



Department  
for Education

# **Phonics screening check 2018**

**Technical specification, version 1.1**

**March 2018**

# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction                                     | 4  |
| 1.1. Audience and purpose                           | 4  |
| 1.2. Scope  | 4  |
| 1.3. Changes for 2018                               | 5  |
| 1.4. Coverage and timings                           | 5  |
| 2. Structure and guidance                           | 6  |
| 2.1. Outline data content                           | 6  |
| 2.2. Process  | 6  |
| 2.3. Additional local authority software facilities | 9  |
| 2.4. Reports for schools and parents                | 10 |
| 3. Data return formats                              | 11 |
| 3.1. Special notes for XML returns                  | 11 |
| 3.2. Example file structure for XML returns         | 12 |
| 4. Data validation rules                            | 14 |
| 4.1. Header validation                              | 15 |
| 4.2. Establishment level validation                 | 15 |
| 4.3. Pupil level validation                         | 16 |
| 5. Resubmission guidance                            | 20 |
| 6. Valid values                                     | 21 |
| 6.1. Local authority codes                          | 21 |
| 6.2. Establishment types                            | 21 |

## Version history

| Version | Change history   | Author / date             |
|---------|--|---------------------------|
| 1.0     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dates rolled forward</li><li>• Links updated</li></ul>   | Kirsty Knox<br>19/12/2017 |
| 1.1     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update of academy process for submission to include non-geographical LA (as per the ARA) - <a href="#">2.2.3</a></li></ul> | Kirsty Knox<br>19/03/2018 |

# 1. Introduction

This specification covers the return of end of the phonics screening check to the Department for Education. These returns will be made using the department’s COLLECT system, in XML format. It should be read in conjunction with the current [Common Basic Dataset](#) definitions and [2018 assessment components](#).

## 1.1. Audience and purpose

This specification describes the phonics screening check data collection 2018. It will enable schools, academies (including free schools), local authorities, and software suppliers working on their behalf, to prepare the necessary data and processes so that information on all phonics screening checks carried out in 2018 can be returned to the department.

The following legislation underpins the provision and publication of this information:

- [the Education Act 1996 s29\(3\)](#)
- [the Education \(School Performance Information\)\(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [regulations 5 and 8 School Information \(England\) Regulations 2008](#)

## 1.2. Scope

This data collection process covers all maintained schools and academies (including free schools) in England, submissions are processed through a local authority who in turn will provide data on all phonics screening checks carried out in 2018. The data consists of pupil-level information for all year 1 pupils and those pupils in year 2 who did not meet the expected level in year 1.

The following diagram outlines the overall scope of the collection:

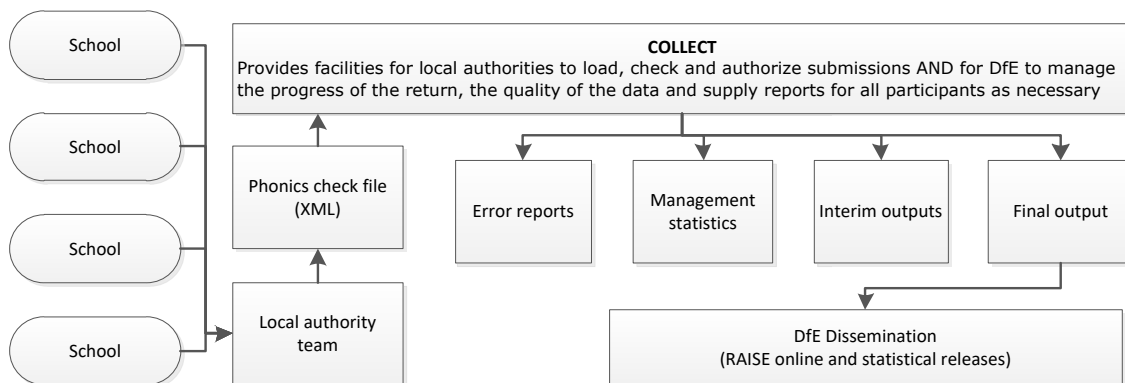


Figure 1: High-level data collection process

### **1.3. Changes for 2018**

Changes for the 2018 phonics screening collection technical specification are:

- roll-over of dates
- updating of links

### **1.4. Coverage and timings**

Maintained schools (including academies and free schools) will capture the data specified for the 2018 phonics screening check. The data will then be collected via department's COLLECT system between 11 June and 27 July 2018. Data received after 27 July 2018 will not be included in the provisional statistics. There will be a limited opportunity for LAs to submit late and/or corrected results but any late results will only feed into the National Pupil Database.

## 2. Structure and guidance

### 2.1. Outline data content

Each return from a local authority will consist of a header and one or more school modules (only one school per return as shown in Figure 2), each of which will contain a pupil module with a number of pupil records. Each pupil record will include identifiers plus the mark and outcome achieved in the phonics screening check.

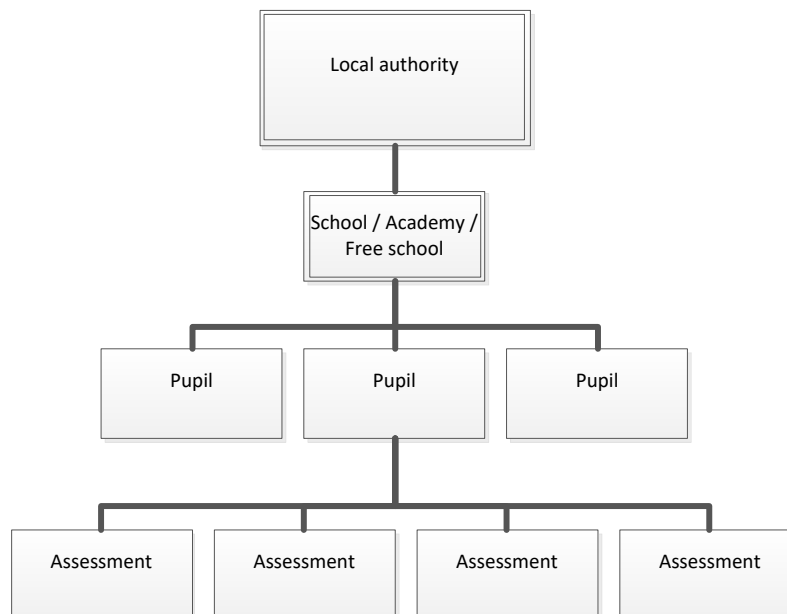


Figure 1: outline structure of data

### 2.2. Process

The process will involve an annual screening check where teachers will assess students on their phonics decoding ability. Students will be asked to read out 40 items with a teacher. These items will be a mix of real words and pseudo-words. The teacher will then score each item (1 mark for a correct answer) and total the scores to make up the mark for the screening check. The threshold mark will be made available to schools after the end of the test window on Monday 25 June on GOV.UK. Schools are only required to submit the mark (or outcome where the pupil has not taken the test) to local authorities and local authorities will be required to submit this to the Department. The Department will apply the threshold after the data has been submitted to local authorities.

Local authorities will monitor 10% of the schools in their area. Monitoring visits will take place before the check (to check materials are being held securely), and during the time of the check to ensure the administration process is being followed and observe some screening checks taking place. If necessary, local authorities can also carry out monitoring visits immediately after the check week. Local authorities have been informed

of the general arrangements, and the funding being provided for this work. A guidance document will be sent out for monitors to local authorities in the spring term of 2018.

### **2.2.1. Entry of marks and outcomes into school MIS**

Data will be gathered in the collection for all year 1 pupils and those in year 2 who did not meet the expected level in year 1. In addition to the basic pupil identifiers (as collected in other collections), there will be 2 data items for each pupil.

The two data items 'NC Year Group Actual' and 'Phonics Mark' are the required components of the 'Phonics Screening Check' data collection.

The 'Phonics Outcome' field is to be populated with the following values only where a pupil has not taken the test:

A – Absent

Q – Maladministration

D – Disapplied

L – Left

Outcomes Wa and Wt are not required. However, if these are included in a file returned to the department the file will be accepted and the Phonics Outcome field removed.

### **2.2.2. MIS data entry checks**

The school MIS software should check that a valid entry has been made in the fields for the phonics screening check where appropriate. Any invalid or missing entries will be reported to the school when the data is entered and / or when the CTF is to be created.

### **2.2.3. Creation of CTF phonics file for transmission to local authority**

Maintained schools must submit the results of the phonics screening check to their local authority.

Academies (including free schools) must have a written agreement in place with their chosen LA for monitoring the phonics screening check. They should inform STA of their choice by Friday 15 December. This can be their closest geographical LA or another of their choosing. If a school became an academy after 1 September 2017, they will be part of their geographical LA's arrangements for monitoring the 2018 phonics screening check.

This will normally be via a CTF and when using this route, the name of the CTF created by schools will be:

xxxnnnn\_PHO\_xxxLLLL\_yyy.XML where xxx represents the local authority number, nnnn is the school number and yyy is an incremented version number starting at 001.

#### **2.2.4. Loading phonics results into the local authorities central management system**

- i) Where any pupil-identifying or contextual data are already present in the local authority central database there should be a prompt to ask if the existing data should be overwritten by the CTF or CSV import.
- ii) Where a CTF contains any pupil's previous assessment data (earlier year's foundation stage profile result), there should be a prompt to ask if the existing assessment data should be overwritten.
- iii) The local authority should also have facilities:
  - to remove and to add pupils;
  - to amend a pupil's identifying data or result levels that have been loaded, and for the new data to be re-validated in accordance with the rules in sections 4.1 to 4.3.
  - to re-import a corrected CTF with an option for the operator to either replace all existing data or add as new data, and be validated in accordance with the rules in sections 4.1 to 4.3.

#### **2.2.5. Creation of individual pupil results XML export file by the local authority for transmission to the DfE**

- i) On completion of the actions at 2.2.4, the software should allow the local authority to create separate XML files of individual school and pupil data, as specified in the example XML file at section 3.2, even if still containing errors, for loading into the department's data collection system (COLLECT). Where both phonics outcome and phonics mark are missing therefore no assessment result level is reported for a subject, all assessment components for that subject should be excluded from the XML file. The XML file will be validated in accordance with the rules in sections 4.1 to 4.3. Any data failing the validation checks will be reported using the error codes and messages specified. In addition to local authority and school number, the file will contain the following data items for each pupil:
  - UPN
  - pupil surname
  - pupil forename
  - DoB
  - gender
  - national curriculum year group



- phonics check result - mark as recorded
- phonics check result – outcome, if no marks are recorded. Outcome can be returned where a mark has been recorded but will be stripped out by COLLECT

**Please note** – An approved ‘SoftwareCode’ will not be issued. COLLECT will use the ‘SoftwareCode’ tag value specified by suppliers for this purpose.

- ii) The convention for naming the XML file is: xxxLLLL\_PHO\_xxxDfE\_yyy.XML where xxx represents the local authority number and yyy is an incremented version number starting at 001.
- The local authority should be provided with options to include in the export XML:
    - all schools’ files even if these contain errors or have previously been exported (- the software should inform the operator if a school is in error or has previously been exported)
    - selected files (that’s is, a single school or multiple schools), even if these contain errors or have previously been exported (the software should inform the operator if a school is in error or has previously been exported)

**Please note** – Whichever option above is chosen, all individual pupil results within the school are to be exported. There must be one file per school.

### 2.2.6. Loading phonics results into the local authorities central management system

In addition, the software should allow the local authority to load into its central database a CSV file created by schools from a phonics Excel spreadsheet (to be supplied to local authorities by the department for distribution if necessary) with the filename ‘Phonics spreadsheet v1.0’. A copy of the spreadsheet can be provided when available, if required.

## 2.3. Additional local authority software facilities

The software should provide the following additional facilities:

- i) to allow the local authority to produce a list of schools to check that all expected schools’ returns have been processed
- ii) to allow the local authority to produce a report for each school or for all schools to show total number of pupils included in each school’s CTF submission. It could also include number of boys and girls as an additional check
- iii) to allow the local authority to transmit results in batches without the need to

resubmit results already transmitted

## **2.4. Reports for schools and parents**

Schools will be expected to report to parents or persons with parental responsibility, the phonics screening check outcomes for their children. Further information is given in the key stage 1 assessment and reporting arrangements [document](#).

### 3. Data return formats

A submission file from a local authority will be provided in a XML file structure as described in 3.2. Where an optional item is not included then the associated tag will also be omitted. Where a mandatory item is omitted then an error will be generated.

#### 3.1. Special notes for XML returns

The standard XML entity references should be used for the following special characters:

| Character                     | Entity reference |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Ampersand (&)                 | &amp;            |
| Left angle bracket (<)        | &lt;             |
| Right angle bracket (>)       | &gt;             |
| Single quote / apostrophe (') | &apos;           |
| Double quotes (“              | &quot;           |

For special characters such as é use a character reference such as &#233; This produces a generic XML file which can be viewed as such in a suitable browser. Details of all such characters are found within the XML standard documentation; see for example <http://www.w3.org/TR/xml/>, section 2.2.

## 3.2. Example file structure for XML returns

| CBDS Ref | XML Format Layout                              | Notes   |
|----------|--|---|
|          | <?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>         |   |
|          | <PhonicsFile>                                  |   |
|          | <Header>                                       |   |
| 800001   | <Collection>Phonics Transfer File</Collection> | Fixed value of "Phonics Transfer File"  |
| 800010   | <DateTime>2018-06-24T15:30:47</DateTime>       |   |
| 800003   | <Year>2018</Year>                              | Fixed value of '2018'   |
| 200001   | <LEA>555</LEA>                                 | Valid values listed in section 6.   |
| 800006   | <SoftwareCode>KEYPAS</SoftwareCode>            | Suppliers decide on code used by their system   |
|          | </Header>                                      |   |
|          | <School>                                       |   |
| 200636   | <Estab>1234</Estab>                            | Valid values listed in section 6.   |
|          | <Pupils>                                       |   |
|          | <Pupil>  | A repeatable group of 1 or more   |
| 100001   | <UPN>A123456789012</UPN>                       |   |
| 100003   | <Surname>SURNAME 1</Surname>                   |   |
| 100004   | <Forename>FORENAME 1</Forename>                |   |
| 100007   | <DOB>2012-02-02</DOB>                          |   |
| 100008   | <Gender>M</Gender>                             |   |
| 100583   | <NCyearActual>1</NCyearActual>                 | NCyearActual must be included and would be expected to be 1 or 2  |
|          | <Assessments>                                  |   |
|          | <Assessment>                                   |   |
| 100466   | <Subject>PHO</Subject>                         | <Assessment> : A repeatable group of 1 or more depending on the combination of <Subject>, <Method>, <Component> and <ResultQualifier> required. See A_Comp 2018.<br>Where a phonics mark is supplied there is no requirement for result to be returned and the xml structure should look as shown. Where no mark is to be returned the result can be returned as <Result>A</Result>. Results of Wa or Wt can be returned but will be stripped out by COLLECT. |
| 100273   | <Method>TT</Method>                            |   |
| 100274   | <Component>CHK</Component>                     |   |
| 100605   | <ResultQualifier>NY</ResultQualifier>          |   |
| 100276   | <Result/>                                      |   |
|          | </Assessment>                                  |   |

| <b>CBDS Ref</b> | <b>XML Format Layout</b>              | <b>Notes</b>   |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--|
|                 | <Assessment>                          | <Assessment> : A repeatable group of 1 or more depending on the combination of <Subject>, <Method>, <Component> and <ResultQualifier> required. See A_Comp 2018. |
| 100466          | <Subject>PHO</Subject>                |  |
| 100273          | <Method>TT</Method>                   |  |
| 100274          | <Component>CHK</Component>            |  |
| 100605          | <ResultQualifier>NM</ResultQualifier> |  |
| 100276          | <Result>39</Result>                   |  |
|                 | </Assessment>                         |  |
|                 | </Assessments>                        |  |
|                 | </Pupil>                              |  |
|                 | </Pupils>                             |  |
|                 | </School>                             |  |
|                 | </PhonicsFile>                        |  |
|                 |                                       |  |
|                 |                                       |  |

## 4. Data validation rules

This section specifies validation rules that are applied to the data by Department for Education, using COLLECT. They must also be applied, as far as possible, by local authorities prior to loading the data onto the COLLECT system and any issues resolved. Those data items included in the specification but not appearing in the validation rules - that is, those not shown in the validation rules as "must be present" - must be supplied where available (for example, child's unique pupil number). The rules also show which validations are errors and which ones are queries. An error is a failed validation check that must be corrected. A query is one which must be investigated, and potentially corrected, as it identifies data that would usually be invalid.

Syntax:

- Validation checks are expressed as conditions that must be true (errors) or that should usually be true (queries). The Error Message shows what is displayed if the condition is not met.
- data items are indicated using the XML tag with the common basic data set number in parentheses, for example <UPN>
- data groups are indicated using the XML tag only, for example <Assessments>
- single dates or date ranges are sometimes defined in relation to <ReferenceDate>, which is from the XML Header.

## 4.1. Header validation

| Seq Number | Error/ Query | Validation Check   | Error Message  |
|------------|--------------|--|--|
| 001        | Error        | <Collection> must be present with a value of "Phonics Transfer File" | Document Name missing or invalid. The file must be recreated |
| 101        | Error        | <SoftwareCode> must be present                                       | Software Code is missing                                     |
| 110        | Error        | <Year> must be present and = 2018                                    | Year is missing or invalid                                   |

## 4.2. Establishment level validation

| Seq Number | Error/ Query | Validation Check                                 | Error Message                             |
|------------|--------------|--|---|
| 301        | Error        | <LEA> must be provided and must be a valid value | Local Authority number missing or invalid |
| 302        | Error        | <Estab> must be present with a valid value       | Establishment No is missing               |

### 4.3. Pupil level validation

| Seq Number               | Error/Query | Validation Check                               | Error Message   |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|---|
| <b>Pupil Identifiers</b> |             |  |   |
| 1600                     | Error       | <DOB> must be present and in a valid format    | Pupil's date of birth is missing or in an invalid format. Format should be CCYY – MM - DD |
| 1601Q                    | Query       | <DOB> should be between 1/9/2010 and 31/8/2012 | Pupil's Date of Birth is outside expected date range                                      |
| 1610                     | Error       | <Gender> must be present and a valid value     | Pupil Gender missing or invalid   |
| 1500                     | Error       | <UPN> (Unique Pupil Number) must be present    | UPN is missing  |



| Seq Number | Error/ Query | Validation Check   | Error Message   |
|------------|--------------|--|---|
| 1510       | Error        | <p>If UPN is present then &lt;UPN&gt; must contain the correct check letter</p> <p>To calculate the check letter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Multiply the individual digits by their weights as follows:<br/>digit 2 by weight 2; digit 3 by weight 3; digit 4 by weight 4; digit 5 by weight 5; digit 6 by weight 6; digit 7 by weight 7; digit 8 by weight 8; digit 9 by weight 9; digit 10 by weight 10; digit 11 by weight 11; digit 12 by weight 12; digit 13 by weight 13.</li> <li>2. Sum the individual results, divide the total by 23, and take the remainder.</li> <li>3. Calculate the check letter from the result as follows:<br/>0 = A; 1 = B; 2 = C; 3 = D; 4 = E; 5 = F; 6 = G; 7 = H; 8 = J; 9 = K; 10 = L; 11 = M; 12 = N; 13 = P; 14 = Q; 15 = R; 16 = T; 17 = U; 18 = V; 19 = W; 20 = X; 21 = Y; 22 = Z.</li> </ol> <p>For calculating the check letter (see above) any alphabetical character at digit 13 is accorded the same numerical value as listed in paragraph 3 above, A=0, B=1, C=2 etc.</p> | UPN invalid (wrong check letter at character 1)       |
| 1520       | Error        | Each pupil <UPN> must be unique across all pupils in the Estab   | More than one pupil record with the same UPN          |
| 1530       | Error        | If <UPN> is present Characters 2-4 of <UPN> must be a valid post April 1999 LA code or a recognised "pseudo LA" code (001-005, 201-213, 301-320, 330-336, 340-344, 350-359, 370-373, 380-384, 390-394, 420, 660-681, 701-708, 800-803, 805-808, 810-813, 815, 816, 820-823, 825, 826, 830, 831, 835-837, 840, 841, 845, 846, 850-852, 855-857, 860, 861, 865-896, 908, 909, 916, 919, 921, 925, 926, 928, 929, 931, 933, 935-38)   | UPN invalid (characters 2-4 not a recognised LA code) |
| 1540       | Error        | If <UPN> is present Characters 5-12 of <UPN> must be numeric   | UPN invalid (characters 5-12 not all numeric)         |

| Seq Number | Error/ Query | Validation Check   | Error Message   |
|------------|--------------|--|---|
| 1550       | Error        | If <UPN> is present Characters 13 of <UPN> must be numeric or A-Z omitting I, O and S  | UPN invalid (character 13 not a recognised value)   |
| 1580       | Error        | <Surname> must be present  | Pupil with surname missing  |
| 1590       | Error        | <Forename> must be present   | Pupil with forename missing   |
| 113        | Error        | Each <Assessment> should only appear once for each <Pupil> for the same combination of <Subject><Component><Method><ResultQualifier>   | Assessments are duplicated  |
| 124        | Error        | For each pupil there must be one and only one instance where <Subject>=PHO and <Component>=CHK and <Method> =TT and <ResultQualifier>=NY   | There are multiple assessments where the Subject, Component, Method and Result Qualifier combinations are the same. |
| 125        | Error        | If there is no assessment where <ResultQualifier>=NM and <Result>= 0 - 40 then there must be an assessment where <Subject>=PHO, <Component>=CHK <ResultQualifier>=NY and <Result> is one of A, Q, D, or L for the same pupil | The outcome result is invalid and should be one of A, Q, D, or L  |
| 126        | Error        | For each pupil there must be no more than one instance where <Subject>=PHO and <Component>=CHK and <Method> =TT and <ResultQualifier>=NM   | There are multiple assessments where the Subject, Component, Method and Result Qualifier combinations are the same. |
| 127        | Error        | If <Subject>=PHO, <Component>=CHK and <ResultQualifier>=NM then <Result> must be an integer in the range 0 – 40 inclusive  | The outcome result is invalid and must be in the range 0 to 40  |
| 129        | Error        | If <ResultQualifier>=NM and its result is present AND there is a record for the same pupil where <ResultQualifier>=NY then <Result> must not be A,Q,D or L   | Phonics outcome and mark invalid  |
| 130        | Error        | Each <Assessment> must contain <Subject>=PHO   | There is an unexpected entry in the Subject container   |

| Seq Number | Error/ Query | Validation Check  | Error Message  |
|------------|--------------|---|--|
| 131        | Error        | Each <Assessment> must contain <Component>=CHK  | There is an unexpected entry in the Component container            |
| 132        | Error        | Each <Assessment> must contain <Method>=TT  | There is an unexpected entry in the Method container               |
| 133        | Error        | For each <Pupil> record at least one <Assessment> node must be included.  | No assessment data is included for this pupil                      |
| 134Q       | Query        | Number of <Assessment> nodes where <Result> equals A, divided by total number of <Pupil> nodes, should not be greater than 0.1. | Please check: proportion of absent pupils is above 10%             |
| 136Q       | Query        | There should be no <Assessment> nodes where <Result> equals Q.  | Please check: One or more records marked as Q (maladministration). |
| 139        | Error        | In each <Pupil> record <NCyearActual > must be present  | National Curriculum year group not provided                        |
| 141        | Error        | <NCyearActual > must be equal to '1' or '2'   | National Curriculum year group must be either '1' or '2'.          |

## 5. Resubmission guidance

When resubmissions are required, the Serial No in the header **must** be incremented by the provider's software. We have also assumed that the whole file will be resubmitted. Note that a resubmission will **delete and replace all the data** contained in the previous submission.

## 6. Valid values

Valid item values must be in the list or range specified in CBDS, the [Common Basic Data Set](#).

### 6.1. Local authority codes

Local authority codes for this collection only covers ENGLAND local authorities.

Coverage also excludes local authority codes:

- 001, 003, 167
- codes starting with 6 and 7 except 702 (MoD schools, which is valid)
- XXX, MMM and NA

### 6.2. Establishment types

These are the following;

- maintained schools with a year 1 or year 2 cohort
- academies (including free schools)
- service children's education schools



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