



# National Year 1 Literacy and Numeracy Check (Year 1 check)

## Overview

In May 2016, the Australian Government released *Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes (QSQO)*, an evidence-based package of school reforms to improve learning outcomes for all Australian students.

A key proposal of QSQO, is to introduce a national Year 1 check of all children in the areas of reading, phonics and numeracy. This reform will ensure that students who are behind in their schooling are identified early and can receive the extra support they need.

While some states and territories already deliver their own assessments in the early years, Australia does not have a nationally consistent approach. Some students are missing out and this is evidenced by Australia's declining performance in significant national and international assessments. That is why the Australian Government is committed to implementing a nationally consistent check for all Year 1 students across Australia.

## What is the Year 1 check?

The Year 1 check will not be a confronting or stressful 'test' for six year olds. It will be a light touch way of assessing whether young students are picking up reading and number skills as quickly as they should and ensuring that, if they are not, they are better supported in the classroom.

The Year 1 check is not a NAPLAN style test. It will be similar to the style of current assessments done in classrooms every week.

## What is the purpose of the Year 1 check?

Good literacy and numeracy skills are the foundations on which a student's education is built. Evidence shows that effective literacy and numeracy instruction in the early years of schooling is critical to a student's academic performance in later years.

Australia's recent results in national and international assessments such as NAPLAN and PISA show that our education performance is at best plateauing and, at worst, declining. Further, the gap between our high achieving and struggling students is widening. This is why the Australian Government is committed to introducing the Year 1 check.

The purpose of the Year 1 check is to identify, as early as possible, those students experiencing difficulties in literacy and numeracy so that appropriate intervention strategies can be put in place before the achievement gap grows.

## Who was on the Expert Advisory Panel?

On 29 January 2017, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Education and Training, announced the establishment of an Expert Advisory Panel (the Panel) to advise the Government on how to best develop and implement a national Year 1 check.

The Panel was comprised of the following academic, health and education experts and classroom practitioners:

- Dr Jennifer Buckingham (Chair), Education Research Fellow , Centre for Independent Studies and Director of FIVE from FIVE Project;
- Ms Mandy Nayton OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Dyslexia SPELD Foundation, Western Australian President AUSPELD;
- Professor Pamela Snow, Head of the La Trobe Rural Health School;
- Mr Steven Capp, Principal, Bentleigh West Primary School in Victoria;
- Professor Geoff Prince, Director, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute ;
- Ms Allason McNamara, Mathematics Teacher at Trinity Grammar in Victoria and President, Australia Association of Mathematics Teachers.

## What did the Panel do?

In its report, the Panel has provided 25 recommendations around how national Year 1 checks in literacy and numeracy could be developed and implemented. This included advice on:

- recent national and international research of best practice in early years assessments covering reading, phonics and numeracy;
- literacy (including phonics) and numeracy assessments that are currently used in Australia and internationally in the early years and on-entry to school;
- recommendations on the implementation of a Year 1 check, including frequency, timing, prioritising of core skills assessed and reporting;
- options for staggered implementation of a national Year 1 check, including an initial pilot study that could be scaled up to a national assessment;
- recommendations about further reforms that may follow the implementation of a national Year 1 check such as specific teacher development programs to support the teaching of early years reading, phonics or numeracy.

The Panel's advice was informed by an online submissions process and specific consultation with key stakeholders and experts such as:

- teachers and relevant education experts;
- teacher employers; and
- key representative bodies of the education sector including principal and key subject professional associations.

## **How is the Government implementing the Year 1 Check?**

This is an important endeavour which cannot be rushed and must be introduced in a way that can deliver results for Australian students. While there is evidence of successful approaches implemented overseas, it will be important that the Year 1 check introduced in Australia reflects the needs of our students and of their parents and communities.

This is why the Australian Government appointed the Expert Advisory Panel to advise it on the development and implementation of the Year 1 check. The Panel has now provided their advice and recommendations to the Minister. The Minister will discuss the Panel's recommendations with his state and territory colleagues at Education Council.