

2019 Phonics Screening Check

The 2019 Phonics Screening Check results show statewide improvement in the ability of year 1 students to decode and blend letters into sounds.

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. More information about the check can be found at:

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/teaching/curriculum-and-teaching/literacy-and-numeracy/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

In 2019 the Phonics Screening Check was implemented between 5 and 30 August 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 teachers days for each year 1 teacher were again made available. This release time enables teachers to attend professional learning, implement the check with students and respond to the results.

Over 1,800 teachers and school leaders attended full-day differentiated Phonics Screening Check professional learning.

Teachers were provided with a range of resources to ensure they are equipped to respond to the results of the check and design learning for students. These resources were built on from 2018 and will continue to be enhanced in 2020.

Student results

Schools undertook the Phonics Screening Check and entered data for more than 14,000 year 1 students enrolled across 431 schools. 13,899 year 1 students actively participated in the check.

In 2018 the Department for Education engaged an external expert, Dr Jennifer Buckingham, Research Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies to provide advice regarding the expected achievement of year 1 students undertaking the check by mapping the items to the Australian Curriculum. Dr Buckingham advised that, according to analysis, it is reasonable to expect year 1 students to decode **28 items correctly out of the 40 items**



in the PSC. As this number was determined against the Australian Curriculum, it will only require updating in line with any changes to the curriculum.

Across South Australian public schools, 7,181 year 1 students (52%) showed that they met the expected achievement by correctly decoding 28 words or more out of 40. This is an improvement of nine percentage points from 2018 where 5,951 (43%) of students were able to correctly decode 28 words or more out of 40.

There was also a decrease in the number of students unable to decode any of the words in the Phonics Screening Check correctly. In 2019 this number was 432 students (3%) reduced from 566 students (4%) in 2018. In 2019 the data shows improvement in all student groups.

Key findings from the 2019 Phonics Screening Check

- Fifty-two of year 1 students scored at or above the expected achievement score. This is **an improvement of 9 percentage points** from 2018 to 2019.
- Fifty-three per cent of females scored at or above the expected achievement score compared to 50% of males.
- Twenty-four per cent of Aboriginal students scored at or above the expected achievement score. This is **an improvement of 3 percentage points** from 2018 to 2019.
- Twenty per cent of students with a verified disability scored at or above the expected achievement score. This is **an improvement of 6 percentage points** from 2018 to 2019.
- Fifty-four per cent of students identified as speaking English as an additional language or dialect scored at or above the expected achievement score. This is **an improvement of 6 percentage points** from 2018 to 2019.
- Fifty-four per cent of students from metropolitan schools scored at or above the expected achievement score compared to 46% from non-metropolitan schools. This is **an improvement of 9 percentage points** for students from metropolitan schools and **10 percentage points** for students from non-metropolitan schools from 2018 to 2019.
- In schools serving the most advantaged communities, 63% of students demonstrated the expected achievement compared to only 24% in schools serving the lowest socioeconomic communities. This is **an improvement of 8 percentage points** for the most advantaged communities and **6 percentage points** for the lowest socioeconomic communities.