



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

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Mrs Nichola Brannen  
Whalton Church of England Aided Primary School  
Whalton  
Morpeth  
NE61 3XH

23 October 2017

Dear Mrs Brannen,

I would like to congratulate you, your staff and your pupils on your school's outstanding achievement in the 2017 phonics screening check.

Early fluency in decoding is a necessary first step in acquiring the key skill of reading. There is a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that systematic phonics is the most effective method for teaching children to read. We want to ensure that every child develops a firm grasp of phonics, which is why I was delighted to see your results. With 100 per cent of pupils at Whalton Church of England Aided Primary School reaching or exceeding the pass mark in the check, your school is in the top 3 per cent of all primary schools in the country.

Your success in teaching phonics 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Nick Gibb'.