

2018 Phonics Screening Check

The Phonics Screening Check was introduced for year 1 students across the South Australian public education system for the first time in 2018. The check is a short, simple assessment that helps teachers to measure how well students are learning to decode and blend letters into sounds – one of the building blocks for reading.

The Phonics Screening Check contains 40 words. Words at the beginning of the check are the simplest and then become increasingly complex. The Phonics Screening Check has also been made available to non-government schools. More information about the check can be found at <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/teaching/curriculum-and-teaching/numeracy-and-literacy/phonics-screening-check>.

By providing information about how year 1 students are learning phonics the department aims to:

- ensure that students who are struggling in learning to read are identified early
- support schools to teach and assess phonics in schools
- improve reading and literacy for students throughout their schooling
- ensure that parents and the wider community are confident about the teaching of reading in schools

Participation and training

The Phonics Screening Check was implemented between 6 and 31 August 2018 in every South Australian public school with year 1 students enrolled.

To support schools to undertake the Phonics Screening Check an additional 3 temporary relief teacher days for each year 1 teacher were made available. This teaching relief enabled teachers to attend face-to-face training sessions and gave them time to implement the check with students and respond to the results.

Over 1,900 teachers and school leaders attended the Phonics Screening Check face-to-face training.

In addition, after-school hours training was provided to approximately 200 reception and year 2 teachers and some school services officers to strengthen understanding about the 'Big 6' components of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, oral language, comprehension, fluency), the systematic teaching of phonics and the appropriate use of decodable readers.

Teachers were provided with a range of resources to ensure they were equipped to respond to the results of the check and design learning for students. These resources will be built on further in 2019 and professional learning and training for teachers will continue.

Student results

Schools undertook the Phonics Screening Check and entered data for more than 14,000 year 1 students enrolled across 432 schools. 13,817 Year 1 students actively participated in the check and 227 students were absent or exempted by the school principal.

Dr Jennifer Buckingham, Research Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies, defined the 'expected achievement' for students undertaking the check by mapping the items to the Australian Curriculum. Dr Buckingham found that by the end of year 1, students should be able to decode and read aloud 28 out of 40 words.

Across South Australian public schools, **5,951 year 1 students (43%) showed that they met the expected achievement** by correctly decoding 28 words or more out of 40.

The results show progress in learning phonics for different groups of students, as summarised in the box below.

Key findings from the 2018 Phonics Screening Check

- Forty-four per cent of females scored at or above the expected achievement score compared to 42% of males.
- In metropolitan schools 45% of students demonstrated the expected achievement compared to 36% from rural and regional schools.
- In schools serving advantaged communities, 55% of students demonstrated the expected achievement compared to only 18% in schools serving low socioeconomic communities.
- Forty-eight per cent of students who speak English as an additional language or dialect scored at or above the expected achievement score.
- Fourteen per cent of students with a verified disability met or exceeded the expected achievement score.
- 566 students (4%) did not answer any of the words correctly and a score of zero was recorded. Around one-third of these students had a verified disability.