



BARROW VC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dear Parent

4th April, 2019

You may have heard announcements about the Multiplication Tables Check coming in for year 4 children. Here's what you need to know:

1. Maths is a big subject and we appreciate there's more to it than times tables and there's 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.
2. The checks will not be compulsory until 2020 so current year 3s will be the first cohort to do them officially when they're in year 4. However we have been chosen as a trial school for the current year 4s to do the checks in 2019. These will be carried out during June.
3. The results of the test are not published publicly, they're not going to end up on a league table and they're not to worry about. There's no pass or fail, there's just a score out of 25 marks. They're not to be used to compare children, they're for *us* to reflect on so that we make the most of our provision. We're actually looking forward to seeing how well we do.
4. The checks consist of 25 questions which will go up to 12×12 . The children will have 5 seconds to answer each question. They don't require problem solving so there's nothing to trip them up. The checks are all about remembering the multiplication facts. That doesn't mean we'll forget all about the concepts, patterns, structures and relationships in multiplication. We're going to be learning those too because they go hand in hand with excellent recall.
5. 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's important. 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 don't think the checks are onerous.
6. Tests in themselves don't cause anxiety. It's the perceived cost of not doing well. For that reason, we will actively downplay the checks with the pupils.
7. 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're 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.

This aside, at Barrow we believe times tables are a fundamental life skill and all children need to secure them early in KS2 to help with all areas of maths.

In order to support your child in learning their times tables we will be using Times Tables Rockstars. This is a fun and challenging online programme that helps students to master the facts progressively, whilst developing speed and accuracy. Children from Y2-Y6 will be coming home with a username and password this week to allow them to access this website.

Learners play in the Garage or the Arena and begin with the first set of questions. When they can answer at a rate of 20 per minute the next set of questions is introduced. As learners progress, missing number questions and division facts are also brought in. The process repeats - all the while giving plenty of opportunity to revisit prior learning, by interleaving earlier tables and giving due weight to the facts we know learners struggle with the most - until your learner has become a Rock Star at all the tables!

The information for how to play the games and check on your child's progress is on the school website.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Cox

Maths Subject Leader