

## Phonics advice for Year 1 teachers

- Although phonics is key to developing literacy skills, research tells us the systematic approach to phonics works best alongside an attention to comprehension of texts, reading for pleasure and an emphasis on developing strong speaking and listening skills.
- Language and literacy are inextricably linked – good talkers are often good readers and good readers have richer language.
- Good practice includes children being actively and fully engaged in developing **phonological awareness** skills, within a broad and **language-rich curriculum**, for example, explaining and defining words when reading to build vocabulary, exploiting the power of play, story, songs, rhymes and drama to familiarise children with letters, words and sounds.
- A focus on language and vocabulary is fundamental and can be achieved through opportunities for **children to talk with adults and each other** about their experiences and feelings in ways which enlarged their vocabulary and stimulated their interest in reading.
- Many children with SEN and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) will struggle with the phonics test. There is a range of ways in which these children can be supported to access the phonics test.
- With careful interpretation, the phonics test could provide information that would support access to phonics and literacy in the wider sense.
- Knowing children’s speech and language levels will support you in understanding their ability to access phonics and wider literacy. Improve your awareness of the ‘ages and stages’ of children’s speech and language by using a free guide like ***Universally Speaking***, produced by The Communication Trust and Pearson Assessment, available at [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources)

## Supporting children with SEN / SLCN to access the phonics test – general points

- Minimise background noise and visual distractions
- Deliver the test in short sections if necessary
- Make the test situation as relaxed as possible
- An adult familiar to the child should administer the test
- Give extended time for children to process what they hear and to formulate their response
- Give instructions in short, simple sentences using vocabulary and concepts you know the child understands
- Accompany instructions with gestures or any sign or symbol system the child uses
- Check whether speech sounds the child ‘fails’ to say during the test are sounds he or she has difficulty with in their spontaneous speech

Detailed information on different types of SLCN/SEN has been produced to guide teachers through access and interpretation of the phonics test as well as giving more general information around literacy for children with SLCN/SEN.

For more information download *Communicating Phonics*. This guide has been produced by The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. The guide is available at [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/phonics](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/phonics)