

Thursday 21st March 2019

Dear Parent/ Carer,

You may have heard announcements about the Multiplication Tables Check for year 4 children next academic year. Here is what you need to know:

1. We love maths! It is an awesome subject to learn and to teach.
2. Maths covers a vast number of subjects and we appreciate there is more to it than just learning times tables 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've always believed that.
3. The checks will not be compulsory until 2020 so current year 3's will be the first cohort to do them when they're in year 4.
4. They will be done at some point during the year, most likely within a three-week-long window towards the end of the year.
5. 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, 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.
6. The checks consist of 25 questions (possibly only 20, depending on government trials later this year). The questions will only be multiplication and they will go up to 12×12 . There is nothing novel about the questions and they do not require problem solving so there is nothing to trip them up.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 today.
12. 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.

13. 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.

Your child has been given a Rock Star Times Tables login. We recommend you take advantage of this and access the wonderful opportunities of this programme.

If you have a question or want to offer your thoughts on any of the above, please bring them to your child's teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Lydia Pavlou

Assistant Headteacher