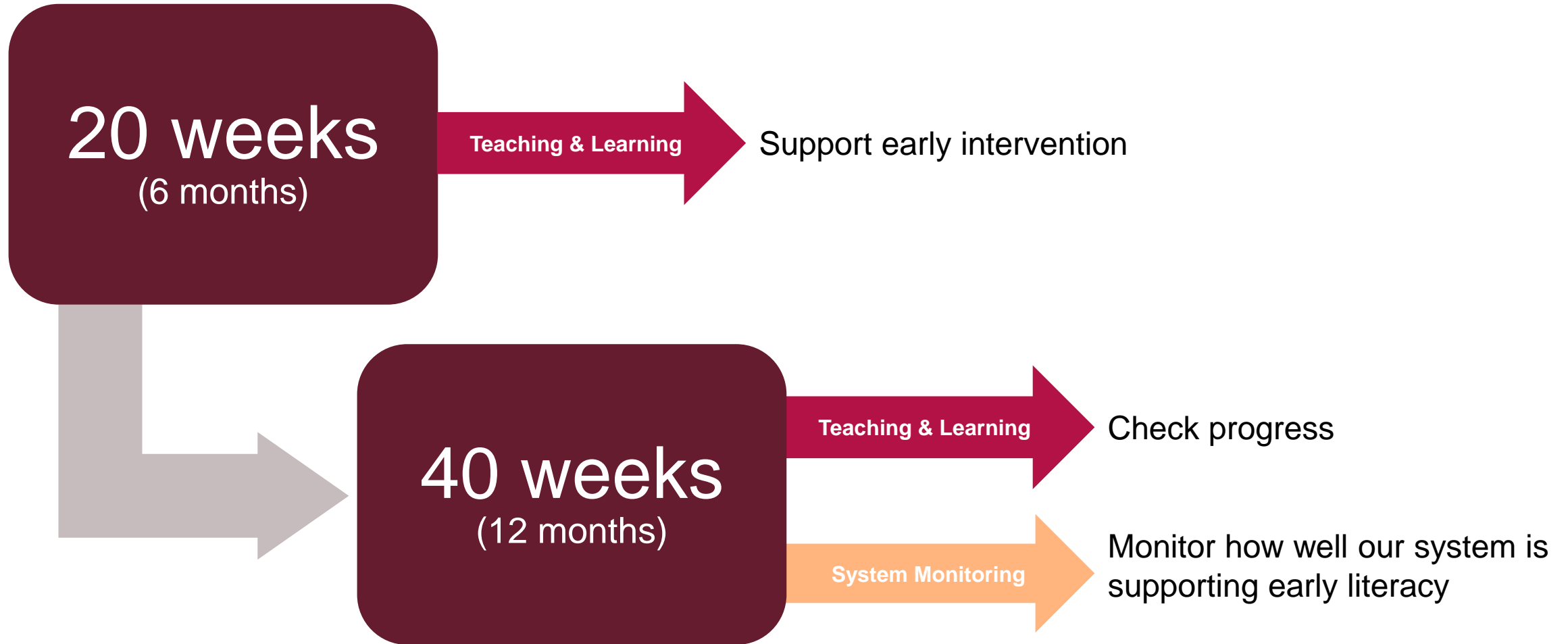
Why do we check at these times?



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Why do we check at these times?



Are the checks **compulsory**?

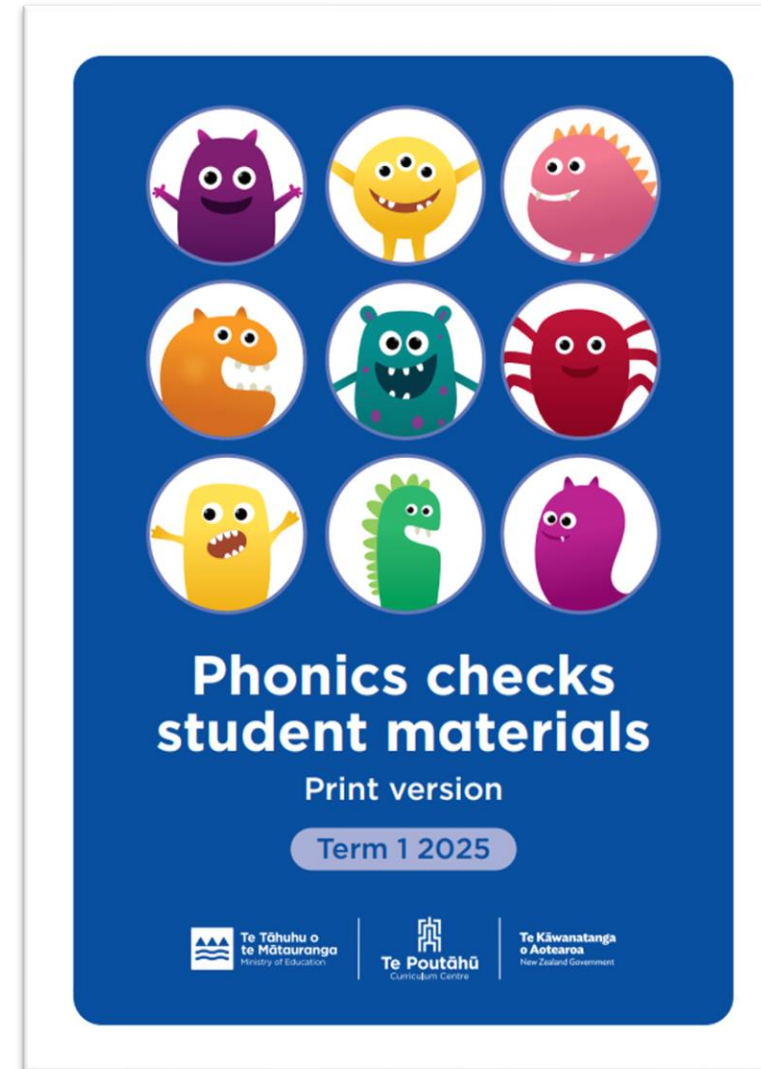
- Schools are not currently required to carry out phonics checks.
- The minister has signalled that they may be required from **2026**



Doing the Phonics Checks

The phonics check

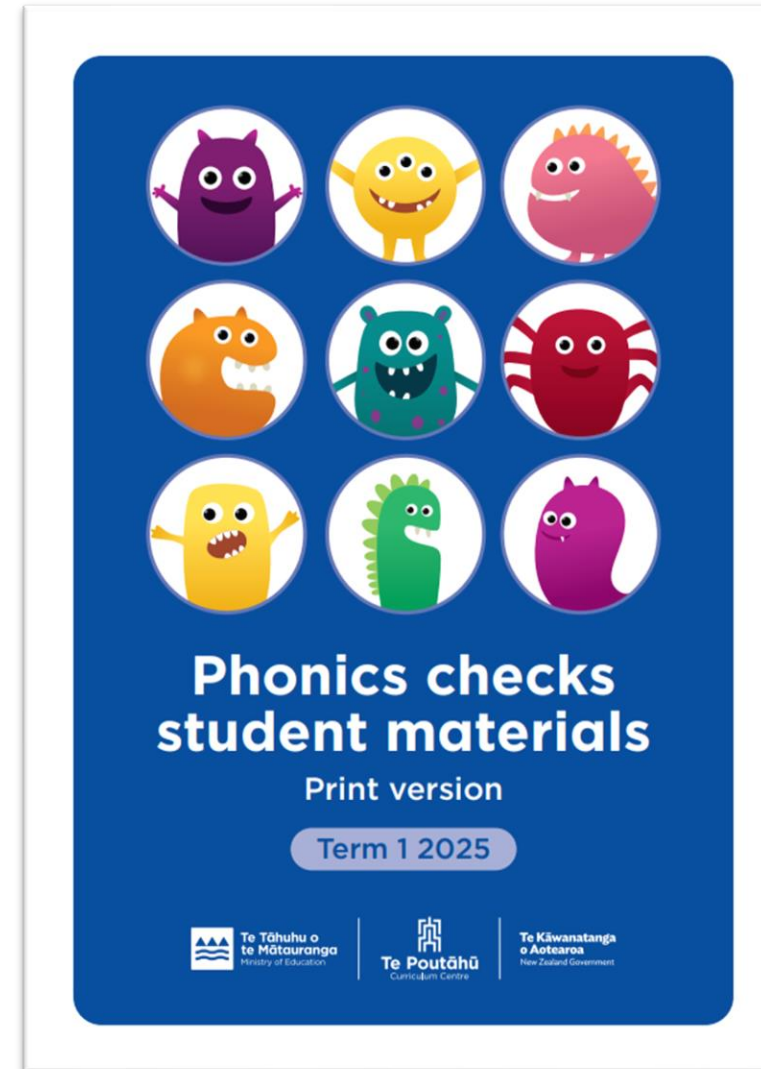
We have adapted an Australian version of the UK phonics check for the NZ context.



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- Aligned to the refreshed English learning area



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- Culturally appropriate



The phonics check

We have adapted an Australian version of the UK phonics check for the NZ context.

- Aligned to the refreshed English learning area
- Culturally appropriate
- Validated through a trial in 76 schools



The phonics check

The phonics check consists of:

- real words
- pseudo / alien words



Phonics checks: Student materials - Term 1 2025

ag	●
ip	●
net	
sum	

The phonics check

The phonics check consists of:

- real words
- pseudo / alien words

Pseudo words ensure children are using their **decoding** skills rather than their memory of known words.

Phonics checks: Student materials - Term 1 2025

cheek	
doom	
braits	●
keam	●

10

Who should do the check?



Who should do the check?



All children who reach 20- and 40-week
school weeks in 2025

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All children who reach 20- and 40-week
school weeks in 2025

- English Language Learners

Who should do the check?



All children who reach 20- and 40-week **school weeks** in 2025

- English Language Learners
- Children moving schools from overseas.

Who should do the check?



All children who reach 20- and 40-week **school weeks** in 2025

- English Language Learners
- Children moving schools from overseas.
- Children who reach 40-weeks but **haven't** done a 20-week check.

Who should do the check?



All children who reach 20- and 40-week **school weeks** in 2025

- English Language Learners
- Children moving schools from overseas.
- Children who reach 40-weeks but haven't done a 20-week check.
- Children with significant absences

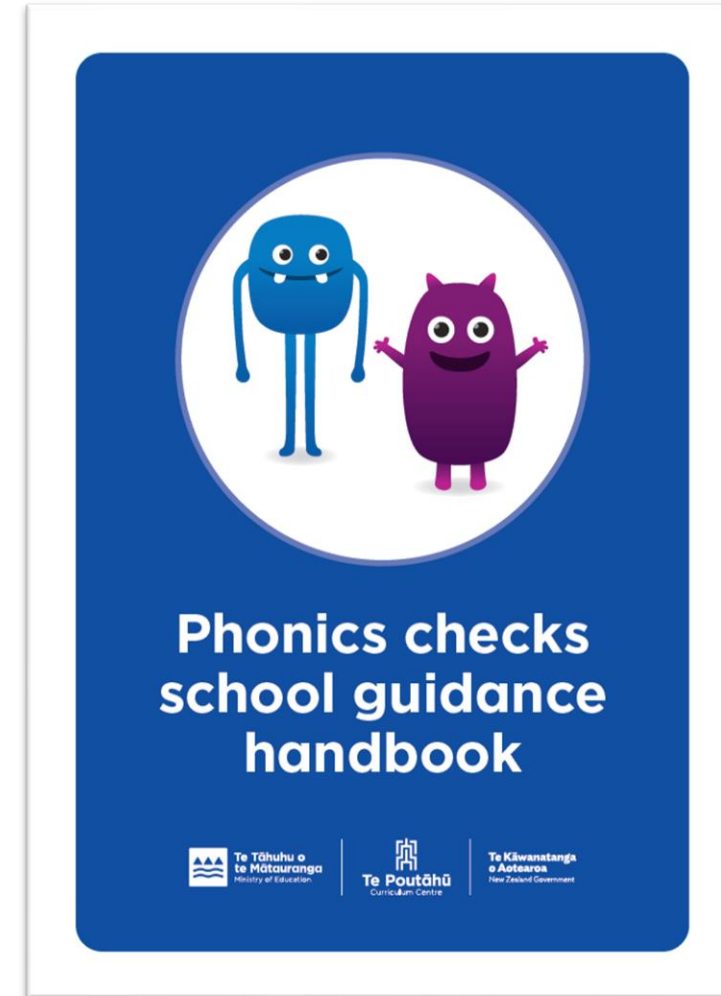
Alternative versions

- Braille
- *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* (in development)
- *Gagana Samoa and Lea Faka Tonga* (in development)



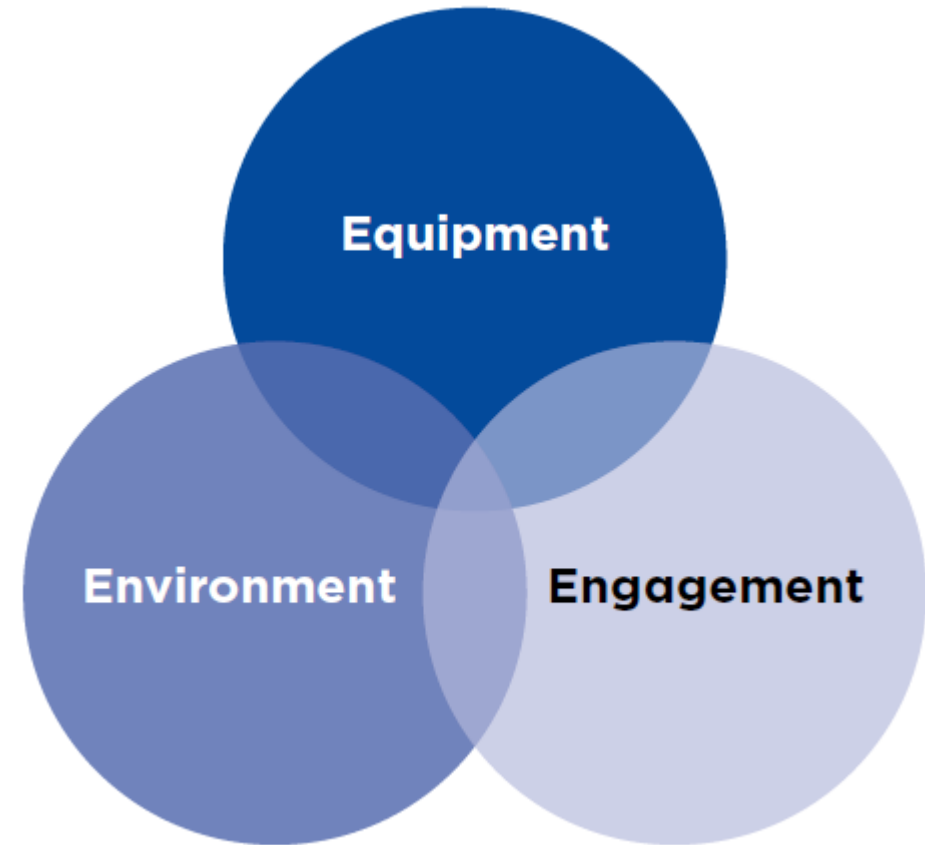
Inclusive and accessible phonics checks

- Guidance to make phonics checks inclusive and accessible are in the handbook



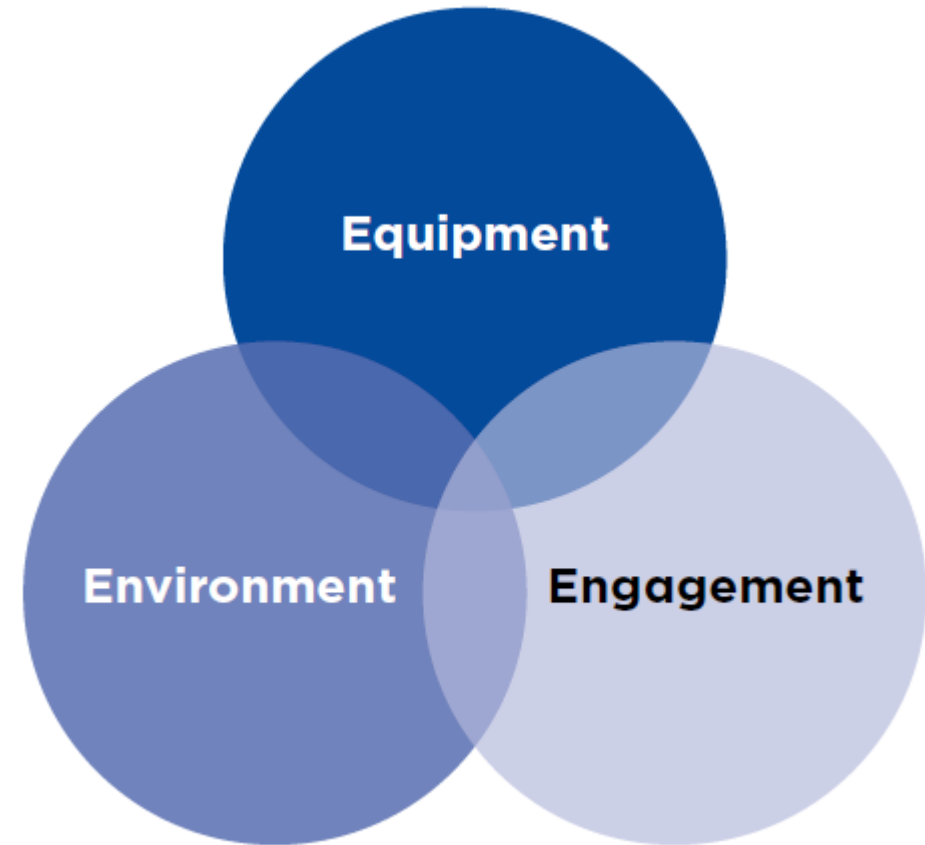
Inclusive and accessible phonics checks

- Identify and address potential barriers to the phonics checks



Inclusive and accessible phonics checks

- Identify and address potential barriers to the phonics checks
- Barriers can exist across single or multiple dimensions



When **not** to do a check?



Do not do the standard phonics checks with children who:

- Do not yet understand the relationship between graphemes and phonemes
- Profoundly deaf
- Currently non-verbal

Administration

The phonics check is administered

- In a quiet place, 1:1 with a teacher and child



Administration

The phonics check is administered

- In a quiet place, 1:1 with a teacher and child
- Standardised script

Phonics checks: Script for administration

Be consistent with the words used to introduce the phonics check to each child. Use the practice sheet to model for children how to segment the letter sounds and blend them together. Encourage them to use this technique as they do the check and especially for the items they might find difficult.

If appropriate for the child, teachers can choose to run the practice words using an, 'I do / we do / you do' approach, where the teacher models the segmenting and blending, then the teacher and child segment and blend the word together, and then the child segments and blends the word by themselves.

The following is a suggested script for talking to children about the phonics check and using the practice sheet just before starting the check:

In this activity, I am going to ask you to read some words aloud. You might have seen some of the words before and others will be new.

Try to read each word but don't worry if you can't. If it helps, you can say the sounds you know and then blend them together to say the word.

This practice sheet shows you what the words will look like. I'm going to read this word; "iii - t, it".

Now you have a go at reading this next word aloud (teacher points to 'on').

This next word is a made-up word. We can imagine it is an alien word spoken by a creature from another planet. You can tell which words are made up by this blue circle.

I'll have a go at reading this made-up word "fff - ooo - mmm, fom".

Now you have a go at reading the next made-up word (teacher points to 'nep').

Now we are going to start reading out the words in the activity.

In this check, I won't tell you whether you have got the word right or not. I will be proud of you for giving these words a go.

Can you start reading the words to me?

Administration

The phonics check is administered

- In a quiet place, 1:1 with a teacher and child
- Standardised script
- Practice words

Phonics checks: Student materials - Term 1 2025

Practice sheet

it

on

fom ●

nep ●

3

Administration

The phonics check is administered

- In a quiet place, 1:1 with a teacher and child
- Standardised script
- Practice words
- Child reads the words aloud



Administration

The phonics check is administered

- In a quiet place, 1:1 with a teacher and child
- Standardised script
- Practice words
- Child reads the words aloud
- Teacher records nature of errors

Item	Correct?	Comment
ag	Got it	
ip	Got it	
net	Not yet	n-e-t not blended
sum	Got it	
san	Not yet	sam - m/n confusion
fot	Not yet	foot - long vowel
tem	Got it	
pon	Not yet	pom - m/n confusion

Administration

The phonics check is administered

- In a quiet place, 1:1 with a teacher and child
- Standardised script
- Practice words
- Child reads the words aloud
- Teacher records nature of errors
- Stop the check after five errors in a row

Phonics Marking Sheet		
No	Item	Correct?
1	ag	Got it
2	ip	Got it
3	net	Not yet
4	sum	Not yet
5	san	Not yet
6	fot	Not yet
7	tem	Not yet
8	pon	

Analysing results

Achievement levels are defined for both timepoints.

Curriculum expectations:

20 weeks

Achievement level	Threshold
Needs support	0 to 5
Progressing towards	6 to 9
Proficient	10 to 12
Exceeding	13 to 40

40 weeks

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

Analysing results

Achievement levels are defined for both timepoints.

Curriculum expectations:

- 10-12 correct answers at **20 weeks**

20 weeks

Achievement level	Threshold
Needs support	0 to 5
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Analysing results

Achievement levels are defined for both timepoints.

Curriculum expectations:

- 10-12 correct answers at **20 weeks**
- 24-30 correct answers at **40 weeks**

20 weeks

Achievement level	Threshold
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40 weeks

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Analysing results

Automatic summary of child's phonics knowledge by grapheme type available

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	0	1	0%
Vowel Digraph	4	5	80%
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		

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Analysing results

Automatic summary of child's phonics knowledge by grapheme type available

Quickly shows **Strengths** and **Needs**

Phonics summary by grapheme type			
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Total	26		
Curriculum Expectation	30		

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Teaching guidance

Guidance is provided for:

- Appropriate teaching response to each achievement level provided in handbook
- Further teacher guidance for [Accelerating Progress in Literacy](#) is available on Tāhūrangi



School-level **Phonics Check** Reports

When schools upload their **Excel phonics check marking sheets** to the Ministry's secure data portal, they will receive a report that includes:

- Summary of progress and achievement
- Demographic analyses
- National norms

Please do not upload PDFs



2025 is an **interim year**

The current materials and manual data sharing are a short-term solution to support **teaching and learning**.

Work is underway on an online phonics check platform will be up in 2026 to support **instant reporting** and system monitoring.



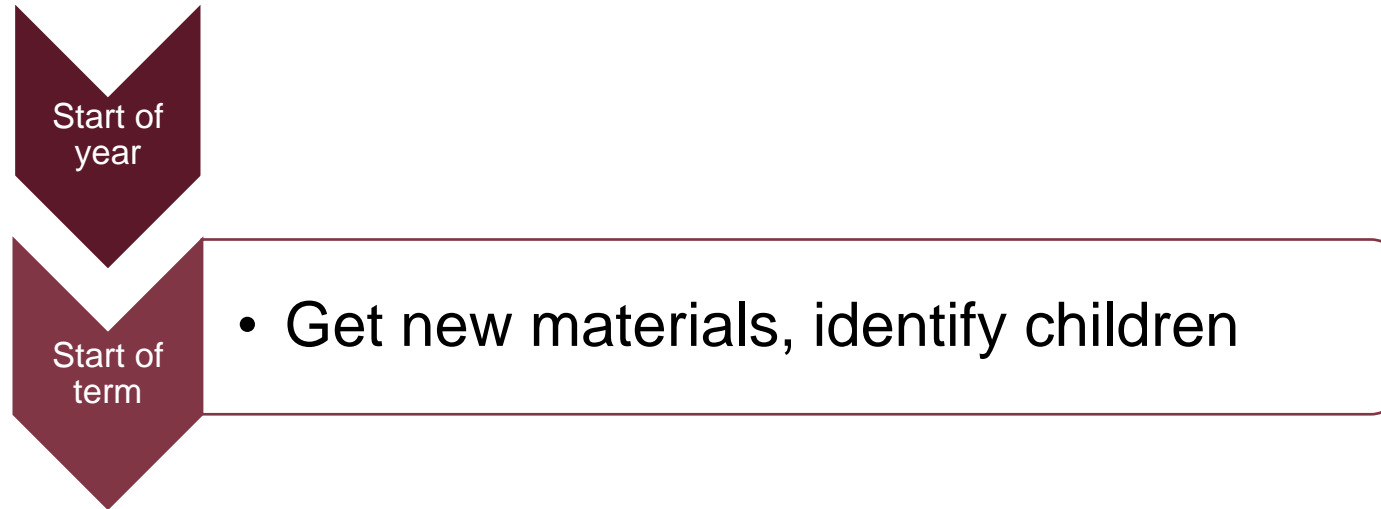
Implementation

2025 timeline for teachers

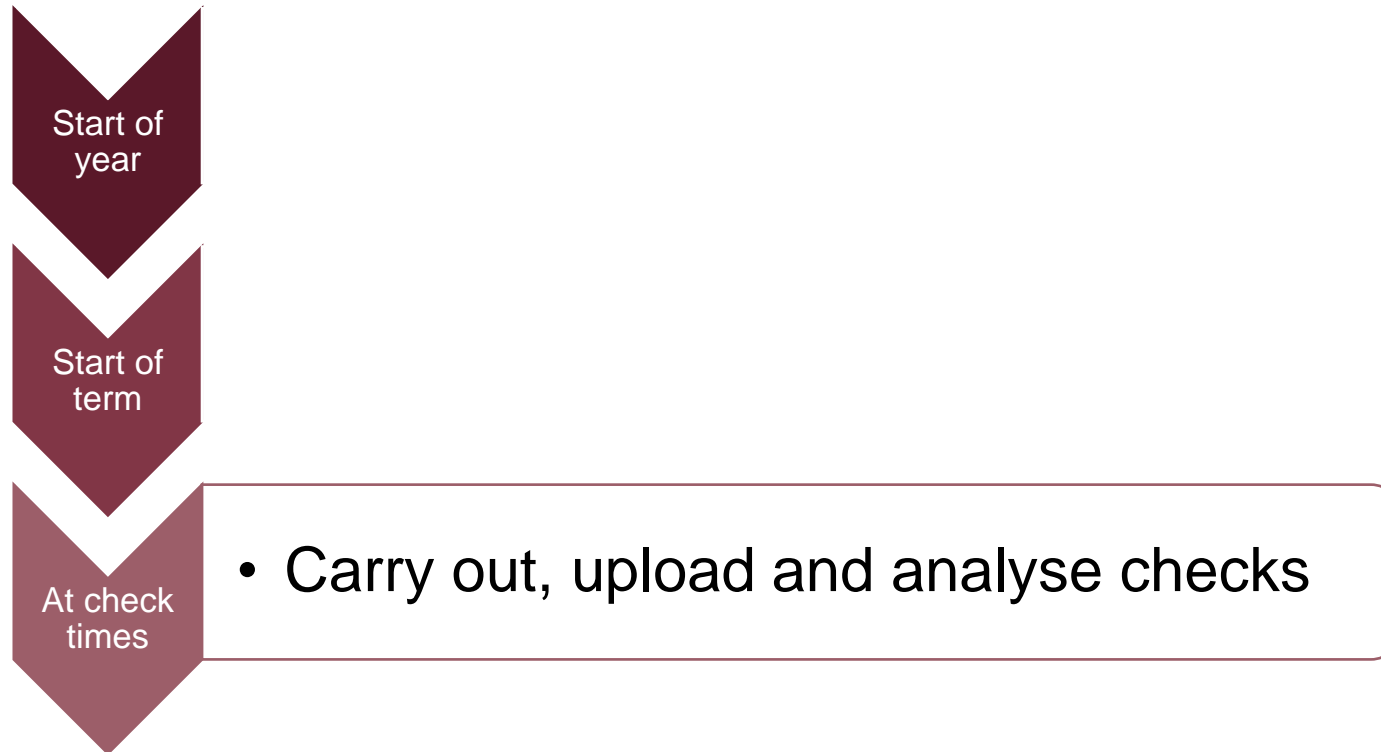
Start of
year

- Get familiar with the checks

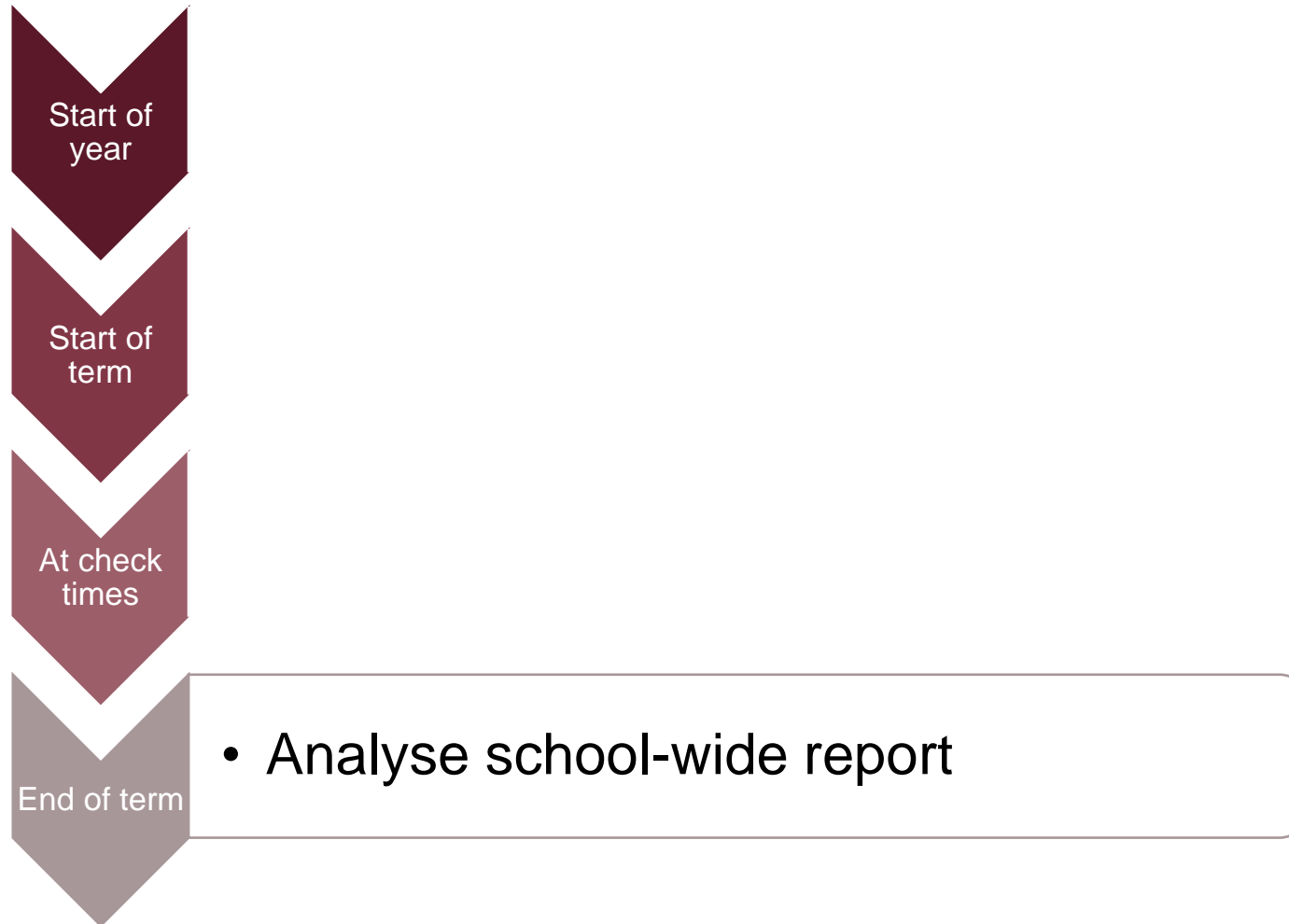
2025 timeline for teachers



2025 timeline for teachers



2025 timeline for teachers



Implementation Support

Tāhūrangi

Phonics checks – Guidance for schools

Phonics Checks – Assessment materials

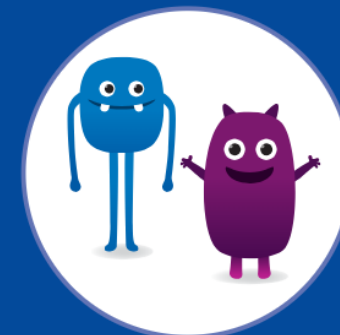


Implementation Support

Self-directed learning module

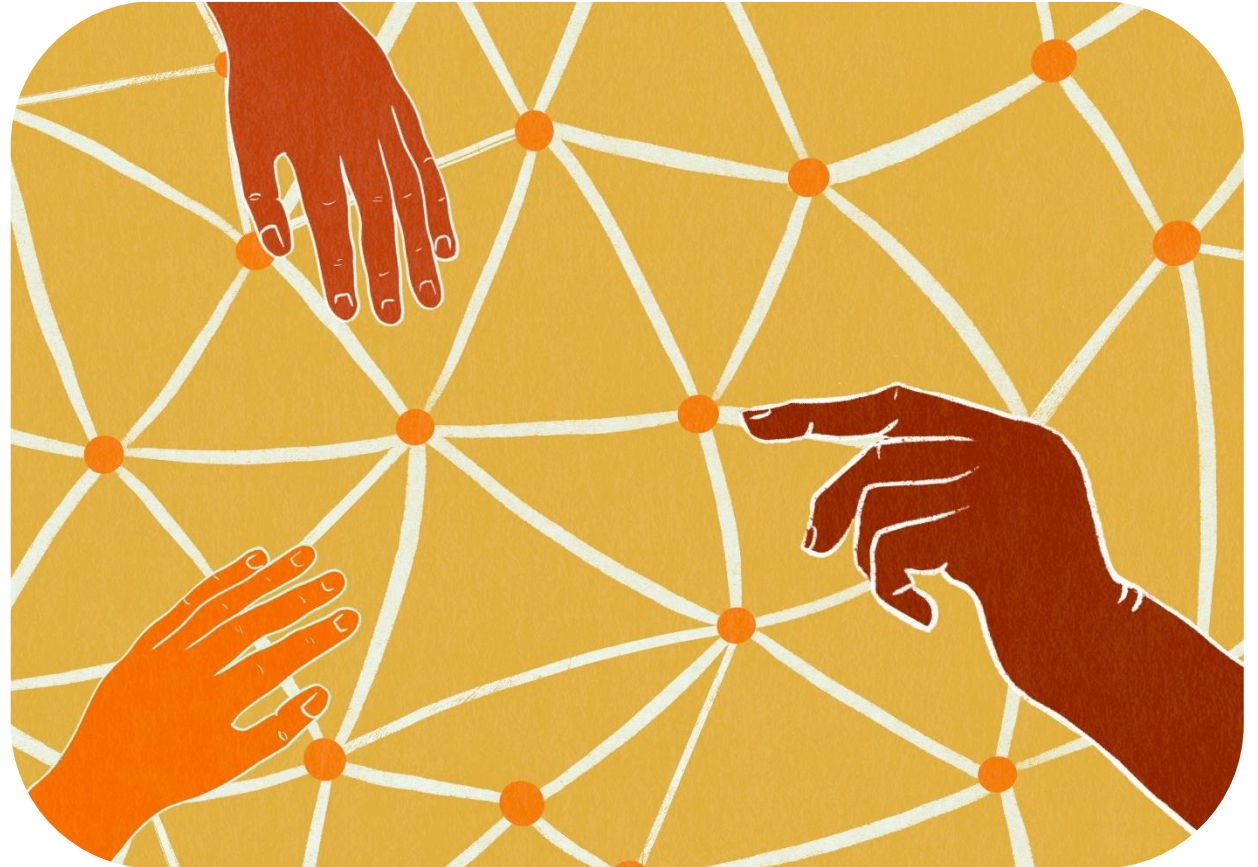
Implementing the phonics
checks

START COURSE



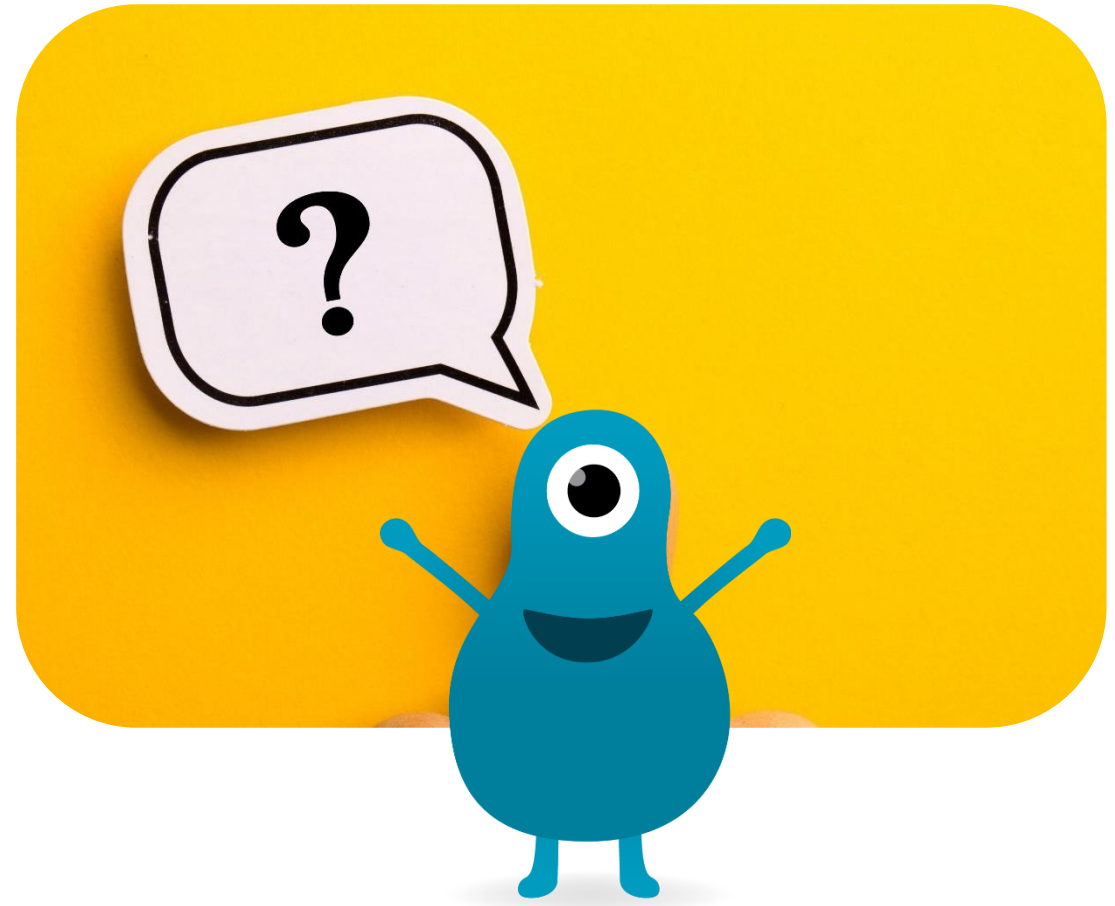
Implementation Support

Curriculum Advisory Service



Implementation Support

Email help desk
phonics.check@education.govt.nz



Thank you!





We **shape** an **education** system that delivers
equitable and **excellent outcomes**

He mea **tārai** e mātou te **mātauranga**
kia **rangatira** ai, kia **mana taurite** ai ōna **huanga**

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**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
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