



**Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP**  
Minister of State for School Standards

Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Mr John Talbot  
Smith's Wood Primary Academy  
Burton's Way  
Birmingham  
B36 0SZ

8 November 2018

Dear Mr Talbot

I would like to congratulate you, your staff and your pupils on your school's outstanding achievement in the 2018 phonics screening check.

Achieving early fluency in decoding is a necessary first step in acquiring the key skill of reading.

There is a significant body of evidence that demonstrates that systematic phonics is the most effective method for teaching early reading. We want to ensure that every child develops a firm grasp of phonics, which is why I was delighted to see your results. With 97 per cent of pupils at Smith's Wood Primary Academy reaching or exceeding the pass mark in the check, your school is in the top 6 per cent of all primary schools in the country.

This year's figures show that 89 per cent of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the check go on to achieve at least the expected standard in key stage 1 reading teacher assessment, which underlines the importance of developing the ability to decode words effectively at an early age.

Your success in teaching phonics and early reading so effectively means your pupils are developing a firm foundation in reading, from which they can become increasingly fluent and develop a lifelong love of reading.

Thank you for your work in this vital area of a child's early education and congratulations again to you and your staff for all you have achieved.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,