

Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check

Dear parents/carers,

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

1. We love maths. It's an awesome subject to learn and to teach.
2. 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. We've always believed that.
3. We're not worried about the checks and this wasn't a surprise. In fact, we're in favour of the checks because it's always good to sharpen practice across the education sector and this is a useful lever to get schools to do that. We're already in a good place with learning the tables and the expectations are in line with the National Curriculum so it's business as usual for us.
4. The checks became compulsory in 2020.
5. They will be done within a three-week-long window starting 8 June.
6. 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 be worried 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.
7. The checks consist of 25 questions. The questions will only be multiplication and they will go up to 12×12 . There's nothing novel about the questions and they don't require problem solving so there isn't anything to trip them up.
8. 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, 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 it 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 no more than 2½ minutes, we don't think the checks are onerous.
11. 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 children. 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're not supposed to be listening.
12. We will not ever be saying, "remember you've got the multiplication checks coming up." Or, "we must practice because you've got the checks this year." We just won't mention them. Please be supportive of this and refrain from referring to the checks at home.
13. As far as the children are concerned, when it comes to the day itself, they're going to have the computers or tablets out so it will just seem like the teachers have chosen to do something slightly different today.

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'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.
15. Please be supportive of our approach in parent-parent communication channels. It's important that we get behind the checks for the benefit of all our children.

Loughton School have subscribed to Times Tables Rock Stars as a fun, competitive and exciting way to engage children with their multiplication knowledge. You will see exciting battles amongst classes, teachers and each other coming out as homework over the next term. To gain points and coins on TT Rockstars, the focus is on accuracy and beating your own scores, therefore it is accessible to all of the children. Each child should have a login but you can always request another one from their class teacher.

To further help your child at home, there is a recommended schedule to follow below on Times Table Rockstars:

February - 10 minutes a week in the Garage. If they're on Auto, they should aim to have passed level 308 by the end of the month. Focusing on the 7s and 8s.

March - 15 minutes a week in Garage. If they're on Auto, they should aim to have passed level 365 by the end of the month. Focusing on the 9s.

April - 15 minutes a week in Garage. If they're on Auto, they should aim to have passed level 420 by the end of the month. Focusing on the 11s and 12s.

May - 10 minutes a week in Studio and 5 minutes a week in Soundcheck, which is our simulator for the MTC.

The most important element is that our ethos will always remain around your child, they can only try their best on the check and this will always be enough.

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,

Charlie McNeaney

Academic Champion and maths lead