



# Wombwell Park Street Primary School

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Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019

## **RE: Multiplication Tables Check**

Dear Parent/Carer,

You may have heard announcements about the Multiplication Tables Check coming in for Year 4 children.

Here is what you need to know:

1. We love maths. It is an awesome subject to learn and to teach.
2. Maths is a big subject and we appreciate there is more to it than times tables and there is more to times tables than learning them off by heart. However, a lot of the rich, interesting maths is all about the multiplicative relationships and these are hard to fully grasp without fluent recall of the tables. For that reason, learning the tables is fundamental – they are a key facilitator to the maths that sits on top. We have always believed that.
3. We are not worried about the checks and this was not a surprise. In fact, we are in favour of the checks because it is always good to sharpen practice across the education sector and this is a useful lever to get schools to do that. Maths is a strong subject at Park Street, we are already in a good place with learning the tables and the expectations are in line with the National Curriculum so it is business as usual for us.
4. The checks are compulsory from 2020 so our current Year 4's will be the first cohort to do them.
5. The checks will be completed at some point during the year, most likely within a three-week-long window towards the end of the year.
6. The results of the test are not published publicly, they are not going to end up on a league table and they are nothing to worry about. There is no pass or fail; there is just a score out of 25 marks (or 20). They are not to be used to compare children; they are for us to reflect on so that we make the most of our provision. We are actually looking forward to seeing how well we do.
7. The checks consist of 25 questions (possibly only 20, depending on upcoming government trials). The questions will only be multiplication and they will go up to  $12 \times 12$ .
8. The checks are all about remembering the multiplication facts. That does not mean we will forget all about the concepts, patterns, structures and relationships in multiplication. We are going to be learning those too, partly because they go hand in hand with excellent recall.
9. There are concerns shared in the public domain that this is "yet another test". The government has been careful to call it a "check" and that is important. It signals their intention to keep it low-stakes and



we should remember that the data could prove useful to us.

10. Given that the questions are relatively simple, age appropriate and the length of the check, which is carried out on a computer, is under 5 minutes, we do not think the checks are onerous.
11. Tests in themselves do not cause anxiety. It is the perceived cost of not doing well. For that reason, we will actively downplay the checks with the pupils. The only thing that will stress the children is if we repeatedly refer to the checks in class or at home, even casually in front of them when they are not supposed to be listening.
12. So, we will not ever be saying "Remember you've got the multiplication checks next year." Or, "We must practice because you've got the checks coming up." We just will not mention them. Please be supportive of that and refrain from referring to the checks at home too.
13. As far as they are concerned, when it comes to the day itself, they are going to have the computers or tablets out so it will just seem like the teachers have chosen to do something slightly different that day.
14. You may notice us taking even more initiative when it comes to learning the tables with more options for home learning. If you are practising with your child, remember you are practising for the benefit of their wider maths education, not for them to get a high score on the tests. So please enjoy the opportunity to work with your child and remember to hold back on comments about the checks.
15. Please be supportive of our approach in parent-parent communication channels. It is important that we get behind the checks for the benefit of all our children.

If you would like any further information in relation to the multiplication tables check or if you would like ideas for supporting your child at home please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your continued support,

Mr A Fidment and Miss L Garratt

KS1 and KS2 Maths Leads