



Fact Sheet: Terms 1 to 3, 2025 Phonics Checks results

October 2025

Priority 2: Implementing evidence-based instruction in early literacy and mathematics.

Priority 3: Implementing consistent modes of monitoring student progress and achievement.

Priority 6: Using data and evidence to drive consistent improvement in achievement.

Terms 1 to 3, 2025 Phonics Checks results show significant improvements in student achievement across the country.

What are Phonics Checks?

Phonics Checks are short assessments that help teachers identify how well a child can decode words. Children are asked to read aloud from a list of 40 words, made up of both real words and pseudo, or made-up words. The check is carried out individually, taking only about five minutes per child, and forms part of effective assessment practice.

Using Phonics Checks help make sure students are making progress with their phonics learning and enable teachers to provide early support for those who need it. The checks are done at 20 weeks and 40 weeks of schooling, or roughly six months and a year after a child has started school.

Term 1 to 3, 2025 results

The current results show significant increases in student achievement, indicating meaningful improvements to teaching and learning so far this year. These gains reflect the hard work of schools and teachers to implement structured literacy, and the positive impact on student outcomes of a nationally consistent, evidence-based model of literacy teaching.

Phonics Checks results across the first three terms in 2025 are broadly representative of the nation-wide distribution of student ethnicity and school EQI groups, giving a clear picture of achievement across New Zealand.

The results show a significant increase in the percentage of students achieving at or above curriculum expectation in phonics learning. Not only do we see more students reaching proficiency, but also growth in the number of students exceeding expectations. The percentage of students exceeding expectations at 20 weeks has more than doubled across the first three terms this year.

Importantly, there is a significant reduction in the number of students that need targeted support with their phonics learning, showing that we are closing the gaps in achievement right from the

first year of school.

Early literacy research shows that closing gaps in student achievement in the first year of school is more effective than addressing the gaps later. These meaningful gains in phonics learning give students improved chances of succeeding in literacy across their schooling pathway.

The Terms 1 to 3 results show that all ethnicities and all school EQI groups are showing significant improvement. This tells us that structured literacy approaches are having an impact across the board, with all groups benefitting from explicit phonics teaching.

Along with the focus on attendance, literacy initiatives such as an hour a day of reading and writing, clearer curriculum content, professional learning in structured literacy approaches for all teachers, and resource funding are contributing to a measurable difference in students learning to read and write.

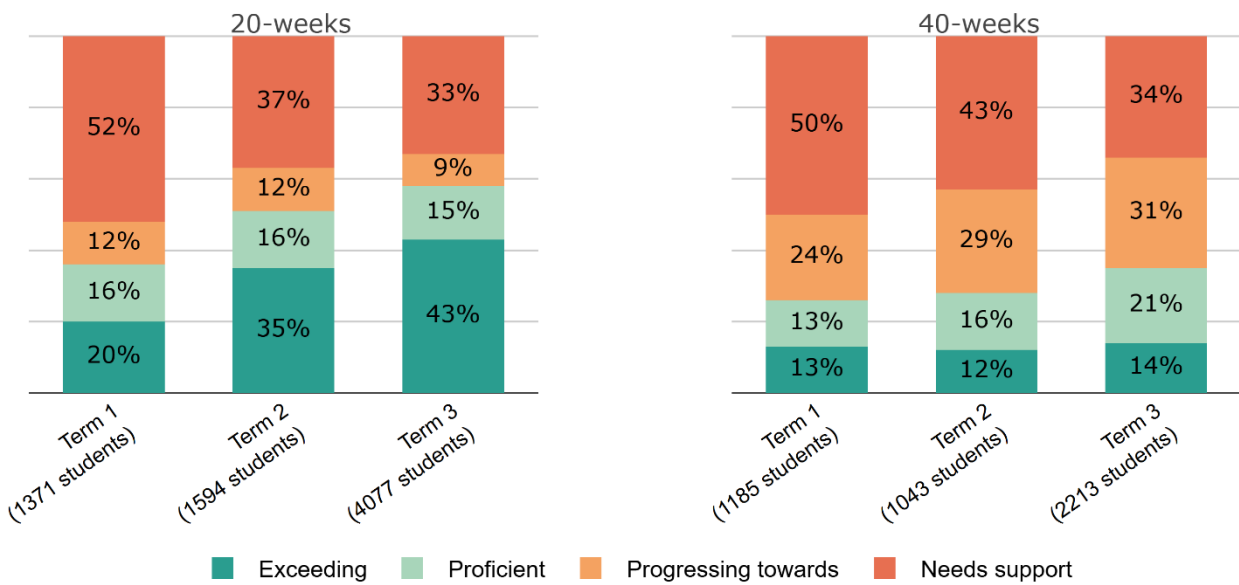
Phonics Checks statistics

Below is a snapshot of total student data.

Table 1. Percentage of students reaching curriculum expectation per term for 2025

Timepoint	At or Above expectation		
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
20-weeks	36%	51%	58%
40-weeks	26%	28%	35%

Figure 1. Achievement levels at 20-weeks and 40-weeks for Term 1, Term 2 & Term 3.



The Terms 1 to 3, 2025 Phonics Checks results are available in full on Tāhūrangi:
<https://newzealandcurriculum.tahurangi.education.govt.nz/phonics-checks-t32025-results>

What's next?

In Term 4, 2025 we're focused on preparing schools for the planned requirement to use Phonics Checks from Term 1, 2026. An online platform is being developed to streamline administration and reporting. Communications and guidance will support schools to confidently implement the checks.

Recent investment through Budget 2025 continues the focus on curriculum and assessment initiatives that support our system-wide approach to raising achievement. This includes the expansion of structured literacy approaches staffing to more schools and students. From 2026, there will be 349 full-time teacher equivalents (FTTE) in over 1,240 schools. Compared with 2025, this is an increase of 280 schools and 32 FTTE. This targeted intervention will now support students in Years 0 to 6.

The Ministry is funding professional learning and development (PLD) to support SLA staffing to provide targeted teaching. This will continue to be available in 2026.

As part of the 'Make It Write' action plan, from Term 1, 2026 we are also introducing targeted PLD for specialist literacy teachers. Initially, this will be available for one teacher from each intermediate, middle and secondary school with students in Years 7 to 10.