Frequently Asked Questions – National Year 1 Literacy and Numeracy Check (Year 1 check)

1. Why do we need the Year 1 check?

Results from recent international and national assessments such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), show that our education performance is plateauing at best, and is declining in some areas. Further, the gap between our high achieving and struggling students is widening.

Evidence suggests that effective literacy and numeracy instruction in the early years of schooling is critical to students’ academic performance in later years. This is why the Australian Government is committed to introducing the Year 1 check.

At the national level, the first evidence of student progress in literacy and numeracy is through NAPLAN in Year 3. This is too late to provide crucial early years interventions to those students who need additional help.

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.

2. What will it look like?

The Year 1 check will be a relaxed and interactive class room based check of student’s reading, phonics and numeracy abilities. It will not be a formal, NAPLAN-style test. Rather, it will be appropriately designed to be a light touch way of assessing young students.

Literacy checks will likely involve identifying letters and sounds that make up words to show a child understands how language works. Numeracy checks will see children undertake simple tasks, such as counting and recognising shapes and numbers to demonstrate basic measurement knowledge. These are things that students should already be doing in the classroom every week. The Year 1 check will identify those students that might need extra support.
3. **How will it benefit students?**

The Year 1 check will ensure those students who might need extra assistance are identified as early as possible, and will ensure interventions and teaching strategies target areas where children need the most support.

A nationally consistent Year 1 check will ensure all students across Australia have access to an early years check, no matter what school they attend.

4. **Why is it an important part of the schools reform package?**

In May 2017, the Australian Government announced the Quality Schools reform package, which builds on the *Quality Schools Quality Outcomes* package released in May 2016. A national Year 1 literacy and numeracy check is a key part of this reform package.

Good literacy and numeracy skills are the foundations on which a student’s education is built. Recent results in international and national assessments show that, despite significantly increased funding, we are not seeing the sorts of improvements our children and the country needs.

The Government is working to restore the focus on an evidence-based approach in schools through reforms that are demonstrated to make the greatest positive difference in the classroom. That is why the Government established a panel of academic, health and education experts to drive the introduction of a nationally consistent Year 1 check in the critical areas of literacy and numeracy.

It is important that these evidence based reforms are ready for teachers to use as soon as possible once new schools agreements are finalised and the expert panel will ensure that is the case.

5. **When will it be available?**

This is an important reform which cannot be rushed and must be introduced in a way that can deliver results for all Australian students. This is why the Government tasked a panel of experts to provide advice and recommendations to inform the development and implementation of the Year 1 check. On 28 April 2017, the Panel provided their advice and recommendations to the Minister for Education and Training, which included considerations on the frequency, timing and core skills to be assessed in the Year 1 check.

Drawing on this advice, the Minister for Education and Training will bring forward a proposal to Education Council in 2017 to ensure that once new schools’ agreements are finalised it will be ready to implement this reform in Australian classrooms.