

Sound Check

a primary literacy project



End of project report

March 2015

Funded by



Department for Education



Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Project context and aims	4
3	The Sound Check intervention	5
3.1	Referral criteria	5
3.2	Phonics Screening tool	5
3.3	Specialist teaching programme.....	6
3.4	Volunteers	7
4	Training Programme.....	9
4.1	Whole school training	9
4.2	Parent / Carer Workshops	10
5	Impact of the Intervention Programme	12
5.1	Headline results.....	12
5.2	Quantitative reporting	12
5.3	Qualitative reporting and results	12
5.4	Engagement of SEND pupils	17
6	The Way Ahead.....	22
6.1	Main areas of success	22
6.2	Learning points	22
6.3	Into the future.....	23
Appendices		25
Sound Check Case Studies		26
Report on Whole School Training and Parent/Carer Workshops		70
Sound Check Evaluation Year 2: Final programme analysis, OPM		77

1 Introduction

The Sound Check project began in April 1st 2013 and has been running for two years. The initial concept of the project was very ambitious: to combine a programme delivered by specialist teachers with input from trained volunteers and, at the same time, to deliver whole school training to school staff and workshops to parents and carers. All with the aim of improving children's understanding of phonics, their literacy learning, and, thus, their life chances.

The project brought together the skills and expertise of three nationally recognized charities, the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), Dyslexia Action (DA), and Springboard for Children (SfC). It aimed to work with children in years 2 and 3 who, following the Year 1 Phonics Check, were identified as having difficulties with learning literacy.

In the first two months of the project, an intervention programme was identified as well as a battery of tests to measure pupils' progress during the intervention. Schools were recruited in the three areas of Leeds, Manchester/Salford, and Swindon and, in June 2013, following the Phonics Check, the first two cohorts of children were identified and recruited.

During the two years since then, our team of specialist teachers and volunteers has worked with just short of 900 children.

Results have exceeded expectations. When the first two cohorts of children re-took the Phonics Check in June 2014, 95% of pupils improved their scores with a mean increase of 12.8 and 66% achieved the threshold level.

When results achieved by children in Cohort 2, those children in primary year 2 who were taking the Phonics for the second time, were compared with a matched control group, the results were striking:

- 72% of Cohort 2 achieved the threshold, compared with 65% of the control group;
- 73% of boys in Cohort 2 reached the required level compared with 59% of boys in the control group;
- 71% of Cohort 2 children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieved the threshold level compared with 61% in the control group;
- 69% of white British pupils reached the required level compared with 63% in the control group;
- 78% of all other ethnicities achieved the threshold level compared with 67% in the control group;
- 59% of SEND pupils achieved the threshold level compared with 52% in the control group;
- 71% of younger pupils (those with birth dates between March – August) reached

Funded by



Department for Education



the threshold level, compared with 62% in the control group.

The implications of these results for particular subsets of pupils, including boys, FSM, SEND, and younger pupils, are powerful.

The aim of the report which follows is to explain the Sound Check project in greater detail and to give insights, through data analysis, case studies, interviews, pupil reports, and the voices of participants, into its achievements.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved, from the project teams at the three partner organisations, to specialist teachers, school staff, our Sound Check pupils and their families, and, of course, the many volunteers who gave up their time to contribute to improving the learning outcomes for so many children.

The Sound Check schools

Leeds: Greenhill Primary, Hollybush Primary, Hunslet Carr Primary, Kerr Mackie Primary, Meadowfield Primary, Parklands Primary, St Augustine's RC Primary, St Matthew's CofE Primary.

Manchester: Baguley Hall Primary, Benchill Primary, Birchfields Primary, Cheetham CofE Community Primary, Holy Name RC Primary, Marlborough Road Academy, Newall Green Primary, Peel Hall Primary, St Mary's CofE Primary.

Swindon: Abbey Meads Community Primary, Drove Primary, Eldene Primary, Holy Family RC Primary, King William Street Primary, Lethbridge Primary, Millbrook Primary, Nythe Primary, Red Oaks Primary, St Francis Primary.

The Sound Check specialist teachers

Leeds

Tricia Banister
Barbara Boam
Flair Buchanan
Gill de Boer
Barbara Eykel
Bozena Haluszczak
Helen Hawkes
Liz Hayton
Rachel Ingham
Shelagh Reid
Amanda Strachan
Jenny Taylor

Manchester

Kate Bate
Susan Briggs
Helen Brocklehurst
Anne Hanson
Ceri Haslam
Annette Keegan
Fiona Patnode
Beth Royle
Hazel Warner

Swindon

Marion Craven
Sandra Fleming
Claire Francis
Sue Kinsler
Jane Moore
Jane Muir Brooks
Jan Oostendorp
Liz Sim
Siobhan Smillie
Valerie Upchurch

And all our volunteers, too numerous to list.

Thank you to you all for making the project such a success.

Funded by



Department for Education



2 Project context and aims

In 2012, the results from the national Year One Phonics Screening Check identified over 235,000 (40%) pupils who did not meet the required level and needed additional reading support in school. Of major concern was the fact that only 44% of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for free school meals, met the required standard of phonic decoding. This was 17 percentage points lower than all other pupils.

In June 2013, Professor Maggie Snowling of Oxford University was quoted as saying: 'The new phonics screening check is successful in helping teachers identify children who need extra help in learning to read. But there is faulty logic here it seems to me. This 'reaches' or 'fails to reach' the standard in a one-off test gives no sense of why the child has difficulties or what should happen next.

'What do you do with kids who are identified as failing? While there is guidance for schools there is no specific funding which follows the identification of children failing to reach the standard in their phonics skills. Ethically, I think it is questionable to offer screening with no prescribed course of action for those who are identified as at risk.'

The Primary Literacy Project in Key Stages 1 and 2 (known as the Sound Check project) aimed to address these issues. It brought together three third sector organisations, the British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia Action, and Springboard for Children, whose combined skills and expertise encompass not only working with children who experience literacy difficulties, but also involving the voluntary sector within the education system.

The Sound Check programme was a 20 week intervention delivered twice weekly to groups of up to 5 children by a Dyslexia Action trained specialist teacher. It was delivered in 27 schools, 9 in each of three regions, Leeds, Manchester and Swindon. A total of 894 children benefitted from the intervention programme. These were divided into 3 Cohorts:

- **Cohort 1** (children who had failed to meet the required level in the Phonics Check twice successively, in 2012 and 2013): n = 216
- **Cohort 2** (children who had failed to meet the required level in the Phonics Check for the first time in 2013): n = 324
- **Cohort 3** (children who failed to meet the required level in the Phonics Check for the first time in 2014): n = 267

In addition to these, 23 additional children were recruited into Cohort 2 in the second year of the project. This was enabled by two factors: firstly, a higher percentage of Cohort 2 children than anticipated had met the required level when they re-sat the Phonics Check in June 2014, resulting in fewer children continuing on the intervention programme; secondly, success rates in the Phonics Check in participating schools were generally higher overall, resulting in a lower percentage of



children failing to meet the required level in June 2014 and, thus, a smaller number of year 2 children being eligible to take part in the project.

In addition to the intervention, the project recruited and trained volunteers to provide additional support sessions for project children with the aim of providing a volunteer session on each day that the specialist teaching was not taking place.

A further objective of the project was to provide training in phonics for teachers/teaching assistants and parents/carers. Training for teachers and TAs comprised one full day of INSET or two twilight sessions for all staff in each of the 27 participating schools, which aimed to increase the confidence of teachers in their phonics teaching skills and, thus, the proportion of children meeting the required level in the Phonics Check. Training for parents and carers consisted of a 1 – 2 hour workshop open to all parents/carers of children within the school, focussing on providing the skills and knowledge required to support children at home, thereby increasing pupil achievement and engagement.

3 The Sound Check intervention

3.1 Referral criteria

Children were eligible to be referred to the project if they had scored below the required pass mark of 32 / 40 in the 2013 or 2014 Phonics Check and if the school felt that they would benefit from the programme. Preference was given to those pupils receiving free school meals; these children made up around 45% of combined Cohorts 1 and 2 and 58% of Cohort 3.

Schools were asked not to refer pupils with global learning difficulties or with extreme hearing impairments, as it was felt that these children would not be able to benefit from a group phonics intervention programme.

3.2 Phonics Screening tool

The Dyslexia Action Key Stage 1 Dyslexia Screener was selected as the most suitable phonics screening tool for the purposes of the Primary Literacy Project because of its particular range of sub-tests which provide information about children's general and phonological abilities as well as their literacy attainment levels.

The Screener includes tests of alphabet knowledge and single syllable word reading taken from the Active Literacy Kit and tests of phonemic awareness using the Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (TAAS). It also uses a range of standardised sub-tests taken from the Wide Range Intelligence Test (WRIT) and the Dyslexia Portfolio in order to provide norm-referenced information about the ability and attainment of participants. Standardised scores are used to compare one individual's score to scores attained by other people. According to this method, an average score falls into the range 90 –

110. Results from these tests also indicate the percentile score achieved by the pupil within a range of 1 – 100 where a percentile of 50 is the average for the general population. A score of 30 would indicate that the individual scored higher than 30% of other people of the same or similar age. Thus, we are able to use results from the screener to comment on pupils' ability and attainment as compared with what would normally be expected from children within a particular age range.

In addition to the sub-tests of the Dyslexia Screener, one third of project children were tested using the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE). The TOWRE comprises tests of single and non-word reading and contains two test forms, thereby allowing for the test to be repeated with no risk of a practice effect.

The Dyslexia Screener was administered to children taking part in the project prior to beginning the intervention programme in order to provide a baseline measure and was re-administered at the end of the intervention to assess progress in:

- phonemic decoding (Dyslexia Portfolio: non-word reading);
- phonemic awareness (TAAS);
- alphabetic knowledge (ALK: alphabet reciting, knowledge of letter sounds, writing lower case alphabet);
- literacy attainment (ALK: knowledge of CVCs in <30 seconds; Dyslexia Portfolio: single word reading; single word spelling).

3.3 Specialist teaching programme

The programme selected for the specialist intervention was the Active Literacy Kit (ALK), which has an excellent track record of supporting children who experience literacy difficulties (e.g. Dyslexia Action's Partnership 4 Literacy). The programme involves a preliminary Placement Test, designed to be administered on an individual basis. After analysis of the results, a structured programme of learning follows in the form of a specified set of exercises, some of which are timed in order to build the skills needed for automatic, fluent and accurate reading and spelling. The exercises are active and multi-sensory in the sense that the child must respond physically and verbally and be engaged totally in the learning process. Carefully structured activities cover phonological awareness, word recognition, phonics, graphic knowledge and spelling. The ALK covers basic sound-to-letter correspondence through fluent reading and spelling of consonant-vowel-consonant words (e.g. cat, mat, fat) and for the Sound Check Project, additional resources have been developed to support children moving towards success in the KS1 Phonics Check in schools. The ALK was supplemented by a range of additional resources including, Stile and Swap cards.

Sessions were delivered by a Dyslexia Action trained specialist teacher to groups comprising a maximum of five children.

During the first year of the project, Cohort 1 children received 2 x 1 hour small group intervention sessions per week for 20 weeks, while Cohort 2 children received 2 x 30 minute sessions. At the end of the 20 week intervention programme, children who were felt most able to benefit were given top-up tuition leading to the Phonics Check in June 2014.

In the second year of the project, as a result of feedback from schools and specialist teachers, the length of sessions was changed to 40 minutes for all pupils. Due to the smaller number of children taking part in 2014-15, group sizes were also able to be reduced with some children receiving their intervention 1:1 or 1:2.

Schools were asked at the outset of the project to make a Teaching Assistant available during the intervention sessions. The rationale for this was two-fold. Firstly, and most importantly, the TA would be able to learn about the Sound Check programme and thus be able to use the resources beyond the period of the project. Secondly, the TA would provide invaluable support during the sessions, allowing children to work at different speeds and on different topics.

3.4 Volunteers

A key aspect of the Sound Check programme was the inclusion of volunteers, recruited from a variety of agencies, including universities, job centres, local volunteering organisations, parents and carers, as well as from within the schools.

Volunteer Case Study 1

C is a part time medical researcher. She was already volunteering at the school (which her daughter attends) in another capacity when the SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) mentioned the Sound Check Project. She came to the training and found it interesting. She had a relevant background (Diploma in Higher Education and 3.75 years of a B Ed Honours degree) and was motivated by wanting to give something back to the school which had done so much for her daughter and by wanting to help the local community. She enjoys seeing each child's personality emerge as they become less anxious, and is able to teach a particular aspect in a variety of different ways, relishing the moment when a child 'gets it'. She has been able to make her own resources to teach and engage each child and her own experience of a having a child at the school has made her approach both relevant and interesting. In the future, she would consider going into teaching or educational research or taking on a mentoring role.

In one Manchester school, the seven volunteers who worked during the first year of the project comprised a speech and language therapy student, a retired teacher, a

grandmother of a child in school, a parent of a child in school, two workplace volunteers, and a lunch-time organiser.

Volunteer Case Study 2

Volunteer M has been working at one of our Swindon schools since the beginning of the Sound Check project.

This mother of three has always been passionate about her children's education. Her sister's kids left school with no qualifications and this has always spurred her on to ensure her own children don't waste the opportunities that education can bring.

M has two older children, aged 20 and 17, as well as a younger child currently in year 1 at the school. She has always been keen to help out at her children's schools and jumped at the chance to support the project. She now volunteers for three days per week from 8.30 am until lunch time.

"I was quite pleased to receive training for the project," M explains. "I really enjoyed it and felt that I got a lot out of it. I already knew a bit about phonics from the support that I'd given my daughter and so it was nice to learn a bit more and see how I could put this knowledge to good use."

"It helped me to understand what the Sound Check specialist teacher was doing and how important it was. It had seemed so repetitive at the very beginning – but as we started to see results I could appreciate what it was all about."

In her sessions, she works on a one-to-one basis with the children and adapts her style for each, as they all have varying abilities and come from different home and social environments.

"I sometimes put out an alphabet arc and ask the children to guess which letters have been removed, or we play the 'detective game' where I take the children outside to "find" missing sounds and digraphs – they love that one!"

Another game that's worked really well is the swap cards, where the children match sounds within words in order to take turns. This has shown the children that they can do phonics and win the game and has the added benefit of teaching them about taking turns.

M sees the same four children three times a week and believes that confidence and positive praise has a huge role to play in a child's development. She is particularly pleased with one child who used to struggle with reading. With her support, he started to see that he could understand the stories and his confidence soared; he now loves reading and particularly enjoys visits to the library.

M has already undertaken a level 4 Open University on-line teaching assistant qualification and as a result of the project she has realised that she would like to support SEND children as a career and will be looking to pursue an SEND specialism.

"I get such a buzz seeing the children make progress," M reports, "and it's a real joy to watch their delight at their own achievements – no matter how big or small."

The role of the volunteer was to provide 1:1 or 1:2 support for project children on days other than those when they were receiving the specialist intervention. To enable them to do this, volunteers received training in supporting children with phonics and reading.

Specialist teachers were asked to indicate to volunteers which phonemes children were working on so that learning could be reinforced in the volunteer sessions. Volunteers kept records of activities carried out with the children so that specialist teachers would know what had been done. In some cases, volunteers observed specialist teachers delivering the Sound Check intervention, and this was felt to be particularly useful (see Case Studies).

Schools have greatly valued the input of volunteers on the programme.

“We are finding the interventions very valuable and the volunteers are exceptional. They are proactive and have quickly picked up routines and applied the training they have received.”

Volunteers, too, have benefitted from the experience on professional as well as personal levels.

“I really love it, I'm learning so much that will be useful in my degree.” (Speech Therapy student)

“Just wanted to let you know that everything is going really well on my sessions, the children are enjoying the sessions and love playing the games. I have had a little bit of feedback from the class teachers and they are noticing a difference in the work the children are doing in class, so it's nice to know its making a difference already.”

4 Training Programme

4.1 Whole school training

A key aim of the project was to provide training in phonics teaching to teachers and TAs in participating schools. These sessions were managed and delivered by Springboard for Children.

As many schools had already invested in phonics training for staff, the content of the training session was reviewed to include a focus on identifying and supporting children with SpLDs/Dyslexia.

During the two years of the project, 27 schools and 736 members of staff received

Funded by



Department for Education



training in phonics and dyslexia awareness in 6 full day and 38 half day/twilight training sessions.

Teachers were asked to complete Training Evaluation forms following the whole school training sessions. An analysis of these is presented in the Appendix 3.

In addition to this, interviews were conducted in 9 of the 27 participating schools to gauge the longer term impact of the training (see Appendix 2). In each of the three case studies, school staff were also asked to comment on teachers' confidence levels before and after the training.

Eleven schools completed a table indicating whether the training had no, some, quite a lot, or a lot of impact on teachers' confidence in each of the areas covered in the session.

100% of respondents reported that teachers at both KS1 and KS2 had increased their confidence levels in:

- knowledge of the Sound Check intervention programme;
- identifying the signs of SpLD/Dyslexia;
- using strategies for supporting children with SpLD/Dyslexia.

In the case of KS2 teachers, 100% respondents also reported improved confidence in:

- use of technical language of phonics;
- teaching phonics in a systematic and structured way;
- using a range of strategies to support the effective learning and teaching of phonics;
- knowledge of the content of the Phonics Screening Check.

For KS1 teachers, the percentage of schools who reported an increase in confidence levels in these areas was less (70%, 82%, 82%, and 55% respectively); however, this was to be expected due to the greater involvement of these teachers in phonics teaching.

4.2 Parent / Carer Workshops

The aim of these workshops was to give parents and carers an improved understanding of phonics and the way that literacy is taught in schools, with a view to helping them to support their children with learning at home.

During the project, 29 parent/carers workshops were delivered, giving training in phonics and literacy learning to 564 parents/carers.

Workshop evaluation questionnaires completed by attendees in the first year of the project showed:

Funded by



Department for Education



- 93% parents/carers reported a better understanding of phonics following the workshop;
- 89% felt more confident in helping their child with reading;
- 89% felt more able to help their child enjoy school.

These workshops were hugely successful across the three regions with some very high numbers attending, particularly in Swindon, where more than 80 attended one workshop.

Feedback suggests that many parents and carers knew very little about phonics prior to the training and greatly appreciated the opportunity presented by the workshop (see Appendix 3).

In all cases, in response to the question 'Please note down ONE thing you will do as a result of today's session', parents and carers replied regarding an increase in their knowledge of phonics and how this is taught at school.

Very interesting to learn the up to date methods of sounding out! I intend to use these with my children.

Very interesting of [sic] what the children are learning at school.

Excellent session, very insightful to help your child with phonics. It is encouraging to understand how the school teaches.

Thank you I learnt a lot to help my child.

Parents left the workshop with a range of practical ideas and activities to use with their child at home.

Laminate Colin the Caterpillar and get them to learn new sounds.

We had already started reading Harry Potter so we can use these skills in reading and understanding how words are put together.

I will be reading with my child and employing the principles of phonics while reading.

Make the learning/teaching more fun for my child like playing I Spy.

Will have fun with 'non-words.

In addition, many commented on how their confidence to work at home with their child had increased as a result of the session and expressed how they shall now spend more time engaging with their child to improve their literacy and oracy skills:

Spent [sic] more time with my child reading, doing phonics.

Very useful workshop. I feel more confident about helping my child with his reading.

Make sure I read & listen to my son read every night and to practice spellings. Spend 10 minutes a day listening to them; getting them to invent stories.

Create more quiet time for reading & making up stories.

Put more fun into reading.

Funded by



Department for Education



5 Impact of the Intervention Programme

5.1 Headline results

Sound Check pupils show improvement on all measures.

Cohort 2 pupils outperform a matched control group on all measures.

- **98%** of Sound Check pupils re-taking the Phonics Check in June 2014 (Cohort 2) increase their scores with a mean increase of 14.8 points from 2013-14.
- **72%** reach the required level.
- **Overall pass rate for Cohort 2 pupils 7 percentage points ahead of matched control group:** 72% of Cohort 2 pupils met the required level compared with 65% in the control group.
- **Sound Check boys 14 percentage points ahead:** 73% of Sound Check boys in Cohort 2 reached the required level compared with 59% in the control group.
- **FSM pupils 10 percentage points ahead:** 71% of free school meals pupils in Sound Check Cohort 2 met the required level compared with 61% in the control group.
- **Younger pupils 9 percentage points ahead:** 71% of pupils in Cohort 2 with birthdays between March and August met the required level compared with 62% in the control group.
- **White British pupils 6 percentage points ahead:** 69% of White British pupils in Cohort 2 met the required level compared with 63% in the control group.
- **SEND pupils 7 percentage points ahead:** 59% of pupils in cohort 2 identified as SEND achieved the threshold level compared with 52% in the control group.

5.2 Quantitative reporting

Pupils' progress was assessed by a range of quantitative measures:

- raw and standardised scores achieved in the pre and post intervention test battery;
- Phonics Check scores, pre and post intervention;
- Likert scale measures of pupils' progress as reported by specialist teachers (5 weekly) and class teachers (10 weekly).
-

Quantitative data sets were analysed by the Office of Public Management, external evaluator to the project. The full results of this analysis are contained in Appendix 3.

5.3 Qualitative reporting and results

Qualitative data was provided by specialist and class teachers' reports.

Funded by



Department for Education



In addition to the Likert scale measures, teachers were asked to provide a written commentary on pupils' progress and any issues they were aware of which may have affected their performance.

In the second year of the project, the reporting mechanism for class teachers was enhanced by asking teachers to complete reports at three points during the intervention: baseline (within the first 5 weeks of children commencing Sound Check), at the end of week 10 of the intervention, and again at the end of week 20. At each stage, they were asked to assess the same aspects of children's literacy attainment and learning behaviours using a scale of 1 (Poor) - 10 (Excellent).

Table 1 shows the percentage of all pupils in Cohorts 3 and continuing Cohort 2 who were reported by class teachers as improving in each aspect of literacy attainment or learning behaviour. As may be seen, improvements in literacy attainment were generally stronger; however, the large majority of pupils were considered to have made advances in each area.

	% Cohort 3 and continuing Cohort 2 pupils reported as showing improvement
1 Confidence in class	86.4%
2 Engagement in class	86.4%
3 Participation in class activities	83.6%
4 Concentration	85.5%
5 Independence as a learner	90.5%
6 Knowledge of letter/sound correspondences	94.3%
7 Ability to segment words/non-words	93.4%
8 Ability to blend sounds	94.6%
9 Interest in books	84.5%
10 Willingness to read	80.8%
11 Motivation to learn	82.3%
mean	87.5%

Table 1

In addition to the scaled reporting, teachers were asked to provide written comments on children's performance, in particular their perception of how the Sound Check intervention had affected the pupil's progress, as well as any additional factors, positive or negative, which may have had an impact, e.g. other interventions, illness, situation at home.

The most frequently remarked improvement was an increase in children's confidence levels (48% of Cohort 3 children and 33% of continuing Cohort 2 children).

'A is a different child! Huge improvements in his confidence and independence as a learner. A now loves learning. Thank you very much :-)'

'L was shy to begin with, she didn't like sharing her ideas with others in the class, in fear of getting something wrong. Since joining the Sound Check phonics group she has gained so much confidence. She now participates more and is willing to put forward her own thoughts. Mum has also commented on the difference she has noticed with her reading and confidence.'

Often the security afforded by small group sessions is linked to this increase in children's confidence:

'O has suffered from confidence issues this year for a range of reasons. Sound Check has helped by offering small group work + dedicated help in the areas she needs.'

Other areas of improvement reported are:

- increased independence (25% of Cohort 3; 12.5% of continuing Cohort 2)

'K is becoming a more independent learner (although we still have a way to go!) and is happy to give things a go with the minimum of adult support.'

- greater engagement, participation and motivation (7% of Cohort 3):

'AY has steadily improved during lessons with his concentration, passion for learning and effort. He even said to me that he "loves working hard" [and] now loves coming to school.'

- improved concentration (7% of Cohort 3):

'What a difference there has been in the last few months. U. now admits to loving both reading and writing. He is able to access the texts that other children read and this has had a big impact on his concentration.'

- greater enthusiasm for books and reading (3.5% of Cohort 3):

'T is more interested and excited to read books. He is often now taking home more than one book to read because of his interest in reading.'

A number of children are also reported as being proud of their achievements:

'J is a confident 1b reader. He has realised the importance of reading at home and now does so every night. He likes to read with the teacher and teaching assistant and is so proud of himself.'

'C has become so much more confident and engaged in his learning. He is trying to be independent and has the confidence to try new things. He is now more interested in reading and proud of his progress.'

'T has really benefitted from sound check; he is a much more independent and confident learner. T now takes a real pride in his work and enjoys sharing his writing with myself and his friends. Thank you for your help :)'

Where children's confidence in their reading skills has increased, this is often seen as having a positive influence on learning in other areas:

'K's confidence in reading has had a positive impact on his learning in all areas of school. He is still obviously delighted with his new found skills and brings books in to show and share with the rest of the class, reading pages out to them. Mum continues to be amazed at what K can now do and is genuinely delighted with his progress. She also reports that he is showing much more interest in school and regularly asks her to continue tasks and activities that we have tackled in school!'

'M's confidence in class has sky-rocketed since last time and she is now a very keen and active learner always looking for a challenge. Her writing and reading has improved massively and this is reflected in her work. M's concentration has improved and she will seek answers herself making her a much more independent learner. Very happy with M's progress.'

'V's reading level has dramatically improved alongside his confidence and engagement within class.'

Many teachers also report successful transference of skills from the Sound Check sessions to work in the classroom. While this view is not shared amongst all class teachers, some very positive results have been observed:

'B's concentration has improved greatly. She is able to focus on a task for longer and also set herself up for work, sitting comfortably and getting her mind ready for the activity. This has a knock on effect on her reading and writing e.g. when reading she reads the first 2 or so pages with minor errors. This has also allowed her to get on with her work more quickly and focus for longer which has enabled her to write with increased accuracy. B has greatly benefitted from the sound check programme and I felt that if it were to continue, B would continue to develop and become more confident in her work which will in turn help her to make progress in relation to NC levels.'

Class teachers have also noted how the project has helped them to identify and support the needs of pupils:

'E's frustrations have grown and he is generally disengaged with anything involving writing and to a lesser extent, reading. We are putting strategies in place to help him including using a computer for writing. The soundcheck intervention has been incredibly useful in helping to identify E's exact needs and in giving some ideas to help me support him within class.'

A number of issues are reported as having a negative impact on children's progress. Most common amongst these is the effect of difficulties at home, often resulting in poor attendance, punctuality and lack of sleep (8% of Cohort 3; 23% of continuing Cohort 2). Where attendance rates improve during the course of the intervention, however, progress has been positive:

'W's attendance has significantly improved and he has really enjoyed the Soundcheck project. I think the stability it gave him - having the same sessions at the same time every week - has helped with his independence.'
'A's attendance has risen over the last half term. This has greatly improved her confidence in school.'

Lack of progress due to SEND is also noted in the case of 6% of Cohort 3 and 11% of continuing Cohort 2 children, while a smaller number of children are reported to have difficulties with concentration or poor motivation.

Other issues which have been seen as preventing children from benefitting fully from the intervention, or showing their achievements to the full, include EAL issues:

'H is a confident reader and can effectively decode difficult words. However, due to English being an additional language for him, he cannot cope with reading non-words as he is constantly trying to make sense of everything he reads. This intervention has had a positive impact on his reading ability and he is now reading at expected level for the end of year 2. Although, I still don't think that he will pass the [phonics] check due to the inability to understand the concept of a pseudo word. [This] is maybe something to consider when monitoring the progress of the children as some other EAL children may be experiencing the same problems.'

The danger of some children becoming over dependent on adult support is also noted:

What H can achieve with an adult present is very different to what he achieves independently. H does not like to attempt writing without an adult present. I feel that although the intervention work he has received has been important in contributing to his skills in reading and writing he has come to expect constant adult support and therefore lacks motivation when he comes back to the classroom and is expected to work independently. In order to support H's independence as a learner he needs to do plenty of work independently during interventions.'

It should also be mentioned that class teachers are not unanimously in favour of an intervention model which results in children being withdrawn from regular classes:

'Although J has made good progress in literacy in general, he has missed large chunks of his intervention sessions and class based literacy sessions in order to attend Sound Check sessions and may have made even more progress had his learning not been interrupted. I believe that in order for any intervention to have maximum impact it should be in addition to normal class based lessons. This has been one of my major issues with Sound Check that children's learning has been fragmented and interrupted in order to access Sound Check sessions.'

5.4 Engagement of SEND pupils

A key aim of the project was the improved engagement of SEND children with issues in learning literacy.

In addition to the analysis of SEND pupils' scores reported in Appendix 3, a comparison was made between scores achieved by SEND pupils in class teachers' monitoring reports and those achieved by non SEND pupils.

Table 2 shows the percentage of pupils reported by class teachers as showing improvement in all areas from the baseline measurement to the end of the project (week 20).

With the exception of Concentration, Independence as a learner, and Motivation to learn, the percentage of SEND children reported to have improved their behaviours is higher than the percentage of their non SEND peers. In all cases the SEND group began at a lower starting point, with a mean baseline score of 4.4 for learning behaviours compared with 5.5 in the non SEND group, representing a gap of 0.8 points; and a mean baseline of just 3.7 for literacy attainment compared with 4.5 in the non SEND group, representing a gap of 1.1 points. During the course of the programme, however, greater improvements made by the SEND pupils closed these gaps slightly, to 0.6 for literacy and 0.8 for learning behaviours, as shown in Table 3.

% Cohort 3 and continuing Cohort 2 pupils reported as showing improvement	SEND	non SEND	Difference
1 Confidence in class	87.0%	84.1%	-2.9%
2 Engagement in class	88.2%	79.4%	-8.8%
3 Participation in class activities	83.5%	84.1%	0.7%
4 Concentration	83.5%	93.7%	10.2%
5 Independence as a learner	89.8%	93.7%	3.9%
6 Knowledge of letter/sound correspondences	94.5%	93.7%	-0.8%
7 Ability to segment words/non-words	94.1%	90.5%	-3.6%
8 Ability to blend sounds	95.3%	92.1%	-3.2%
9 Interest in books	85.8%	79.4%	-6.5%
10 Willingness to read	82.7%	73.0%	-9.7%
11 Motivation to learn	82.3%	82.5%	0.3%
mean	87.9%	86.0%	-1.9%

Table 2

	SEND				non SEND			
	base line	Week 10	Week 20	Change in score: baseline - week 20	base line	Week 10	Week 20	Change in score: baseline - week 20
Mean scores: Literacy attainment	3.7	5.1	6.4	2.7	4.5	5.9	7.0	2.5
Mean scores: Learning behaviours	4.4	5.5	6.5	2.2	5.5	6.4	7.3	1.8

Table 3

As is shown by the analysis of quantitative data in Appendix 3 and Tables 2 and 3 above, SEND children taking part in the project performed as well as non SEND children. Improvements were, however, variable, and often relate to the child's specific profile as well as to external factors such as the home environment.

The three case studies below look at SEND children whose respective improvements through the programme have been higher than average, average and below average. All children were recruited into Cohort 3 in the second year of the project following the Phonics Check in June 2014.

Case Study 1

Profile

- Male. DoB: 08/05/08. Black African with English as first language.
- Eligible for Pupil Premium.
- Receiving Speech and Language therapy. Also identified as having Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties.
- Short term memory as measured by Digits Forwards (Dyslexia Portfolio) is well above average (standardised score =121) but working memory as measured by Digits Reversed is weaker (ss=81).
- General intelligence, as measured by the WRIT Verbal Analogies is below average (ss=86)
- Attendance at SC sessions excellent (39/40).

Progress

- Began the intervention with a June 2014 Phonics Check score of 5; achieved 38 in a mock Phonics Check post-intervention.
- Standardised scores increase on all tests by a mean of 14 points, bringing all scores from low average and well below average to within the average band.
- Class teacher reports increase in NC levels from P8 to 1A+ in Reading and from P7 to 1A in Writing.
- Scaled performance in measures of literacy and learning behaviours all increase by an average of 5 points.
- Class teacher comments include: 'significant improvements'; 'confidence has developed'.
- Specialist teacher reports occasional problems with concentration and behaviour 'can become agitated if asked to do something he thinks he can't do'; 'has a strong idea of what he likes and doesn't like and sometimes it can be hard to focus him, but if he's happy with what we are doing he works really hard'; 'His mood is variable - sometimes he is quite distracted and doesn't like coming to lessons if he is in the middle of something else in class. Other times he concentrates and does really well.'

Case Study 2

Profile

- Female. DoB: 27/08/08. White British. Not eligible for Pupil Premium.
- Receiving Speech and Language therapy (3 x 10 minute sessions per week).
- Short term memory as measured by Digits Forwards (Dyslexia Portfolio) is average (ss=105) but working memory as measured by Digits Reversed is well below average (ss=81).
- General intelligence, as measured by the WRIT Verbal Analogies is average (ss=97).
- Attendance at Sound Check sessions very good (37/40).

Progress

- Began the intervention with a June 2014 Phonics Check score of 19 (this was the mean score for pupils on the second year of the programme); achieved 27 in a mock Phonics Check post-intervention (an increase of 8 points, the mean increase achieved by pupils in the second year of the project).
- Standardised scores are in the average range pre intervention and increase by a mean of 7.6 points. All scores remain in the average range with the exception of Non-Word Reading, which moves into the Higher Average range.
- Scaled performance in measures of literacy and learning behaviours all increase by an average of 3 points, with the exception of Independent Learning, which increases from 3 to 8.
- Comments include: 'more of an independent learner'; 'improvement in attitude and concentration'; 'confidence is improving.'
- Specialist teacher reports good steady progress throughout the intervention, although issues remain with pronunciation, recall of letter shapes and spelling patterns such as split digraphs and vowel digraphs.

Case Study 3

Profile

- Male. DoB: 25/09/07. White British. Eligible for Pupil Premium.
- Has additional support for Speech, Language and Communication and Specific Language Impairment.
- Measures of short term and working memory are well below average (ss=80 and 84 respectively).
- However, General Intelligence, as measured by the WRIT Verbal Analogies test is at the upper end of higher average (ss=115) showing that this pupil has the ability to do well.
- School reports that he often arrives late.
- Attendance at Sound Check sessions poor at the outset (5/10 sessions in Quarter 1 and 6/10 sessions in Quarter 2) but increasing to full attendance in Quarter 4.

Progress

- Began the intervention with a June 2014 Phonics Check score of 2; achieved 4 in a mock Phonics Check post-intervention.
- Standardised scores achieved pre-intervention are all well below average (ss=69-72) and remain unchanged post-intervention.
- Class teacher reports little or no change in NC levels: 1C in Reading; P5 to P8 in Writing.
- Scaled measures of performance in literacy attainment and learning behaviours show small improvements (typically from 1 - 3) but remain poor.
- Comments draw attention to a difficult home environment. In Week 10 it is observed '[he] has recently gone into foster care. His behaviour and lack of concentration contribute to his small levels of progress'; and in week 20, 'behaviour continues to disrupt his learning'.
- The specialist teacher notes difficulties with speech and language and extreme lack of confidence. She reports that, due to a series of missed appointments with the speech and language therapist, it is difficult for the child to receive any further help.
- In the third quarter, it is reported that the pupil is staying with grand-parents as his mum is in hospital and that this has caused the pupil's behaviour to dip. However, speech and language issues are reported as being at the core of this pupil's learning difficulties: 'speech difficulties certainly affecting his reading, writing, confidence and self-esteem'. This is certainly apparent when the pupil takes a mock phonics check at the end of the intervention: '[he] scored 4 in the mock Phonics Check. He was very anxious throughout the process and at one point with a sigh said "Have I got any right?"'

6 The Way Ahead

6.1 Main areas of success

During its two years, the Sound Check project has achieved all of its aims and objectives.

- 736 teachers and TAs have received training in phonics and dyslexia awareness.
- 564 parents and carers have attended workshops in supporting their children's literacy learning.
- 894 children have received the intervention.
- Improvements have been recorded on all measures: Phonics Check scores, standardized tests, assessment of learning behaviours, and attendance.
- Sound Check pupils have out-performed a matched control group in increases in Phonics Check scores recorded in June 2014.
- Particularly impressive results have been recorded for boys, FSM pupils, pupils identified with SEND, and younger children.
- Confidence levels amongst participating children have soared, with improved independence as a learner reported for 90% of children in project year 2.

The results achieved by these sub-groups, in particular, point to the value of an intervention programme which focuses on early identification and intervention and which targets the needs of the individual pupil, going back to basics, increasing confidence, and creating a firm platform upon which to build success.

6.2 Learning points

The final section of the report by OPM, the external evaluator for the project, presents an overview of findings from a Stakeholder Workshop held in Manchester on 3rd March, 2015 (See Appendix 3).

Representatives from project schools who attended the workshop were enthusiastic about the benefits of Sound Check for pupils and staff alike and all expressed particular appreciation for having access to a specialist teacher and the wealth of expertise this brought.

A key learning point to come out of the workshop and other interviews with stakeholders is the need to develop the role of the specialist teacher, from one of working with pupils to that of consultant and facilitator tasked with developing the skills and knowledge base within the school. This would lead to greater involvement of staff and eventual independent delivery of the intervention.

A need for greater communication between all participants in the programme was noted, including the specialist teacher, TAs, class teachers, and volunteers; the importance of earlier training and involvement of school staff was also observed.

It was felt that the Sound Check programme would benefit from greater application of the teaching to reading and writing, thereby encouraging pupils to transfer knowledge from the intervention sessions to the classroom.

A need for the programme to be more widely available throughout the school was also noted.

Similar points are made in the three Case Studies conducted by regional project managers (see Appendix 1), where a whole school approach, including involvement of senior management, is found to contribute appreciably to the success of the intervention.

Finally, results from mock phonics checks administered at the end of the 20 week intervention programme in March 2014, compared with scores achieved in the actual test in June, underline the importance of top-up provision for children following the Sound Check intervention. Feedback from schools has also suggested that a proportion of children who took part in the first year of the project and achieved the threshold level in June 2014 began to slip backwards at the start of the new school year. This again emphasizes the importance of training teachers and TAs in using the Sound Check materials, so that ongoing support can be given as required to these children.

6.3 Into the future

The legacy of Sound Check remains now within each of the schools who have participated in the project during the last two years.

Specialist teachers have made use of the last month of the funded period to offer further training to school staff; Sound Check materials will remain within schools, as will the Volunteer Handbook and links with existing volunteers and volunteer suppliers; reports and records of scores achieved by pupils who have taken part in the intervention have been passed on to school contacts; and the Parents' Holiday Activities Booklet developed by Springboard for Children is available electronically for schools to download so that parents and carers can continue to be encouraged to be involved in their children's literacy learning.

In addition, around 30 teachers from participating schools have benefitted from free CPD courses provided by Dyslexia Action.

Over the coming year (2015-16) the Sound Check partnership are delighted to have been awarded a further year's funding by the Department for Education.

We will be using this to further strengthen the Sound Check intervention, focusing particularly on the role of the specialist teacher in developing the ability of school staff to deliver the programme.

In addition, it is our intention to respond to the new SEN Code of Practice by developing a three-tier certification framework, celebrating the achievement of schools in good literacy teaching, early identification of dyslexia/SpLD, and effective support and interventions.

We very much hope to continue working with as many of our current Sound Check schools as possible and look forward to seeing the Sound Check legacy develop over the coming year.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Sound Check Case Studies. British Dyslexia Association regional project managers

Appendix 2: Report on Whole School Training and Parent/Carer Workshops. Springboard for Children

Appendix 3: Sound Check Evaluation Year 2. Final programme analysis. OPM

Funded by

 Department for Education

British Dyslexia
Association

Dyslexia
Action
Taking Action • Changing Lives

Springboard
Life-changing literacy

Sound Check Case Studies

Funded by



Department for Education



Methodology

The purpose of the case studies was to collect and present qualitative, descriptive and explorative information about Sound Check as perceived by a cross section of people directly or indirectly involved in the project, through a series of interviews and focus groups conducted between October - December 2014.

One school took part in the case study in each of the three project areas. The Swindon school is a large school with most pupils of white British origin. The Leeds and Manchester schools are also large and both have a well above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. While the Leeds and Swindon schools have relatively few children eligible for pupil premium, the Manchester school is located in an economically and socially deprived area with over 80% children eligible.

The first part of the case study comprised a series of in depth interviews with school staff. Separate interviews were conducted with the head teacher, main contact person, class teachers and participating teaching assistants. These explored a range of issues including the needs of the project children, the organisational implications of participating in Sound Check, the impact of the intervention on children and staff, and the degree to which skills were transferred to the classroom. Staff were also asked about the impact of whole school training and the parent/carer workshops.

Interviews were also conducted with specialist teachers and volunteers. Specialist teachers were asked about the intervention itself and about communication systems in place with school staff and volunteers. Volunteers were asked about their motivation for volunteering, their thoughts about the volunteer sessions and their perceptions of existing communication systems.

The opinions of parents/carers and participating children were sought through separate focus groups. Parents were asked to discuss their child's attitude to school, learning and reading and to identify any changes they had noticed. They were also asked about the parent workshop and the Holiday Activities Booklet and whether they had used any activities suggested in these to support their children.

In order to capture the children's viewpoints, two approaches were employed. Firstly, three year two children were met on a 1:1 basis and were asked how they felt about school, books, phonics and reading in year one and in year two and were questioned about their experience of the intervention. For each question, they placed a cut out monkey on a picture of a tree, the higher the position of the monkey, the more they liked a particular activity.

The second approach used the visual methods research tool of diamond ranking, designed to encourage the children to explore their feelings by engaging in discussion. The children worked in groups of threes, looking at photos of different activities/games used in the intervention and/or volunteer sessions and then ranking

them by position so that the preferred picture is at the top and the most disliked one at the bottom.

Leeds Case Study

1 Background

The Case Study school is a maintained school, situated on the edge of a moderately affluent area of Leeds which borders on less affluent areas. Of England's 8,414 electoral wards, one of the school's catchment areas ranks in the highest 5% for most deprived (on multiple indices of deprivation). The latest Ofsted report is dated October 2012. The school received a rating of 'Good' in all areas.

- The age range is 3-11.
- It is a larger than average-sized primary school. Pupils on roll have remained stable and currently number 469.
- A below average proportion of pupils (n=60) is known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average (n=173), as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. There are currently 56 children on the Special Educational Needs (SEND) register.

2 Involvement in Sound Check

2.1 Reasons for interest in Sound Check

Most schools in Leeds heard about the project through the Local Education Authority. The Case Study school, however, first heard about Sound Check through one of their own staff, who was already involved with setting up Sound Check in Leeds.

Senior Leadership gave the following reasons for wanting to participate:

"It sounded like a very good intervention programme. It sounded well-structured and ... I particularly liked ... that it targeted the younger end of the school. I believe that the earlier you can get some intervention in, the more benefit it has for the child."

2.2 Organisation

- The school had a dedicated member of staff in place whose role was to oversee and organise interventions. This person took over as the main school contact for

Sound Check. The school felt that having this person enabled a smooth integration of Sound Check into the school, alongside existing interventions.

- The school prioritised the Sound Check intervention: “We ensured that no matter what else was going on [Sound Check] kept going, we made sure that those children got that intervention.”
- School leadership and class teachers both commented on what they saw as one perennial difficulty with interventions: “Taking children out of lessons is hard, especially when they are coming out of literacy or numeracy. We tried to do a rolling programme but these are the children who need literacy, ... so it is hard when they go back half way through a lesson and have to pick things up quicker than others, because that is their weakness. And if you take them out of the afternoon when it is creative, sometimes that is their area of strength and what they enjoy most.”

2.3 Communication

- School leadership felt that they received good information and on-going support from Sound Check: “I think there has been really good communication between the school and the organisation, including [the Project Manager] – very clear information, there was a lot that the people driving Sound Check organised. We were very clear what our role was.”
- Class teachers involved felt that they were adequately briefed about Sound Check in the first year of the project. The school contact communicated beforehand the aims of the project and the names of the children involved.
- Leadership and class teachers who were involved in both years of the project commented that understanding and communication was greatly improved by a meeting with the Regional Project Manager at the start of the second year:
“The chat with [the Project Manager] was brilliant because it gave us ideas of what we could bring into the classroom.”
- On-going communication was seen as an issue. There were few opportunities for staff and Specialist Teachers to communicate:
“I find it very difficult to ... have any discussion ... outside of the session, because they are so busy ... The only time I see [the TA] is when he is in the session and then my focus is on the children.”
- It was felt that, in retrospect, delivery of the whole school training session early in the first year would have helped promote the project to the whole school. However, due to existing commitments, training took place late in Year 2.

- Parents were informed about the project by a letter from the school followed up by meetings at the school. In Year 2, the school particularly appreciated being able to send out the invitation for children to participate in Sound Check at the same time as sending out the 2014 Phonics Check results.
- Parents were invited to participate by becoming volunteers:

“I think all our parents thought it was great for our children ... [and] they liked ... that there were going to be parents volunteering. I think they felt that was a good aspect of it.”
- The school put Sound Check on the governors’ agenda and the governors received regular reports about Sound Check.

2.4 Teaching Assistant (TA) involvement

One of the aims of TA involvement was to familiarise staff with the intervention and its resources. In the first year, the school assigned one TA full time to Sound Check sessions to build up her expertise with the main intervention resource, the Active Literacy Kit (ALK). This TA left the school at the end of the year to train as a teacher. In the second year, the school again dedicated a TA to the Sound Check sessions. This TA was able to attend all Sound Check sessions, apart from one afternoon a week, when he was released to attend college.

- At the beginning of each year, the school contact briefed the TAs about Sound Check and the pupils involved.
- The choice of TA was partly based on existing working relationships with the pupils: The TAs worked in classes containing Sound Check pupils. The TA in the second year also delivered Speech and Language support in the school. It was felt that involvement in Sound Check would enhance this role.
- Specialist Teachers also valued the input of TAs:

“[Having] the TA is such a massive bonus because they generally know the children and that helps in the initial stages.”

3 Impact of Sound Check Intervention Resources and Methods

3.1 The Sound Check intervention

- The intervention is delivered by a Specialist Teacher. The specialist knowledge and skills of the teacher to adapt teaching to individual needs is an integral part of the Sound Check intervention. The current teacher has a level 7 Diploma in Dyslexia and Literacy and has been working as a Specialist Teacher since 1999.

- In the first year, Cohort 1 (Year 3) children received a 1 hour session, twice a week, in groups of 4 for 20 weeks. Cohort 2 children (Year 2) received 30 minutes, twice a week, in groups of 4 for 20 weeks. Cohort 2 children also received top up sessions for the first half of the Summer term.
- In the second year, Cohort 3 children received 40 minutes, twice a week, in groups of 2 for 20 weeks. As all Cohort 2 children in this school reached the required level in the Phonics Check in June 2014, there were no continuing Cohort 2 children in the second year of the project.

3.2 Sound Check Resources

- The core resource used in the intervention was the Active Literacy Kit (ALK). This teaches phonics by starting with individual sounds and phoneme-grapheme links, building up to blending CVC words. Extension materials were produced and additional materials were used to cover all the phases.
- The ALK and other resources were seen as particularly suitable to the learning needs of children with working memory difficulties.
- The Specialist Teacher felt that the core resources used in Sound Check enable her:

“to engage the children at their level of skill. The intervention seems to be meeting them at their level of need.”

3.3 Sound Check Methods

Specialist Teachers were expected to use their skills and personal experience to adapt sessions for learners. Core resources and aims were uniform throughout the project, but session structure was at the discretion of the Specialist. In the second year at the Case Study school, a session might consist of the following elements:

- **Review of learning.** This involves reminders about previous learning to help consolidate that learning, and link it to new learning:

“I start off by questioning any memory of the previous session, e.g. letters in the alphabet, remembering the names and sounds of the vowels.”

- **Listening skills and phonological awareness.** Many children were assessed as having difficulties with these skills. Listening and identifying individual phonemes is seen as an essential skill in phonics:

“I ... train them how to listen, and how to focus. We do paired work, independent work, listening for sounds in the beginnings/middles/ends of words, listening for vowels, counting syllables.”

- **Memory work.** Sessions and activities involved helping children to develop strategies to compensate for working memory weaknesses.
- **Vocabulary development:**

“... increasing vocabulary knowledge where it is lacking ... I try to encourage the children to talk in sentences as many don’t talk in sentences in their everyday speech.”
- **Phoneme-grapheme links.**

“We write ... making links between the letters and the sounds of letters, writing words, writing sounds, writing sentences.”
- **Fluency.** Once accuracy is achieved, fluency is encouraged:

“They have timed challenges within the sessions.”
- **Engaging learning.**

“I ask them, “What do you think is going on here?” Sometimes it can be auditory, sometimes it can be visual. Sometimes I give them semantic clues and they are working out what it is we are going to focus on [and] so they are much more engaged.”

3.4 Teaching Assistant view

- Second year TA:

“I think [the intervention activities] are all useful... It is all helping... teachers notice that [reading] has improved and the spelling.”
- The Active Literacy Kit (ALK) has an Exercise Guide which lists what is needed for each exercise and how to deliver it. TAs reported that they found the Guide, “very clear. It is a godsend.”
- TAs report that they would feel “confident” to deliver ALK exercises to other children in the school.

3.5 Impact of Sound Check resources and methods on the wider school

- Within the Sound Check sessions, the TAs learn by observing the Specialist Teacher modelling exercises, and then the TA “mirrors” the activities with the pupils.
- TAs find that working with Sound Check and with the same pupils in class helps transfer the learning:

“If the child is stuck on something you can go back to what they have done in Sound Check [and] remind them what they did ... then it just clicks.”

- TAs use the activities and strategies with other children in the school.
- School leadership aspire to use the intervention methods and resources with the wider school.

“I want to use some of these ideas from the sessions in our own classes and distribute these through school.”

- School Leadership report that they have noticed that the second year TA has learnt a lot through participation in Sound Check.

4 Children on the Project

In the first year of the project, twenty children were selected to participate; children eligible for Free School Meals were prioritised and the remaining places allotted randomly. The children selected had the following profile:

- 2013 Phonic Check Scores for Y1 (Cohort 2) ranged from 9 to 31 with an average of 22.
- 2013 Phonic Check Scores for Y2 (Cohort 1) ranged from 13 to 31 with an average of 23.
- One child eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).
- 14 of the pupils were from a minority ethnic group.
- 9 pupils had English as an additional language.
- 6 pupils were on the Special Educational Needs (SEND) register.

After the end of the first year of the intervention pupils retook the Phonics Check in June 2014:

- All 12 pupils in Cohort 2 met the requirements of the 2014 Phonics Check; scores ranged from 35 to 40 with an average of 37.
- 5 out of 8 pupils in Cohort 1 met the requirements and three achieved a maximum score of 40; scores ranged from 24 to 40 with an average of 34.

In the second year of the project, Cohort 2 children who did not meet the requirements of the 2014 Phonics Check were able to continue for a second year. As all Cohort 2 children had met the requirement in the Case Study school, this did not apply. Additionally, as only ten children in Y1 (2013-14) did not meet the

requirements, no selection procedure was needed. All ten joined the project as Cohort 3.

The ten Cohort 3 children had the following profile:

- 2014 Phonic Check scores ranged from 1 to 29, with an average of 19.
- Three pupils were eligible for Pupil Premium (PP).
- 6 of the pupils were from minority ethnic groups.
- 3 pupils had English as an additional language.
- 3 pupils were identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEND).

Teachers identified a range of reasons why children in each of the three cohorts were struggling with phonics:

- difficulties identifying sounds
- remembering grapheme-phoneme links
- difficulty accurately blending sounds into a word
- remembering letter names
- lack of confidence
- lack of experience with English
- lack of language skills
- maturation

All children were pre-screened by Sound Check. In addition to the difficulties described by teachers, the assessments suggest many children had weaknesses in verbal short term and/or working memory. This is the ability to hold new verbal information, words and sounds in short term memory, and then concentrate on, and work with, that information. Weaknesses in this area will negatively impact on the ability to hold sounds in memory for blending, segment sounds for spelling, remember instructions, plan what to do next, and focus on a task.

- With one exception, all children on the project at the Case Study school had working memory scores below the norm (100).
- 6 out of 8 Cohort 1 children had short term and/or working memory in the low average to well below average range.
- 9 out of 12 Cohort 2 children had short term and/or working memory in the low average to below average range.

- 6 out of 10 Cohort 3 children had short term and/or working memory in the low average to well below average range.

Regarding pupils involved in the second year of the project, the Specialist Teacher observed:

“[For] quite a lot of them ... speech is not clear. They cannot articulate vocabulary very well, so struggle when they want to record anything. They have phonological awareness difficulties – difficulties identifying where a sound is in a word. That impacts on their ability to read words or spell words. They struggle to discriminate among the graphemes, so they don’t know what they are going to use. They don’t know how to read it. They don’t know if it is a long vowel or a short vowel ... Inability to synthesize sounds, the sounds are not pure, they don’t know how to say them to build them into a word. Fast and slow processing – some are very fast, so they rush and make mistakes, others are very slow so they can’t work sufficiently to get anything done – and memory is very much linked to that. They start working on something and then lose the track of what they are doing. And all of these things impact on their ability to move on in class.”

5 Impact of Sound Check on Pupil Progress and Learning Behaviours

5.1 School leadership

“I expected ... children would make accelerated progress in their reading and I think that that has been successful, in particular the Phonics Screening Check. ... The children have very much enjoyed the process themselves ... They have really gained in confidence and ... they feel better back in class because they can now follow things better.”

5.2 The class teacher perspective

There was recognition that some children were having other interventions, e.g. Fischer Family Trust. For these children, some of the observations below relate to the package of intervention received.

- Teachers agree that Sound Check learning transfers to the classroom to various degrees, for some more than others: “You can see how children are using the skills they have been taught in Sound Check to segment and blend and it does filter through into their writing. X is now writing much more fluently.”
- An increase in children’s general confidence was a frequent observation: “I have seen a massive confidence boost ... reading has improved, but [I have] noticed they now want to communicate verbally.”

- An increase in concentration was also noticed: “His concentration and attitude to learning has improved drastically.”
- Changes in attitudes to reading were noticed: “He was taking a joy in reading.” “[She] flew with her reading.”
- Pupils were happy to attend Sound Check sessions: “The children absolutely loved it...very excited about it.”
- Whilst children were seen as benefitting, teachers felt that some “will need further work in Y4 – a similar programme. [They are not yet] in a position to let go of a programme of this sort of intensity.”

5.3 Sound Check Specialist Teacher perspective

“I have definitely observed positive changes in attitudes to learning within the sessions. I have definitely observed improved concentration. I believe this is because we are working at their level of skill. I think that the very careful assessment, before the intervention, means you know exactly where they are and can work at their level.”

5.4 A perspective

“I can ... see the progress they are making. There is a pupil, and the progress... is brilliant. We were just saying today how far he’s moved on, [with] his confidence. It seems to have had a knock-on effect, [with] his writing, using a number line, onto other subjects.”

5.5 Sound Check Pupil perspective

When asked to express their feelings about reading, school and Sound Check, individual children generally indicated that they liked school and reading more now, and all strongly indicated that they liked Sound Check most of all: “I did not like reading before Sound Check. [I] feel happier about reading now. [I] like everything now.”

5.6 The parent perspective

When asked in focus groups and individually, about any observations and changes they have noticed since Sound Check, parents commented on the following:

- Children enjoyed Sound Check: “He enjoyed the sessions. He talked about some of the games. He also talked about the work with the volunteers.”

- Increased progress and confidence: “I think Sound Check has been brilliant. At that time, I could really see that he was progressing and that his confidence was improving.”
- Sustaining concentration: “He used to get quite distracted with books and he use to lose concentrations but with the games, it has kept him focused.”
- Developing independence: “His reading has come on in leaps and bounds – prior to Sound Check he was quite quiet, reading under his breath but now he is clear and quite confident – it has given him that confidence to read independently.” “He will to the library now and pick a book and read.”
- Increased perseverance: “He used to get quite frustrated and give up – but now if he has having difficulties he will persevere and get to the end of a book.”
- Improvements in behaviour: “He has calmed him down.”
- Parents noticed children using effective strategies: “This year it all clicked He has certainly made progress and I’ve noticed him breaking down words.”

6 Impact of Sound Check Staff Training on the school

The school was already familiar with the Active Literacy Kit (ALK) before Sound Check, and had also invested time into training Foundation and KS1 staff in Phonics. At the time of writing the case study, the school had only received the first part of the Sound Check whole school training. The school valued this training, but mostly as a refresher. Both prior to and after training, the school rated themselves as Good to Excellent in their expertise and knowledge of Phonics: “I think that the training we have had from Sound Check about the correct way to say your sounds ... refreshed everyone’s understanding of the teaching of Phonics.”

- When asked about the whole school training, teachers said they thought it was ‘great’ and “brilliant.”
- Teachers appreciated the ideas they gained from the training, and links to resources.
- The school felt that the whole school training, “raised the profile of phonics ... in KS2, in particular.”

7 Impact of Volunteer Component

The Specialist Teacher visited schools on two days per week to deliver the intervention and volunteers were recruited to provide additional reinforcement for the Sound Check children on other days. School leadership saw the volunteer element as a positive aspect of the project: “What has been fantastic about [Sound Check] is

Funded by



Department for Education



that, not only have we had the specialist, expert teaching, but then we have also had the opportunity for volunteers to come in, on the back of this, to reinforce the children's learning on a regular basis."

7.1 Volunteer Recruitment

The school actively recruited volunteers from their community. The Regional Project Manager recruited additional volunteers.

In the first year of the project, volunteers included the following:

- Parent volunteer, recruited by the school. Left at the end of the year to return to work.
- Parent volunteer, with child participating in Sound Check, recruited by the school. Left at the end of the year to take a post as a Teaching Assistant in another school.
- Existing volunteer, recruited by the school. Left at the end of the year to take a post as Teaching Assistant in the Case Study School.
- Retired individual, recruited by the Project Manager. Continued as a volunteer into the second year.

New volunteer in Year 2:

- University student on primary education teacher training course.

7.2 How volunteers heard about the opportunity

- Word of mouth
- School newsletter
- Pre-existing volunteers in the school
- Volunteer bureau
- Promoted by lecturers on teacher training course

7.3 Reasons for volunteering

- Training to be a teacher
- Child on the project
- "To give something back." - "To do something worthwhile."
- "To do something useful and help young children achieve."

Funded by



- “Will enhance [my] current training as a TA”
- “Cementing my own knowledge and understanding [of Phonics] and helping children with theirs.”
- “[I] have enjoyed previous volunteer work with children and would like to continue volunteering in this type of role.”
- Think it is a “valuable and exciting project.”
- It is an “ideal platform for future voluntary work of this nature.”

7.4 Volunteer recruitment process and training

Volunteers made formal applications, were interviewed and had enhanced DBS checks for working with children. Before going into school they had 3 to 4 hours training in Phonics and the volunteer activities. The training also included child protection and health and safety issues.

- “The volunteer training was really useful. I really enjoyed that day.”
- “I learnt about phonics for the first time ... when I was at school we did everything differently.”
- “Putting names like phonemes and graphemes to what I was doing was quite useful”
- “I found [the training] helpful ... Splitting up of the sounds and how to say them properly ... I was not that sure about it and it was nice to have the reassurance.”
- “It was also useful to get techniques on how to listen to the child read – the kind of activities we could do with them and games to play that would really help the children. [Things] you would not necessarily have thought of – simple things but effective things.”

Volunteers were also encouraged to complete a more thorough online training for child protection. Their first visit to school involved the school’s normal induction process, including awareness of school policies, and how Sound Check worked in that particular school.

At the Case Study school, the Specialist Teacher provided a welcome sheet for volunteers. Most communication happened through a file left with the volunteers but volunteers were also able to email the Specialist Teacher.

7.5 The Volunteer Session

All schools were given a Volunteer File containing a variety of games and activities to reinforce phonics teaching and reading. Each school organised the format of the

volunteer sessions in a way that worked best for them. The Case Study school preferred two children to be seen together in a 30 minute session, as this was seen as a way of minimising disruption:

- “In the volunteer sessions I have 2 children at a time. I hear the first one read and the other child reads to him or herself. We will have about 10 minutes reading through a book at the appropriate level – obviously helping them sound things out – decode words. And when that is over we will typically bring the other child in and play a game for 10 minutes and then I will listen to the second child read.”
- “One of the games ... is the card game SWAP, which they all really love. It is a letter patterns game. They get 7 cards each. They have to sound out the words and follow on with a card of the same letter pattern.”
- “One they particularly like [uses] the wooden letters. They have to give the sound and the names and then we play a game, e.g. ‘Would you give me a word which starts with that letter or ends with that letter?’ With the more capable children we will look for something in the word rather than the start of the word.”
- “I really enjoy the volunteer sessions – coming in and meeting the children – they are always pleased to see me.”

7.6 School perspective

- The school preferred volunteers to attend in the afternoons, to avoid pulling children out of literacy or numeracy lessons. All volunteers were able to accommodate this. However, it did limit the number of volunteers able to volunteer in the school in the second year of the project.
- Ideally, the school would have liked to use their own staff, citing the advantage of reliability and staff gaining greater insight into pupil progress, working on a one to one basis. However, due to the pressures within school, they recognised that this was not possible.
- The school clearly valued the volunteers and the work they did. The volunteer work was described as “priceless.”
- The school particularly valued the opportunity to have parents as volunteers. They felt it helped the parents to get to know the school better, and see the difference they were making:

“[They] feel valued ... [and] get a real sense of achievement.”
- The school gave the volunteers a thorough initial induction into school and ensured that support was on-going:

“The volunteers have been looked after by the staff they are working more closely with – as part of their inductions I will always to take them into meet the class teachers and TAs working in those areas. They are all positive about them.”

- The school noted that the way the Specialist Teacher and volunteers communicated worked well:

“I liked the liaising in the book between the Specialist Teacher and the volunteers ... having an opportunity to follow up a particular sound [the children] were struggling with was great.”

7.7 Volunteer perspective

- Volunteers also found the forms in the Volunteer File were an effective way of communication between Specialist Teacher and themselves:

“We had a file we could write notes on and got bits from the tutor saying if a child needed extra help on something.”

- All volunteers felt the school kept them well informed and supported. One volunteer described the relationship as, “Perfect!”

7.8 Benefits to volunteers

- “It has taught me about phonics.”
- “Yes, [I have benefited]. With the training we received, I have been able to take that further into my job as a TA – working with Y5 – [and] use [it] with those of ‘lower abilities’. I want to become a teacher.”
- “I have really enjoyed the whole Sound Check experience, and have learnt a lot myself.”

8 Sustainability

- At the end of the project the intervention and volunteer resources will be left with the school. The school has a history of using the core resource, the Active Literacy Kit, and is likely to continue to do so.
- The school has indicated that they value, and want to utilise in the future, the experience and knowledge that the Sound Check TA has gained.
- Although the school has the resources, and experience, the school feels that delivery by a Specialist Teacher has been a significant factor. Three Cohort 1 children had significant difficulties and continue to struggle:

“I worry about the children who continue to struggle, those that finished Sound Check last year, and now are really struggling to make progress in literacy. We are doing ALK but they have no specialist teacher coming in anymore.”

- School leadership will make specific decisions, based on factors such as staff levels and relative impacts of interventions:

“[I] presented a report to governors about Sound Check ... What we need to start looking at now is how we are going to continue this ourselves once ... support and input has gone. So we need to look at [whether to] ... get some more staff trained up. Are we going to use those staff for Sound Check rather than another intervention which is not having quite the impact that Sound Check has – it is about evaluating all your interventions, seeing where it has really made a difference or less so. It will be about whether we have the staffing and whether we can maintain that level of staffing.”

9 Conclusions

This Case Study brings together the perspectives of the children, parents, Specialist Teachers, class teachers, teaching assistants, volunteers and school leadership. This qualitative input collectively points to Sound Check being a successful intervention. The main factors identified include:

- Clear communication: Sound Check was perceived to have clearly communicated with the school and the school leadership clearly communicated with staff and parents. Everyone was aware of the purpose of Sound Check and their roles within it.
- Good management: The school leadership felt that Sound Check was well managed and that from their side, having a staff member in place to integrate Sound Check into the school was a significant factor in its success.
- Quality of the Specialist Teachers and volunteers:

“The quality of the people delivering the intervention from Sound Check, [including] volunteers, were of a very high quality and were very passionate and committed about it.”

- Appropriate intervention: The Specialist Teacher highlighted the strength of the intervention to meet the children’s needs. This was reflected in a number of factors including; perceived increases in confidence, concentration, perseverance and improvements in behaviour. A number of children reported enjoying reading and school more. All children rated their enjoyment of Sound Check sessions very highly.
- School leadership indicated that Sound Check, together with other factors, had resulted in an

“impact ... seen in outcomes in KS1 and in the Phonics Check ... We are above national average in both reading and the Phonics Check. That has been recognised by our School Improvement Officer and that has been passed onto the Local Authority as well.”

- The school reported wide ranging impact on the children on the Sound Check intervention:

“Yes, there has been an improvement in reading, but I think it is about the whole child and how they feel about learning. And how they feel about coming to school ... I hadn't really expected [this] as much, but that has definitely been a benefit.”



Manchester case study

1 Background

This school is located in Moss Side which, on the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), was ranked 1,349 out of 32,482 in England (where 1 is the most deprived and 32,482 the least deprived). Moss Side was in the bottom 10% for health (9%), employment (3%) and income deprivation (0%). The school has grown significantly since its last full Ofsted inspection in 2009 and now has 450 pupils on roll. 362 of these pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium. 101 pupils are on the Special Educational Needs Register although this figure also includes pupils who are on the pastoral support programme.

369 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and 27 different first languages are spoken. The main ethnic groups are Somali, Arabic and African Caribbean and the main languages are Somali, Brava and Arabic. 60% of families are asylum seeker families. There is now less mobility around the Somali families but mobility around the Arabic families remains high.

2 Involvement in Sound Check

The school was made aware of the project by one of the Saturday School teachers who had heard about Sound Check at a British Dyslexia Association (BDA) event. After discussing the project with the SENCo and seeing her enthusiasm, the head decided that the school would take part. The head spoke of the 'luxury' of being able to access expertise and training. The SENCo said that it hadn't been necessary to 'sell' the project to other staff as they 'embrace anything that's offered to them', especially the chance to provide extra support to the children.

3 The specialist teacher and the intervention

Although the specialist teacher does not have a specialist dyslexia qualification, she has completed a number of short courses including one on dyslexia and multilingualism. She has a post graduate certificate in education and has worked as an EAL tutor and consultant, a background that she feels has been very useful as the majority of the children on the intervention have English as an additional language. She previously worked with Springboard for Children, supporting children with their phonics in a very systematic way. Sound Check appealed to her because it offered the opportunity to focus on the specific areas with which the children were having difficulty.

The specialist teacher works through the Active Literacy Kit (ALK) activities, starting with the alphabet arc and doing vowel work and short word endings. She identifies the phonemes with which the children are struggling and works on one or two a

week. She is training the children to work in pairs and to learn to work more independently. She supplements the ALK resources with games she has made and with some of the school's phonics resources.

She says that the sessions enable the children to catch up on areas that they may have missed out on. They are able to practise in a safe environment, learning to ask questions and understanding that it does not matter if they make mistakes. Because of the small size of the groups, she can work at the children's pace and, as a result, the children gain in confidence. She feels that the focus on ensuring that the letter sounds, letter names and alphabetical order are secure and automatic makes this intervention different from other interventions.

The specialist teacher says that some of the children's difficulties stem from the fact that English is not their first language. They may not understand the content of what they are reading or they may not understand instructions. One child has physical difficulties and struggles to manipulate objects, other children have hearing difficulties or family issues which sometimes impact on their behaviour. Nevertheless, the specialist teacher feels that the Sound Check environment enables her to meet the children's needs and to see their improvement.

The SENCo attributes much of the success of the project to the specialist teacher:

Our specialist teacher is fantastic. She's very flexible in working... If there's something going on, she's quite happy to work around [it] or become involved. She comes into assemblies on occasion. We've just got a really positive working relationship, and I know she's valued by all the teachers. [There are] regular conversations with class teachers around the children, and she really goes the extra mile.

One of the class teachers remarked that the specialist teacher would come into her class most days and would let her know what the children were doing and how they were getting on. She said that this was really useful as she did not take these children for literacy. She felt that this input was useful for her when planning her afternoon sessions.

From the outset, schools were asked to provide a teaching assistant to assist with the delivery of the intervention. It was envisaged that this would make the sessions more effective, raise awareness of the intervention among staff and increase the likelihood of the long-term sustainability of the project.

In order to meet this requirement, the head teacher initially re-organised the staff structure so that a fifth adult could join KS1 in order to train alongside the specialist teacher and ultimately be able to deliver the intervention. During the first year of the intervention, a teaching assistant was present at most of the intervention sessions. She was able to work with individual children and free up the specialist teacher to work 1:1 with another child. She also assisted with the development of resources and

Funded by



collected the children from class, thereby giving the specialist teacher a few minutes to prepare for the next session.

At the end of the first year, this TA left the school due to family circumstances. Two TAs who were chosen to take over have been off school long-term due to an accident and a serious illness respectively. One staff member is due to return to work shortly and she hopes that their return will free up another member of staff to assist with the intervention.

4 The children's feelings about the intervention

The focus group children said that they enjoyed playing games and most of them liked playing with the swap cards the best. They seemed to enjoy the competitive element of swap. Several children said they liked Stile Dyslexia. One boy was very quiet during the focus group but he said that he liked stile because it had colour and he liked swap cards 'because you win.' Several children said they enjoyed doing the alphabet. One girl said:

It teaches me everything and I learn and do it quickly and get stickers. I like stickers.

Another girl said that she preferred games to reading and wanted to put the word lists at the bottom in the ranking activity. She said that she did not enjoy phonics in year 1 'because you had to read words.' She said that year 2 was worse because the level was harder. However, she rated her enjoyment of the Sound Check intervention sessions as 'High to the sky or to the heaven' because she had the opportunity to play games and practise the alphabet.

5 Impact of the intervention on the children

For the project children, the mean score in the 2014 Phonics Screening Check was 34, 16.5 points higher than the mean score of 17.5 in 2013 (see Table below). In addition, the case study revealed a significant amount of qualitative data relating to the children's progress.

The head said that the biggest benefit of the intervention was on the confidence of the children. She mentioned one boy who had been very far behind his peers and whose family had been going through some difficult times. At a lesson observation she had been 'astounded' at the extent to which the gap between him and his peers had been closed. She attributed the change to the consistency and quality of the input. With other children, the difference was less extreme but they had also gained confidence and moved up levels or sub levels.

	Phonics Check score 2012	Phonics Check score 2013	Phonics Check score 2014	Difference between 2013 and 2014	Difference between 2012 and 2013	Difference between 2012 and 2014
Cohort 1						
M0901	11	29	36	7	18	25
M0902	25	30	36	6	5	11
M0903	16	23	36	13	7	20
M0904	5	9	39	30	4	34
M0905	24	30	36	6	6	12
Mean	16.2	24.2	36.6	12.4	8	20.4
Cohort 2						
M0906		25	34	9		
M0908		25	34	9		
M0909		12	38	26		
M0910		25	32	7		
M0911		7	24	17		
M0912		0	33	33		
M0913		0	34	34		
M0914		19	35	16		
M0915		11	29	18		
Mean		13.8	32.6	18.8		

The SENCo also talked about the increased confidence of the children and their positive attitude:

They have a real can-do approach. They are enthusiastic, I mean, they skip over to the intervention. They absolutely love it so it's been really positive... they are definitely more likely to have a go. I can think of certain children who would be very reluctant for fear of failure. And they've now got that confidence and that boost in their self-esteem that they feel that they can do it for themselves.

One of the class teachers talked about a girl whose lack of phonic knowledge had been having an impact on her behaviour and she had been displaying avoidance tactics during literacy lessons. After joining the Sound Check intervention, there was a significant change in her attitude and she became more confident and was willing to try to sound out words.

In a monitoring questionnaire, a class teacher commented about another girl:

Although C has missed the final Sound Check assessment due to holiday, I would like to just say what a huge improvement I saw in her phonic knowledge and reading. Her engagement and independence has improved dramatically and she applied her phonic knowledge to her writing with such confidence. Thanks to Sound Check.

The class teachers reported that the children were applying what they had learnt in other contexts. One said that when she was walking around the class, she could sometimes hear the children referring to their Sound Check sessions and saying that Mrs B taught them how to do something in a particular way. Another commented that the children were now more likely to make use of other resources (such as phonics posters) in the learning environment. She felt that the children were more alert than they had been before the intervention.

One parent talked about the change in her son's attitude to reading since taking part in Sound Check. He now encourages his siblings to read and she has: to go to Asda and buy books! It's like a library in my home – big massive change – [It] happened last year.

The aunt of one of the year two children said that he did not like reading at all last year but now he loves it. She attributed this to the fact that he had learnt more sounds (both in Sound Check and Success for All (SFA)). Another aunt of the same child said that she thought it was beneficial when children get to work with somebody other than the class teacher as each teacher has a different way of teaching. She felt that her nephew now enjoyed reading and sounding out and this was due to the improvement he had made both from doing SFA and from taking part in the Sound Check intervention.

One of the volunteers was delighted when one of the children she was working with, returned from a school holiday and said:

'Miss I can read much better now you know'.

6 Impact of Sound Check staff training on the school

As part of the project, all schools received either one full day or two part days of training in phonics. The SENCo said that all KS1 teachers and the 'Roots' teachers have a good phonics knowledge whereas their key stage 2 colleagues who are not involved in 'Roots' teaching do not necessarily have such knowledge and she felt that the whole school training delivered by Springboard for Children training was particularly beneficial for them.

Funded by



Department for Education



The Table below indicates the extent to which the SENCo feels that the teachers' confidence had improved as a result of the staff training. (1 = None; 2 = Somewhat; 3 = Quite a lot; 4 = A lot)

	KS1				KS2			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
use of technical language of phonics.		✓					✓	
teaching phonics in a systematic and structured way.		✓					✓	
using a range of strategies to support the effective learning and teaching of phonics.		✓					✓	
knowledge of the content of the Phonics Screening Check.			✓				✓	
knowledge of the 'Sound Check' intervention programme.			✓				✓	
identifying the signs of SpLD/dyslexia.			✓				✓	
using strategies for supporting children with SpLD/dyslexia.		✓					✓	

When asked which aspects of the training might have contributed to the children in the first year of the project reaching the required standard in the Phonics Screening Check, she said that she thought it had all contributed:

It's all part of the bigger picture – it's very difficult to isolate something specific and say the impact it has or it hasn't had. It's definitely had a positive impact around everything but it's in conjunction with SFA (Success for All) and everything else.

7 Impact of Parent Workshops

The school had a parent workshop at the beginning of the project and then requested another workshop in the second year of the project. Both workshops were well

attended and positively received. The table below indicates the areas in which the SENCo feels that the workshops had a positive impact.

helping parents/carers understand phonics and early literacy skills	✓
helping parents/carers understand how phonics and early reading is taught in their school	✓
supporting their child at home with learning to read	✓
supporting their child at home with learning to spell	✓

The SENCO said that a lot of hard work had gone into parental involvement and that the school runs a lot of parental training which is always well attended. The school is currently running a family literacy course around phonics with Manchester Adult Education Service and parents attending that course were invited to the second parent workshop. She commented that parents were now using some of the information provided in the ‘whole school training’ with their children at home.

The parent focus group was attended by a parent of two children who took part in the intervention in the first year of the project and by two aunts of a child currently doing the intervention. One of the aunts said that she had attended both parent workshops and found them useful:

We know about the sounds – we learned how to pronounce them. The sounding out and blending activity was useful.

She said that she used the phoneme frames and a chart for blending sounds. She started giving her nephew pictures and asking him to identify the sounds and then write the letters. She said that he was now good with the sounds but still made some mistakes with spelling.

She said that they had been given some useful websites during the training. She mentioned one called Phonics Genius which she uses on a regular basis:

I do a new word every day – [his] spelling has improved. Before he would say ‘oh no!’ when reading. He would do it but wouldn’t enjoy it. Now he enjoys reading.

8 Impact of Volunteer Component

8.1 Implementation

Funded by



Department for Education



It was originally envisaged that volunteers would provide their input on days that the specialist teacher was not in school. The rationale for this was that the project input would be spread over more days and also that the children would not be removed from class twice on the same day. One volunteer said that she was very conscious of the lack of opportunity to meet the specialist teacher and how this left her feeling 'a bit disconnected'. The SENCo was 'really welcoming and friendly' but could not necessarily answer specific queries about the intervention. Another volunteer said that she felt unsure of the children's level and felt that she would have benefitted from more direct contact with the specialist teacher.

Because of their timetable constraints, some of the volunteers did go in on the same day as the specialist teacher and felt that the face-to-face contact was invaluable. Other volunteers had an initial face-to-face meeting with the specialist teacher and found that extremely helpful.

Although the volunteers felt that a personal handover was best, most of them said that the specialist teacher was accessible by email and that they found the teacher-volunteer handover sheets useful.

8.2 Motivation for volunteering

6 volunteers were interviewed for the case study. Four of them are speech therapy students and heard about the project via a departmental email. One volunteer found the opportunity on the Do-It volunteering website and another heard about it at a BDA (Dyslang project) event. The speech therapy students were keen to get some hands on experience of working in a school and interacting with young children and felt that the project linked naturally with their course. Another volunteer said that she was teaching children at the Saturday school and, although she was adult literacy trained, she had never trained to work with children. This and the fact that she had a grandson on the way made her interested in learning about how children learn to read and speak.

8.3 Impact of the volunteer training

The volunteers felt that the initial training had been very useful. Some of the elements they highlighted included the chance to meet other volunteers and form a supportive group, the introduction to phonics, the explanation how to use various games and activities and being given an information pack for reference.

8.4 The volunteer sessions

The volunteers said that they really enjoyed seeing the children enjoy themselves while simultaneously practising and improving. For the speech therapy students, the sessions provided good experience of learning how to interact with children. They had already had some clinical experience but this gave them the opportunity to work

Funded by



Department for Education



in a different, more relaxed atmosphere. One volunteer said that the volunteering enabled her to try out some of the techniques that she had learned on her course and which she could continue to use when working as a speech therapist. She also felt that it was valuable to learn about the difficulties that children can have with their speech, language and literacy and how all of it is interconnected. She also praised the quality of the resources and commented that whatever you wanted to do with a particular child, there was always a Swap game, book or board available.

8.5 Impact of the volunteering on the children

The head said that the relationships that the children have with the volunteers is 'absolutely key'. She said that the time spent with a 'nurturing adult' had a positive impact on the children's reading, phonics and confidence. She praised the volunteer input, saying that:

The quality of the volunteers we've had has been second to none.

She said that the volunteers understood the school and its context and shared the staff vision and determination that children should not be allowed to 'fall through the net'. She commented that the volunteers fitted in with the caring environment of the school and had taken on board a lot of the school's positive behaviour management.

One of the class teachers commented that the children were excited about going to their sessions with the volunteers. Even children who can sometimes be 'quite stubborn' had shown no reluctance in working with the volunteers. She said that the children loved receiving stickers and coming back to class and telling their peers what they had been doing.

The SENCo also commented on the value of the volunteer input. She singled out two of the volunteers from the first year of the project, both experienced teachers of adult learners, describing them as 'amazing' and the impact they had had on the children as 'massive'. She feels that the volunteer component is fundamental to the success of the project:

because it gives the children the opportunity to practise the skills that they've learnt. It gives them the opportunity to develop a meaningful relationship with another adult, somebody they know is there just for them. There's that continuity and security around them. And it's also giving them a chance to practise reading. They might not necessarily get that opportunity at home.

9 Sustainability

The head is confident that there will soon be a TA available to assist with the intervention. This should ensure that the resources continue to be used once the project has finished. One class teacher has already observed the specialist teacher

Funded by



Department for Education



and said that she thought that everyone should have the opportunity to observe. She described the session as:

a great eye opener for me in terms of looking at the way that she delivered the session – very clear, very repetitive. [It] made me think about the intervention work that the TA was doing with a target group of children [and] getting her to do it in a more Sound Check way.

The SENCO commented that the skills displayed in Sound Check sessions were being incorporated into class and that a second class teacher was planning to observe the intervention. When asked about the legacy of Sound Check, the SENCo identified the additional skills that the class teachers and the TAs had picked up from the 'whole school training' Springboard for Children training and from the specialist teacher.

10 Conclusions

It is clear from the data gathered in the interviews and focus groups that Sound Check has been very well received and has had a positive impact at this case study school. This section will identify the main factors that appear to have contributed to this success.

1. The head was involved in the process from the start. She consulted senior members of staff and immediately assigned the lead role to the SENCo. She made changes to the staffing structure to enable a TA to assist with the intervention. Flexibility was shown in other ways too. For example, the school was able to accommodate a volunteer's varied availability and find her a place to work despite the pressure on space.
2. The SENCo has been committed to the project throughout. As well as completing the necessary paperwork, she was able to provide a room for a volunteer training session and was happy to carry out the induction of volunteers. The proximity between her room and the intervention room facilitates frequent contact and ensures that the volunteers do not feel they are operating in isolation – something reported by volunteers at other schools. In the first year of the project, the SENCo also organised a meeting for parents to meet the volunteers and specialist teacher. The head attributes much of the project's success to the determination and commitment of the SENCo and to the effective sharing of information about individual children.
3. The head and SENCo are committed to ensuring the sustainability of Sound Check and are making efforts to ensure that a TA assists with the intervention from January 2015. One class teacher has already said that observing the intervention has impacted on her practice and another class teacher is planning to observe.

4. The specialist teacher's previous experience of working with EAL children and of working for Springboard for Children is likely to have had contributed to the success of the intervention at the school. She attended the first staff training session which meant that staff were familiar with her from the start. She passed articles in the Sound Check newsletter to the SENCo and the TA working with her. She has shown great flexibility and has communicated with class teachers throughout the project.
5. The volunteers have proved very high quality and reliable, carrying out their sessions regularly and communicating with the regional project manager and the school.
6. All the volunteers said that the school was very friendly and welcoming. Messages were passed to volunteers by staff at the front desk, the SENCo responded promptly to emails, the head teacher greeted volunteers and thanked them for volunteering. This has inevitably contributed to the good retention of volunteers at this school. Two volunteers from the first year of the intervention have continued to volunteer into the second year.
7. There appears to be a very collaborative approach between class teachers and volunteers. A class teacher said that a child sometimes misses something important when they go out for their volunteer sessions in the afternoon but she or the TA is happy to sit with the child and help them to catch up. There is an appreciation of the impact that the Sound Check sessions are having and a willingness to accommodate them. Equally, the volunteers are willing to show flexibility. A class teacher said that if a volunteer comes to collect a child just as that child is about to grasp a new concept, she will ask the volunteer to wait for a moment. She said that the volunteer will observe and will then talk to the child about what they have just learnt.
8. A conscious attempt has been made to provide feedback to volunteers by the SENCO, the specialist teacher and the regional project manager. One volunteer commented on this and said that she had previously worked on projects where she felt that she was having an impact but she could not really tell. The volunteer received the following email from the specialist teacher:

I know that you built up a particularly good relationship with Z which has been wonderful for his self-esteem. He has made very good progress in reading – when tested at school he had made 4 progress points (the expected progress is 2!). T has also made way above expected progress – 5 for reading and 3 for writing!

9. There appears to be good communication and a supportive attitude between different members of staff. Class teachers were consulted about the original selection of children for the intervention. When the SENCO was absent, the

pastoral manager became the main contact for the volunteers and carried out volunteer inductions. She and the deputy head teacher took over arrangements for the parent workshop. Staff are aware of what goes on in the intervention sessions. One class teacher commented that a child might be walking up the corridor and have three different members of staff approach them and say that they had heard that the child has done some amazing work.

10. The relationship between staff and parents is also very positive at the school. This was mentioned in the SENCo interview but it is also apparent when you spend a few minutes in reception and see the interaction between parents and staff. The school builds on its positive relationship with parents and events are effectively promoted. For example, the parent workshop was advertised on the video screen in reception and a short video clip is available on the school website.
11. It was apparent from the various interviews and the parent focus group that it is difficult to ascertain the impact of Sound Check in isolation. It seems likely that a combination of Sound Check and Success for All have resulted in the marked improvement in the children's phonics skills. The TA who assisted in the first year of the project said that she felt that the two programmes had complemented each other very successfully. It would be interesting to compare the experience of X with a school that uses Letters and Sounds or Read, Write Inc.



Swindon case study

1 Background

Established in 2006, the school is located in North Swindon (St Andrews ward) and since opening has experienced rapid growth. This is a larger than average primary school; the current number of pupils on roll stands at 547. The school caters for children aged 3 – 11, from nursery through to the end of the primary range at 11 years old. Most pupils are of white British origin; current figures indicate 78 pupils as EAL (14%).

The school has two special provisions, one for hearing impaired pupils who attend from across the borough and one for learning difficulties and disabilities. 103 pupils are on the school SEND register (19%); lower than national average. 74 children are eligible for pupil premium which is lower than average.

The school has been successful in gaining many awards including the Healthy Schools Award, Basic Skills Award, ECO Award Silver, International Schools Award (intermediate level), Investors in People, Activemark, and the Swindon Dyslexia Friendly Schools Award. The school was last inspected in November 2013 where they achieved 'Good' status (the school achieved 'outstanding' status in their previous inspection).

2 Involvement in Sound Check

The school reports that their reason for coming onto the project was poor phonics scores recorded at the launch of the project in June 2013. Improvement in phonics provision within the school had been identified by the Senior Management Team (SMT) as a key area within the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Initially, the school were informed of Sound Check through an invitation letter issued to the school at the time the SIP had been published. The head teacher issued this information to the Curriculum Lead for KS2 and the Literacy Co-ordinator KS2 to investigate potential impact for the school in terms of logistical issues such as timetabling, room availability, implied costs, etc. Once these issues had been investigated to her satisfaction a meeting was arranged and the project launched.

3 The specialist teacher and the intervention

The Specialist Teacher, J, considers herself to be 'recently qualified', having attained her certificate in dyslexia and literacy through the University of York and Dyslexia Action three years ago. Whilst undertaking her studies she was engaged as an Assistant SENCo and English Teacher at a secondary school. Her drive and motivation comes from seeing, at first hand, pupils within this setting that could not read as well as links between literacy difficulties and behavioural issues.

Funded by



Department for Education



‘This is why this programme is so important to me as we need to get this right, we need to teach these children the letter names and their letters sounds, their pure sounds and reading before they get into the secondary setting and face that situation.’

This is the first time that J has used the Active Literacy Kit (ALK), which she supplements with Smart Chute and Stile to reinforce learning. Her approach is flexible to accommodate the level of each child engaged on the programme:

‘what I am doing is teaching new skills, reinforcing [and] over learning those skills and teaching those children to be fluent and automatic so that they don’t even have to think about decoding and spelling in that it is so automatic to them.’

J has also recognised that it is important to encourage independence within her sessions and practices ‘thinking time’ with the children to allow them time to think about a question or a task.

J commented that a number of people within the school see the benefits of ALK as an intervention as it comes in at a lower level and allows children to almost start from scratch.

‘A focus on picture sound knowledge is essential as many other interventions will build on the assumption that a child has this knowledge secured and as we have seen with these Sound Check children, this is not always the case.’

‘I love seeing the difference in these children. All of the children come in desperate to learn, sometimes they bring in an attitude with them that they ‘can’t do it’ and they are quickly surprised by what they can do.’

‘They love coming to the sessions as the activities are not threatening to them. We will go over and over the same ground as many times as they need to [until] they get very comfortable with it. They love knowing that they know something and I love seeing the children flourish and they flourish very quickly!’

The school supports children from a wide demographic and with differing Special Educational Needs. For varying reasons, some of the children have little support at home or are facing very difficult circumstances at home. One child engaged on the project, for example, is the only hearing child in a deaf environment in which both parents and siblings are hearing impaired. This child has speech and language issues and more recently was confirmed to be on the ASD spectrum, which has presented a challenge within the intervention sessions.

When questioned on this further J commented that for her the challenge is to turn such situations around into a positive experience:

‘When he first came to me he only knew the letters ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’, and ‘d’ by name.... I also needed to manage his Asperger’s as well as teaching him literacy. Through observing him and through listening to him I now have a better understanding of what his needs are where he is coming from and this has definitely improved my

teaching. A part of that applies to the other children - what is good teaching for him is good teaching for everyone else.'

4 The children's feelings about the intervention

Findings from the pupil focus group (Monkey in the Tree Activity) revealed that all of the children interviewed gave a 'high' rating to attending the Sound Check sessions. Comments captured include:

'Mrs X (Specialist Teacher) makes lessons fun'

'She (the Specialist Teacher) is lovely. She teaches me spellings and how to speak (letters) lovely'

'I like to use the pen and white board to spell and practise my letters'

'The lessons are really friendly and a bit funny'

Three of the six children interviewed rated playing the SWAP cards as their favourite activity, two children selected the blindfold game (ALK Activity) as their favourite, and the remaining child said that she loved 'all of it'.

The popularity of SWAP Cards was confirmed by the two groups of two children who took part in the Diamond Ranking Activity. In both cases, SWAP cards were selected as the favourite activity, followed by working in a group to complete activities. For both groups, working with the ALK alphabet arc and picture / sound / letter activities were rated in the middle of the grid, while spelling and hand writing exercises were identified as their least favourite activity!

5 Impact of the Intervention on phonics results

The school has seen a vast improvement in its phonics results over the period that the project has been in place.

	2014	2013	2012
Year 1 phonics results	83.4%	56%	48%
Year 2 phonics results	87%		

Whilst this improvement cannot be attributed solely to the Sound Check project, the Head acknowledges that Sound Check has had a significant impact.

Project results recorded for the school are similar to the school's overall results.

Participant	Check score 2012	Check score 2013	Check score 2014
S0801	20	30	39
S0802	19	25	37
S0803	21	23	36
S0804	7	21	32
S0805	6	20	33
S0806	4	19	31
S0807	14	17	25
S0808	2	8	15
S0809		7	30
S0810		29	39
S0811		13	37
S0812		13	40
S0813		17	40
S0814		26	39
S0815		23	39
S0816		14	37
S0817		22	40
S0818		8	37
S0819		25	31
S0820		21	40

Literacy and phonics targets within the school have focused upon closing the gap of poor phonics performance identified within the SIP and the results from Sound Check have directly contributed toward this. All class teachers have had an opportunity to observe J in her intervention sessions, and J has ensured that anyone coming into a session gets involved with helping to deliver the session.

The biggest impact seen within the school has been the improvement in pupil confidence, reported by the Head Teacher, Class Teachers and the two main project leads school (Head of KS 2 Curriculum and KS 2 Literacy Coordinator), parents and volunteers.

Funded by



One Class Teacher reported:

‘The biggest impact that I have seen is that they (Sound Check children) now have a go at writing things down. It’s not always successful but they want to have a go and that’s the important thing... putting pen on paper and linking with the phonics – they are doing more handwriting and have just realised that it is all linked to what they have been learning’.

The school no longer streams children; this means that all children are working together in the classroom at the same time and have wider exposure to pure sounds, hearing phonemes within discussions rather than being removed from this environment and missing key aspects to their learning.

When looking at the wider impact of the project on the school, the KS2 lead reported that the Specialist Teacher alerted her to the fact that alphabet instruction at foundation stage was not having a positive impact on learning. Children were coming into the intervention knowing the ‘song’ for the alphabet but not knowing what it meant. This information has now been fed back to the foundation team and corrective measures put in place.

All stakeholders contributing to the case study have singled out the Specialist Teacher for particular comment in terms of her knowledge, her easy relationship with the children, and the way she has fitted in with the ethos of the school. This has had a significant impact on the school. Many of the Class Teachers have commented that it has been very reassuring to have J available to refer to when discussing issues of particular children, their traits and behaviours.

The Specialist Teacher adopts a process where the children teach themselves to boost their confidence and develop a ‘can do’ attitude to their learning. This is something that they continue to do when they return to the classroom. This has been commented upon by the class teachers and identified to the school project leads as a positive experience for those children and their peers.

6 Impact of Sound Check staff training on the school

The two school project leads were interviewed separately in order to gain their response to the training received by the school from the Sound Check project.

When asked to give their opinions on the quality of phonics teaching before and after delivery of the Sound Check training, both stated that before the quality was ‘weak’ and after it was ‘good’.

The table below records the responses collected regarding improvement in teachers’ confidence against the list of topics provided:

(1 = None; 2 = Somewhat; 3 = Quite a lot; 4 = A lot)

	KS1				KS2			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Use of technical language of phonics.				✓				✓
Teaching phonics in a systematic and structured way.				✓				✓
Using a range of strategies to support the effective learning and teaching of phonics.				✓			✓	
Knowledge of the content of the Phonics Screening Check.				✓		✓		
Knowledge of the 'Sound Check' intervention programme.				✓			✓	
Identifying the signs of SpLD/dyslexia.				✓				✓
Using strategies for supporting children with SpLD/dyslexia.				✓				✓

The activity has revealed a training need for greater understanding of the Phonics Screening Check throughout KS2 and this is something that the school intends to put into action.

School staff have received a lot of training in phonics since the introduction of Sound Check and therefore it is difficult to attribute improvements directly to the training delivered by the project. The key areas of impact have been identified as follows:

- Teaching phonics in a more structured and systematic way
- Teaching to what the children know
- Removal of streaming for phonics
- Strategies to support effective learning in phonics

7 Impact of Parent Workshops

The parent workshop was held in 2013 at the beginning of the project. Historically the school has always struggled to obtain good attendance to information events for parents; however, the Sound Check parent workshop attracted an unprecedented 92 attendees. The success of the attendance was put down to the timing (the session was held at pick-up time) and provision by the school of a crèche facility to ensure parents' full engagement.

The two school project leads were asked about the areas of the training that are thought to have had the greatest impact on parents. The following results were recorded:

(1 = None; 2 = Somewhat; 3 = Quite a lot; 4 = A lot)

Helping parents/carers understand phonics and early literacy skills	3
Helping parents/carers understand how phonics and early reading is taught in their school	3
Supporting their child at home with learning to read	3
Supporting their child at home with learning to spell	2

Two Parent Focus Groups were held within the school to discuss the experiences of parents of children engaged on the project. These Focus Groups were held on the same day; one event in the morning (at drop off time) was attended by two parents, while the second event, held in the afternoon to coincide with collection time, was attended by five parents.

A key comment recorded referred to the size of the parent workshop and that it was a little intimidating. Two of the parents interviewed commented that they felt too self-conscious to put up their hands and ask questions.

All parents agreed that it was really useful to see the whole project team present at the workshop (the event was attended by the Specialist Teacher, Regional Project Manager, and the two school project leads) and that they could approach the project leads immediately following the event.

One parent commented:

'The parent workshop helped me to understand just how much I didn't know. I asked my child about some of the terms that were mentioned at the event. She loved the fact

that she knew things that I didn't know and I could see how this got her interested and boosted her confidence. We have continued like this from the start of Sound Check'.

8 The Volunteer Component

8.1 Motivation for volunteering

Throughout Swindon, the volunteer cohort has largely been formed of parents and grandparents of children attending the school. In addition, there has been a strong element of volunteers using Sound Check as an opportunity to embark upon TA training and to pursue a career in education. This has certainly been the case within this school.

Two volunteers were interviewed for this case study. The first has children who used to attend the school, while the second has a child still attending the school. The latter is further motivated by recently completing her TA training within the borough.

8.2 The volunteer training

Both of the volunteers interviewed found the training helpful, although it was felt that the content of the training session made more sense when they saw the Specialist Teacher conducting her session.

One of the volunteers commented that it would have been helpful to have scheduled this in before the training sessions.

8.3 The volunteer sessions

Both of the volunteers interviewed stated that they really enjoyed working with the project children. They particularly liked seeing the growth in children's confidence and helping them to develop a 'have a go' attitude to reading and sounding out words. One of the volunteers commented that for her there was nothing better than seeing a 'lights on' moment with a child she was supporting. She was able to give an example of a reluctant reader who now can't wait to read to her - 'where it was a battle for me to get him to read a page, he now gets upset that we can't finish the whole book in one of our sessions'.

In order to support the volunteer sessions, the Specialist Teacher maintains good channels of communication:

'I keep a reading folder for each child. I read the volunteer messages each week, always thank them and respond to comments they make. I try to explain my suggestions, so that they understand why they are being asked to do something and I also try to make it fun so that they and the child really enjoy the session.'

However, J recognises the need for increased opportunities for communication:

‘I have to be very careful about what I ask the volunteers to do. I work on the basis that they have been taught pure sounds and that they understand the importance of promoting these. I have to trust that this is happening, otherwise Sound Check teaching is undermined. I think there needs to be far more face to face communication time built in for specialist teachers and volunteers – as indeed there does between class teachers and specialist teachers.’

8.4 Impact of the volunteering on the children

The inclusion of volunteers within the Sound Check structure has been seen as a real benefit by the school. The KS2 Literacy Coordinator has commented that having ‘trained and knowledgeable volunteers available to the school is a real benefit and one that I had not actually considered before. It would be really helpful for us to keep these individuals on at school post Sound Check to continue their good work’. She continues that:

‘As a school we struggle to get volunteers and the fact that we were able to say that this was something new and completely different, run by organisations external to the school and that training would be provided, was seen as a very positive message’.

9 Sustainability

The approach taken by the school to the project has certainly helped to achieve a smooth transition and launch. The school SIP had already identified a need for improvement and Sound Check was seen as filling this gap. There is no doubt that ‘buy-in’ was largely achieved as a result of SMT backing for the project, providing a firm footing within the school from the off.

As confirmed by the Head Teacher, the steps that were taken at the very beginning of the project were of crucial importance; i.e. it was only when timetabling issues were sorted out (to ensure that children did not miss the same lessons every week and that intervention groups were rotated throughout the week) and room availability was established, that the school gave their agreement to commence with the project. Logistical issues such as these can have an extremely detrimental effect on the success of a project if they are not agreed at the outset.

Despite initial planning, however, the fact remains that space is at a premium and the Specialist Teacher reported that on occasion she would be asked to vacate her room with little notice if a pressing issue arose (safeguarding, for example). It is down to her flexibility and ability to think creatively about her delivery that the impact of such disturbances were contained.

One of the challenges for the Specialist Teacher has been delivering the ALK programme to groups of children.

'The ALK is a marvellous resource activity for childrenbut it is designed for children to work in pairs and balancing 3 or 4 childrenat the ages of 6 and 7 it is very difficult for them to go off and work independently.....Progressing their learning was the most difficult thing as I could not effectively time their activity and could not record just how much they were learning and often we would get distracted by one child in the classroom'.

For this reason, dedicated TA support has been recognised as essential to the success of the project; however, in this school, this element has only become firmly established in year two of the project. The Specialist Teacher now has the support of two TAs, one from Year 2 and one from Year 3, and this is clearly having a positive impact on the children's experience of Sound Check. Furthermore, the TAs have commented that they are able to reinforce Sound Check learning when they return to the classroom with the children engaged on the project.

As reported above, two TAs have now been assigned to support the Specialist Teacher and it has been reported that 'children are really enjoying having someone else working with them.' During the week, one TA reinforces previous learning from ALK exercises with Sound Check children. This has made a huge difference to their progress, confidence and motivation.

'Now in Year 3, Pupil X has learned his letter names from A-Z (having only known A-D previously) and despite speech and language impairments, his pure sounds have really improved to the point where he is more compelled to have a go at decoding. Pupil Y who needs lots of overlearning and reinforcement for dyslexic tendencies, is also far more confident and willing to decode and apply reading attack strategies than he was in September.'

The involvement of TAs is also seen as having a positive impact on the school as a whole. J commented:

'This is now leaving a legacy for the school. They are both very interested and taking it all inthe insights they are giving me are probably deeper than they realise. We are benefiting all round.'

It is also reported that the new Cohort 3 group arrived with far better knowledge and appreciation of pure sounds than last year's groups. The SMT are set to ensure that letter names are taught at an earlier stage in the curriculum this year. The Specialist Teacher has commented that:

'I think there's also a greater awareness of the phonological needs of children who have speech and language difficulties with regard to learning to read and write. For example, rhyming pairs did become more of a feature on spelling lists last year and Sound Check children do tend to become pure sound disciples in class!'

10 Conclusions

1. 'Buy-in' from the Head Teacher has been achieved from the outset of the project. There is no doubt that the timing of the project played a significant role in its successful incorporation within the school. However, the fact that the Head Teacher gave very public support to Sound Check has been of huge benefit to its operation. The Head Teacher was insistent that any logistical issues should be settled before the school gave its commitment. The two school project leads were then charged with the task of timetabling the intervention sessions within the appropriate year groups to make sure that key lessons such as literacy and numeracy were not missed by children attending the intervention. The solution presented to the Head Teacher involved children being rotated within their intervention groups to ensure that the same lessons were not missed each week and that class teachers were fully informed of the project time table. Room allocation also played a key role in the school's decision to accommodate Sound Check. As in all schools, 'space' is at a premium; having benefitted from a small intervention room throughout year one of the project, during year two Sound Check took residence in a purpose built meeting room, constructed out of a space made available within the foyer of the school building.

2. 'Buy-in' from Class Teachers has been evident throughout the course of the project within this school. It is acknowledged that the involvement and public support of the project from the Head Teacher will have influenced the attitudes of staff to Sound Check; however, recognition is to be given to the approach taken by the school to ensure effective 'buy-in'. The process began with a staff meeting for all members to be informed of Sound Check and to ask any questions and raise any comments / suggestions / concerns. This was quickly followed by the INSET training event delivered by Springboard as part of the project. Class teachers commented that they felt they were well informed and understood why certain children within their class would benefit from the intervention. The litmus test for this was, of course, the ease with which children were taken out of class to attend the intervention and then returned to their lessons. When asked about this element of operational practice, class teachers interviewed commented:

'We have such good support staff in my classroom, they would record the bits they missed ready for when they returned. This was one aspect that I was really worried about but we are so on top of thislet's face it, it's for such a short period of time and it is so important [for them to attend].'

'We have got into a really good pattern with this we simply look in their books to see what they missed for that period when they were in the intervention and we make sure they catch up accordingly'

'They settle down really quickly and are not disruptive so it's fine, we work it out.'

3. Consistent TA support made available to the project within its second year has had a significant impact on the project, both in terms of pupil progress and delivery. Having experienced sporadic TA support during the first year of the project, the Specialist Teacher has seen the benefits of being allocated consistent TA support during the second year. The difference this has made within the intervention sessions has been significant in assisting with activities and allowing children to work effectively in pairs. This has reinforced the necessity of TA presence within the Sound Check model.
4. Collaborative working between Class Teachers and the Specialist Teacher has been positively commented on throughout this case study. Class Teachers engaged in the Sound Check process have all given examples of how they (and their pupils) have benefitted from the flexible and accommodating approach of the Specialist Teacher. J has been sought out as a point of reference and expertise for referral discussions regarding individual pupils and the difficulties they have displayed within the classroom setting. The result of these discussions has led to changes in teaching approach for certain pupils and in some cases referral to the Educational Psychologist and other specialist provision.

A softer outcome of this approach by the Specialist Teacher has also been recorded in comments received from Class Teachers and the two school project leads. By J having such a presence within the school she has been seen as a member of staff and a member of a team. Her comments, knowledge and opinion have been greatly valued and as such she has helped to remove the 'external' feel of the project in that the school has gained more ownership.

5. The allocation of two project leads from within the school has also had a significant impact on the success of the project. These two individuals are well respected by colleagues, volunteers and parents, and their positions within the school, i.e. Curriculum Lead for KS2 and the Literacy Co-ordinator KS2, has not only ensured a sound knowledge of the children engaged on the project but also an appropriate standing within the school in implementing change and co-operation. Throughout the project there has always been two points of contact for information and decision making for both internal and external stakeholders.

Glossary

Active Literacy Kit (ALK) - offers a series of short timed exercises, which have been designed to build the skills needed for automatic, fluent and accurate reading and spelling. Carefully structured activities cover phonological awareness, word recognition, phonics, graphic knowledge and spelling. The ALK covers basic sound-to-letter correspondence through fluent reading and spelling of consonant-vowel-consonant words (e.g. cat, mat, fat).

alphabet arc – involves using wooden or magnetic letters to arrange the alphabet into an arc and to practise saying letter sounds and letter names.

blending – involves saying the sounds that make up a word and merging the sounds together to make that word.

Letters and Sounds - a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007. It aims to 'build children's speaking and listening skills in their own right as well as to prepare children for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge and skills'.

phonemes – the smallest units of sound in a language. English has approximately 44 phonemes.

phoneme frames – grids used for children to practise segmenting words into individual phonemes. For example, the word 'wood' would go into three separate boxes: 'w', 'oo' and 'd'.

Read Write Inc. - developed by Ruth Miskin, is a whole-school literacy programme for 4-11-year-olds 'designed to create fluent readers, confident speakers and willing writers'.

Saturday School – Mrs D's Saturday Supplementary School (run at the Manchester case study school by The Louise Da-Cocodia Education Trust which works in support of the educational attainment of young people in the community).

Stile Dyslexia - an activity where the pupils answer phonics questions by placing numbered tiles on a tray to produce a geometric pattern

Success for All (SFA) - The Manchester case study school uses an intervention programme called 'Success for All' which is used in 'over 130 schools across the UK'. The children are divided into 'Roots' and 'Wings' groups according to ability. Children with a national curriculum level of 2c and below in reading and writing are in 'Roots' groups.

Swap cards - boxed card games covering word families and suffixing/prefixing rules

Report on Whole School Training and Parent/Carer Workshops

Funded by



Department for Education



Introduction

Springboard for Children delivered whole school phonics training titled 'Fundamental Phonics' as part of the Sound Check project across the two year project. The aim of the training was to revise and revisit basic phonics knowledge and understanding for whole school staff teams including class teachers in KS2, teaching assistants and additional support staff. It was also to increase class teachers' and support staff's confidence and ability in teaching high quality phonics lessons and interventions. The content of the training and suggested approaches and activities were based on a range of phonics schemes and programmes popular in schools. As the new National Curriculum highlights phonics as the 'prime approach to learning to read', the training emphasised that all school staff from Nursery to Upper Key Stage 2 should be skilled practitioners in delivering a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. Springboard stipulated that all members of school staff attend the training. However, some schools chose not to include teaching assistants due to the session being an after school twilight, while others felt it was only appropriate for Foundation Stage and KS1 members of staff to receive the training.

In September 2014, Springboard for Children contacted the 17 schools who had received both the whole day's training and the Parent Workshop (excluding the three case study schools). 9 schools (3 in each area) agreed to take part in the survey via a telephone interview carried out during October 2014 and December 2014. Participants included a range of school leaders: Deputy Headteachers, Assistant Headteachers, KS1 Phase Leaders and SENCOs.

Results of the Survey

1. Quality of Phonics Teaching – Before and After Training

Schools were asked to grade the quality of phonics teaching across the school before and after the Sound Check training as either Inadequate, Weak, Good or Excellent. The table below shows each school's response:

School leaders who reported no change in the quality of teaching after the training said that they had already received current phonics training prior to the Sound Check training and that phonics and literacy were a high priority in their schools.

Name of school	Quality of phonics teaching BEFORE training	Quality of phonics teaching AFTER training
Baguley Hall Primary**, Manchester	EYFS – Excellent KS1 – Good	EYFS – Excellent KS1 – Good

	KS2 - Weak	KS2 – Good
Holy Name RC Primary, Manchester	Good	Excellent
Newall Green Primary, Manchester	Good	Good
Greenhill Primary, Leeds	Weak	Good
Meadowfield Primary, Leeds	Good	Good
St Matthew’s CE Primary, Leeds	Weak	Good (strong)
Lethbridge Primary, Swindon	Good	Excellent
Eldene Primary, Swindon	Good	Good
Millbrook Primary, Swindon	Good	Good

**Within the last 3 years this school has had a big drive in pushing phonics.

2. Teacher’s confidence in phonics

The 9 school leaders interviewed were asked to indicate the extent to which KS1 and KS2 teachers’ confidence has improved in each of the areas covered in the training using the following grading: 1 = None; 2 = Somewhat; 3 = Quite a lot; 4 = A lot.

The table below shows the number of responses given for each grading.

It is interesting to note that all schools felt the training to have had a greater impact on KS2 staff. This confirmed our original belief that teachers at KS2 would have previously had less experience of teaching phonics and would particularly benefit from the training.

	KS1				KS2			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
use of technical language of phonics.	3	2	2	2		3	5	1
teaching phonics in a systematic and structured way.	2	4	1	2		5	4	
using a range of strategies to support the effective learning and teaching of phonics.	2	3	2	2		5	4	
knowledge of the content of the Phonics Screening Check.	5	1	1	2		3	5	1
knowledge of the 'Sound Check' intervention programme.			5	4		2	4	3
identifying the signs of SpLD/dyslexia.		6	1	1		6	2	
using strategies for supporting children with SpLD/dyslexia.		7		1		7	1	

Schools that rated the training as not having improved teachers' confidence also added that over recent years, they had had a drive in improving teachers' phonics skills and confidence in teaching phonics. Baguley Hall Primary, Manchester, said that their teachers had received recent training on a local phonics programme. Eldene Primary, Swindon, did not grade 'Identifying the signs of SpLD' or 'Using strategies for supporting children with dyslexia' as they have previously gained LEA 'Dyslexia Friendly School' accreditation. Similarly, Millbrook Primary, Swindon, added that by having the Swindon SpLD team based at their school, they felt that they were well-equipped in identifying and supporting pupils with SpLD and dyslexia. The impact of the training was felt to be greatest in Greenhill Primary, Leeds where it was reported that all aspects of the training had hugely raised KS1 teachers' confidence. Staff in this school had had a detailed discussion about the methods and approaches they used and, as a result, the quality of phonics teaching progressed from 'Weak' to 'Good' in KS1 and in KS2.

3. Aspects of the training that may have contributed to pupils reaching the required standard in the Phonics Screening Check

We asked the 9 schools to tell us which elements of the training (listed in the table above) may have contributed to children reaching the required standard in the Phonics Screening Check. Schools feedback on this was:

- Teaching phonics in a systematic and structured way (2*)
- Using a range of strategies to support the effective learning and teaching of phonics (2)
- Identifying pupils with SpLD/dyslexia (2)
- Use of technical language (1)
- The elements on dyslexia were beneficial and had raised awareness on dyslexia (1)
- Having received knowledge of the Sound Check intervention helped and the ability to work with Sound Check teachers and TAs who support the session were much more able to focus on individual children's needs (1)
- Support staff benefitted from gaining a range of strategies (1)
- Having received knowledge of the content of the Phonics Check and the use of real and nonsense words (1)
- The training was very useful and refreshed teacher's knowledge and understanding of phonics (1)

*numbers refer to the number of schools that reported this element.

4. Changes in KS1 and KS2 since the training

We asked schools to share with us any changes that they had seen since the phonics training at both KS1 and KS2. These included:

At KS1:

- Improved identification of pupils needing to receive the Sound Check intervention.
- Improved day to day teaching when using the Letters and Sounds scheme.
- Teachers using different resources and strategies.
- Increased use of technical language.
- Moving faster within the phonics phases.
- Changes in the groupings of children; some smaller groups have emerged.
- Pupils have been set in ability groups, improved pace in teaching of phonics, an increase in progress made, improved teaching of clusters and blends.
- Close relationships between TAs that support the Sound Check intervention programme and the class teachers about children's needs and progress.
- Staff are more confident; they have a deeper understanding of the process and can produce pure sounds more accurately.

At KS2:

- Improved day to day teaching of phonics and spelling.
- Teachers more confident in phonics and have an awareness of pure sounds.
- Teachers using different resources and strategies.
- TAs much more confident in using synthetic phonics when working on a one to one basis.
- Increase in direct teaching of phonics in Year 3 and setting up booster groups in KS2.
- Teachers and TAs more likely to seek advice to support pupils.
- Clearer identification of those needing support.
- More interventions and greater support in place for less able pupils at KS2.

5. Parent Workshops

Springboard were reliant on each school to promote the Parent Workshop and we encouraged them to invite all parents across the school. Some schools felt it would be more relevant to invite Reception and KS1 parents only, while others wanted the workshop delivered solely to the parents/carers of children taking part in the project. In the latter case, attendance was low; an example of this was Parklands, Leeds where only 6 parents/carers attended.

Six out of the nine schools said that, historically, they have struggled to have parents attending events and workshops during the school day due to parents working full time. This is reflected in the low numbers of parent/carer attendees for Swarcliffe (7), Peel Hall (2), and Nythe (7).

We asked schools to tell us more about the impact of the Parent/Carer Workshop and, in particular, whether this workshop had helped parents/carers:

- understand phonics and early literacy skills;
- understand how phonics and early reading is taught in their school;
- support their child at home with learning to read;
- support their child at home with learning to spell.

All the schools interviewed said that the Parent Workshop had had a great impact and agreed that it had achieved all four of the above aims, even where attendance had been low. Schools particularly thought it supported parents for whom English is an additional language. It was generally felt that the workshop enabled parents to gain knowledge of phonemes and how to articulate them clearly and in their purest form, although Eldene Primary, Swindon, said that they had no evidence to suggest that the workshop had an impact on parents supporting their child at home with learning to read and with spelling.

We also asked schools to tell us if they had experienced an increase in parental involvement across the school since the Parent Workshop. Holy Name RC Primary, Manchester, where a very diverse and multi-ethnic group of parents attended the workshop, stated that the KS1 parents were now playing a more active role in the school and in their child's development. Following the workshop, St Matthew's CE Primary, Leeds, introduced a Stay and Play session for KS1 parents as part of their school agenda.

Summary

Although only 9 schools took part in the interview process, evaluations and verbal feedback post-training suggests that the results are indicative of how the training was received across all schools. Overall, Springboard felt that some schools were already confident and knowledgeable on phonics and many other schools stated that the training was useful as 'a revisit and a refresher'. Based on the evaluations, the biggest impact of the training was to improve the phonics knowledge of KS2 teachers and the confidence of teaching assistants who work with small groups or one to one with pupils.

The Parent Workshops were very well received and many positive comments came from the evaluations. Overall, Springboard felt that this is where training had its biggest impact as parents came to the workshop knowing very little about phonics or early reading and writing skills. They attended with eagerness to learn more about how they could help their child at home with learning to read and spell and left with good phonics knowledge and a range of activities that they could actively do with their child.

Alexandra Charalambous – Training Coordinator, Springboard for Children

January 2015



Sound Check Evaluation Year 2: Final programme analysis, OPM

Funded by



Department for Education



Sound Check evaluation, Year 2

Final programme analysis

20 March 2015



Client	British Dyslexia Association
Company	OPM
Title	Sound Check evaluation, Year 2
Subtitle	Final programme analysis
Dates	last published 20/03/2015 last revised 24 Mar. 2015
Status	Version 2.0 Draft
Classification	Restricted External
Project Code	9657
Author(s)	Max Kowalewski
Quality Assurance by	Leigh Johnston
Main point of contact	Max Kowalewski
Telephone	020 7239 7833
Email	MKowalewski@opm.co.uk

If you would like a large text version of this document, please contact us.

OPM

252B Gray's Inn Road
London
WC1X 8XG

0845 055 3900
www.opm.co.uk
info@opm.co.uk



Contents

Introduction	4
Progress against Key Performance Indicators.....	4
Cohorts in the programme.....	6
Key points	6
Phonics Checks	10
Pupils included in the analysis	10
All participants	11
Cohort 1	13
Cohort 2	15
Comparison: Cohort 1 and Cohort 2	17
Control group	18
Matched groups comparison: Cohort 2 and control group.....	21
Subgroup analysis: by sex.....	23
Subgroup analysis: by Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility.....	26
Subgroup analysis: by First Language	29
Subgroup analysis: by Ethnicity	32
Subgroup analysis: by SEN status	35
Subgroup analysis: by Date of Birth (DoB)	38
Attitudes to school and learning	41
Attendance.....	46
Overall school attendance	46
Specialist class attendance	48
Exclusion.....	49
Training impact, Project Year 2	49
Parents and carers training	49
Volunteer training.....	50
Whole school training	51
Dyslexia Screener scores.....	53
Workshop findings and learning points	54
Group discussion: looking to the future	54
Summary	57

Introduction

This report should be read alongside the National Prospectus DfE Grant Funding – End of Year 2 report. It contains analysis of the impact of the Sound Check programme on Phonics Check scores; changes in pupil attitudes and behaviours; analysis of class attendance; the impact of training; changes in Dyslexia Screener scores; and key learning points from a stakeholder workshop at the end of the project.

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

The table below gives an overview of the Sound Check programme's progress against Key Performance Indicators. For these key measures, evidence has been recorded for most of them and is presented in the body of this report.

Table 1: Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Outcome	Proposed measure	Evaluation evidence
Improvement in phonic skills.	Increase in proportion meeting expected standard in phonics reading check re-sit (compared to national picture for comparable population).	✓ 72% ¹ in Project Year 1 met required score in re-sit, compared to 65% of control group
	All pupils complete phonics skills re-assessment: more than 50% pupils show improvements in phonics skills	✓ 95% of pupils in programme in Project Year 1 improved their phonics scores
	All pupils complete phonics skills re-assessment: more than 75% show improved attitude to school and learning behaviours	✓ 88% in Project Year 1 improved on at least one measure of attitude, behaviour and literacy
Improvement in phonic teaching within schools. Increase in teachers' confidence in their phonics teaching skills.	Declining proportion of children failing to meet the required standard in the schools phonic test (compared to national picture for re-sits for comparable population).	✓ 72% in Project Year 1 met required score in re-sit, compared to 65% of control group

¹ Note: due to roundings not all percentages add up to 100%

	<p>Impact feedback data following INSET training shows increase in teachers' confidence in their phonics teaching skills.</p>	<p>✓ At the end of the Year 1 whole school training, 79% of respondents agreed that 'I now feel more confident in my ability to teach phonics'.</p> <p>After the Year 2 training, 84% agreed that 'I know how to teach phonics in a systematic and structured way', compared to 63% before the training.</p>
<p>Improved engagement of SEND children with literacy issues in learning.</p>	<p>More than 75% show improved attitude to school and learning behaviours, as evidenced through qualitative reporting.</p>	<p>✓ 87% of those with identified SEN in Project Year 1 improved on at least one measure of attitude, behaviour and literacy</p>
<p>Data on attendance and exclusion rates within the cohorts is compared with the national picture for comparable population. Qualitative information on those factors felt by teachers to impact on attitude to school and learning behaviours within the cohorts is collected.</p>	<p>Evidence of positive impact on attendance and exclusion rates within the cohorts.</p>	<p>✓ School attendance rates for Project Year 1 pupils improved by more than for those in the control group.</p> <p>Only two exclusions, so no analysis conducted for this.</p>

Cohorts in the programme

In the two years of the Sound Check project, three different cohorts of pupils received support from the intervention. The table below gives an overview of these different cohorts. Note that 87 Cohort 2 pupils who did not meet the required score after Year 1 of the intervention were offered continued support in Year 2 of the intervention and will be retaking the Check in 2015.

Table 2: Overview of Sound Check programme cohorts

Cohort	Number of pupils	Entered programme	In school year during programme	Phonics status before entering the programme	Retook/will retake Phonics Check in
Cohort 1	193	Project Year 1, 2013-14	Year 3	Had not met required score twice before (in Year 1 and Year 2)	June 204
Cohort 2	323	Project Year 1, 2013-14	Year 2	Had not met required score once before (in Year 1)	June 2014
Control group – matched to Cohort 2	324	(N/A – did not receive any intervention)	Year 2	Had not met required score once before (in Year 1)	June 2014
Cohort 2-continuing*	87	Project Year 2, 2014-15	Year 3	Had not met required score twice before (in Year 1 and Year 2)	June 2015
Cohort 3	266	Project Year 2, 2014-15	Year 2	Had not met required score once before (in Year 1)	June 2015

Key points

- **Phonics scores for pupils taking part in the programme generally improved, and a majority of pupils achieved the required standard in 2014.** Mean scores for all participants (i.e. Cohorts 1 and 2 combined) increased by 12.8 points from 2013 to 2014, from a mean score of 18.9 to 31.6. This represents a statistically significant² increase. Sixty-six per cent of all pupils scored the required standard of 32 points or above in 2014.

² In this report 'statistically significant' refers to a confidence interval of 95% unless explicitly stated otherwise.

- **Pupils in the programme who had taken the phonics check twice before (Cohort 1) tended to achieve a lower increase in scores than those who had only taken the check only once before (Cohort 2).** Cohort 1, showed a statistically significant mean increase of 9.3 points in their scores from 2013 to 2014, with a mean score in 2014 of 31 points. Fifty-nine per cent of these scored the required standard or above. Ninety-three per cent had an improved score from 2013 to 2014. Cohort 2 also showed a statistically significant increase in mean scores, with a mean increase of 14.8 points in their scores from 2013 to 2014, rising to a mean score in 2014 of 32.5 points. Seventy-two per cent met or exceeded the required standard, and 98% had an improved score from 2013 to 2014. The differences between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 in terms of mean score increases, proportions meeting the required score in 2014, and proportions improving their scores year on year are all statistically significant.
- **Pupils from the control group which was matched to Cohort 2 tended to show a lower increase in scores, and were less likely to achieve the required standard.** The mean increase in score from 2013 to 2014 for the control group was 13.5 points, which is lower than Cohort 2's mean increase of 14.8 points. Sixty-five per cent of the control group met or exceeded the required score of 32 points, compared to 72% of Cohort 2. Both these differences in mean increases and the proportions meeting the required score are statistically significant. Ninety-six per cent of the control group had a year-on-year increase in their score, compared to 98% of Cohort 2, although this does not represent a significant difference.
- **Boys in the programme generally showed a greater increase in scores, albeit from a lower starting point, and a greater percentage of boys than girls achieved the required standard.** Boys' scores increased by a mean of 13.6 points, from a mean of 18.2 in 2013 to 31.8 in 2014; compared to a mean increase of 11.8 points for girls, from a mean of 19.7 to 31.6. This represents a significant difference between the mean increases of boys' and girls' scores. Sixty-eight per cent of boys met or exceeded the required score, compared to 64% of girls. Ninety-five per cent of both boys and girls improved their scores. These differences between proportions meeting the required score and those increasing their scores are not significant – i.e. by 2014 boys and girls in the programme were at the same level.
- **Compared to the matched control group, boys in Cohort 2 improved their scores more strongly.** The programme helped them improve their scores to the point that they pulled level and indeed even slightly exceeded the performance of girls. Thus 73% of boys and 72% of girls in Cohort 2 met the required score in 2014. No such effect was observed in the control group, where boys continued to lag behind girls in 2014; with only 59% of boys meeting the required score, compared to 72% of girls. These differences in mean improvement of boys' scores, as well as in proportions meeting the required score, between boys in the programme and those in the control group are statistically significant; there was no significantly larger impact on girls in the programme than those in the control group.

- **Those pupils in the programme eligible for free school meals (FSM) increased their scores slightly more than those who were not; but this was from a lower starting point, and fewer FSM eligible pupils met the required score.** Those pupils eligible for FSM improved their scores by a mean of 13.4 points, from a mean of 17.7 in 2013 to 31.1 in 2014; compared to a mean improvement of 12.2 points for those not eligible for FSM, from a mean of 20 in 2013 to 32.2 in 2014. Sixty-four per cent of those eligible for FSM met or exceeded the required score, compared to 68% of those not eligible. Ninety-five per cent of both subgroups improved their scores. However, these differences are not statistically significant at the standard 95% confidence level, with only the difference in mean improvement significant at a 90% confidence level.
- **Pupils in the programme Cohort 2 eligible for FSM were helped to nearly close the gap with their counterparts not eligible for FSM, which was not the case to the same extent for pupils in the control group.** FSM eligible pupils in Cohort 2 improved their scores by a mean of 15.6 points, compared to an increase of 14.1 points for those in the control group, which represents a significant difference. 71% of FSM eligible pupils in the programme met the required score in 2014, compared to 61% of those in the control group, although this variation is only significant at the lower 90% confidence level. No significant differences in impact on non-FSM eligible pupils between Cohort 2 and the control group were observed.
- **Pupils whose first language was not English tended to improve their scores more strongly, and from a lower base before the intervention overtook their peers whose first language was English.** Those whose first language was not English improved their scores by a mean of 14.2 points, from 18.3 in 2013 to 32.5 in 2014. This compares to those whose first language was English whose scores only improved by a mean of 12.4 points, from 19.1 in 2013 to 31.5 in 2014, and represents a significant difference. Sixty-five percent of the latter met the required score in 2014, compared to 71% of those whose first language was not English, although this difference is not significant.
- **Pupils in the control group whose first language was English showed a larger attainment gap in their 2014 scores compared to those in the control group whose first language was not English; this attainment gap, although present in Cohort 2, was not as marked.** Those pupils whose first language was English in the control group improved their scores by 12.9 points on average, compared to 14.5 for those in Cohort 2, which is a statistically significant difference.
- **Similarly, pupils from other ethnicities tended to improve more strongly, from a lower phonics score starting point catching up and overtaking their White British peers.** Pupils from other ethnicities improved their scores by a mean of 14.4 points, from 18.4 in 2013 to 32.8 in 2014; compared to White British pupils, who improved their scores by 11.9 points, from 19.2 in 2013 to 31.0 in 2014. Seventy-three percent of pupils from other ethnicities met the required score in 2014, compared to

62% of White British pupils. These differences in improvement and proportions meeting the score are both statistically significant.

- **White British pupils in the control group showed a larger attainment gap to their peers from other ethnicities, than those in Cohort 2.** White British children in the control group improved their scores by a mean of 12.5 points, compared to those in Cohort 2 who had a stronger performance, improving by a mean of 14.0 points. This difference is however only significant at the lower 90% confidence level.
- **Pupils in the programme with identified SEN performed less strongly than their peers.** Of those pupils without SEN, 85% met the required score in the 2014 resit, compared to 54% of those with SEN, which represents a significant difference. Those with SEN improved their scores by a mean of 12.3 points from 2013 to 2014, compared to an improvement of 13.5 points among those without SEN, however this difference is not significant.
- **Pupils with no identified SEN tended to perform more strongly in Cohort 2 than the comparable pupils in the control group.** The former improved their scores by a mean of 15.0 points from 2013 to 2014, compared to an improvement of 13.2 points for those in the control group; of the latter, 79% met the required score in 2014, compared to 89% of those in the programme. Both these differences are statistically significant. However there were no significant differences between pupils with SEN comparing those in Cohort 2 with the control group.
- **Overall, younger pupils in the programme tended to perform slightly less strongly than their older classmates.** Younger pupils were less likely to meet the required score in 2014, with 65% scoring 32 or above compared to 69% of the older pupils; however this difference is not statistically significant. Both subgroups improved their scores by a mean of 12.8 points from 2013 to 2014, but younger pupils started from a lower level and so did not catch up with their older peers.
- **Younger pupils in Cohort 2 did manage to narrow their attainment gap against their older peers, whereas for pupils in the control group this attainment gap increased.** The younger pupils in Cohort 2 increased their scores more strongly than those in the control group: a mean increase of 15.0 points, compared to 13.2 points. This difference in mean improvement is statistically significant. More younger pupils in the Sound Check programme also met the required score in 2014 (71%) compared to those in the control group (62%), although this difference is only significant at the lower 90% confidence interval.
- **Positive changes for literacy skills were observed for half of all pupils in Project Year 1, and a majority showed improvements in attitudes and behaviour.** Class teachers observed positive improvements in 68% of participating pupils' attitudes and behaviours, and specialist teachers observed these changes in 61% of pupils in their classes in Project Year 1; specialist teachers observed these changes for 74% of pupils in Project Year 2. Across all measures of literacy, attitudes and behaviour, teachers observed a positive change for 88% of all participants in Project Year 1.

- **Class teachers reported increased attendance levels for pupils taking part in the programme in Project Year 1, but attendance levels dropped among pupils in Project Year 2.** Attendance levels rose between Term 1 of the year 2012/13 and Term 2 of the year 2013/14 by a mean of 2.8%, from 92.6% to 95.4%; but fell by 3.3% between Term 1 of 2013-14 to Term 2 of 2014-15. Compared to the control group pupils in Project Year 1, pupils from Cohort 2 showed a greater increase in attendance levels.
- **Parents and carers; volunteers; and teachers in schools receiving training from Sound Check in Year 2 were generally positive in their feedback and tended to report improvements in their skills.**
- **Pupils in the programme improved on all measures of dyslexia screener checks over the course of the intervention, both in Year 1 and Year 2 of the project.**

Phonics Checks

Pupils included in the analysis

As pupils in Cohort 3 and those continuing from Cohort 2 in Year 2 of the programme have yet to take their resit in the Check in June 2015, analysis of changes to phonics scores is limited to pupils from Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 that took the check in 2014 after Year 1 of the Sound Check programme support.

In total, data on 516 pupils from these cohorts has been received, from a total of 27 schools. This is down slightly from the number of pupils in these cohorts in the programme at the end of Year 1, where data was held for 528 pupils. In a number of cases particular data is missing for certain pupils, and these cases have been excluded from the analysis where relevant. Percentages are calculated out of the total number of pupils for which the relevant data has been received.

- Of the participants in the programme 44% are female and 56% male.
- Around 68% of pupils are of white ethnicity, 13% Asian, 10% black, 7% mixed and 2% Chinese or other. (5 cases marked unclassified, or missing)
- 78% of the pupils speak English as their first language.
- 47% of pupils were recorded by their school as eligible for free school meals.
- Approximately 63% of pupils had an identified special educational need, with around 1.2% having an SEN statement. (14 cases missing)

Of all these pupils, 63% were in Cohort 2 and 37% in Cohort 1.

All participants

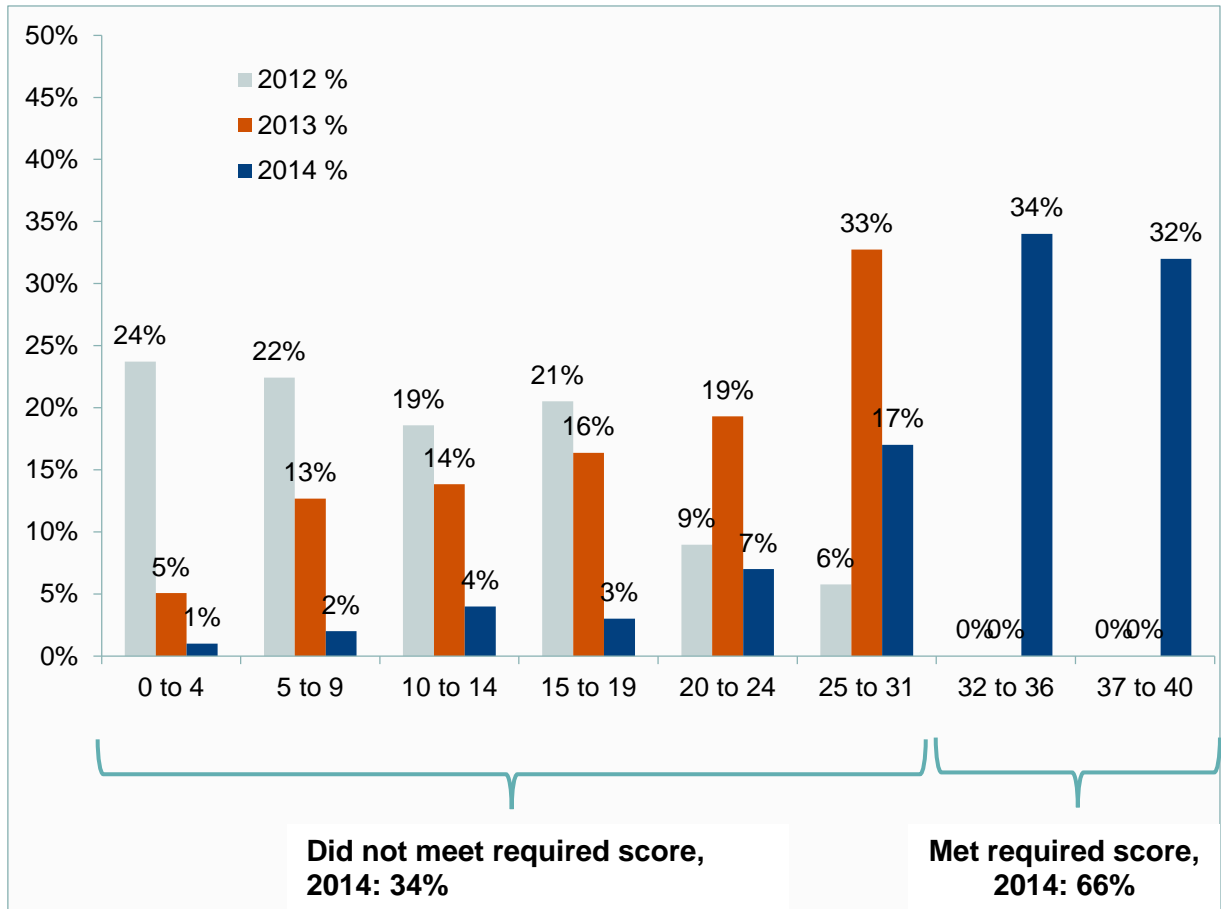
- Table 3 shows the increases in mean scores for all participants who took phonics checks in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Where individual pupils did not sit the test, these cases were excluded from the analysis.
- Mean scores increased from 2013 to 2014 by 12.8 points, and from 2012 to 2014 (for pupils in Cohort 1) by 19.4 points. Both these changes are statistically significant.

Table 3. Phonics check scores: all participants, Project Year 1

	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	156	513	494	492	140
Mean	11.2	18.9	31.6	+12.8	+19.4
Maximum	31	31	40	+34	+36
Minimum	0	0	1	-12	-3
Median	11.5	20	34	+12	+19

- Chart 1 on the following page shows the distribution of phonics scores for all participants. It indicates that pupils who had failed to meet the required score in 2012 as well as 2013 (Cohort 2) tended to have very low scores. By the 2013 check, although all pupils scored below the 32 mark, a relatively large proportion (33%) scored only somewhat below, between 25 and 31.
- By the 2014 phonics check, 66% met the required score of 32 or above. Of these, the proportions scoring between 32 and 36, and those scoring 37 to the full mark of 40, were roughly similar. Thirty-four percent did not meet the required score in 2014, but of these only very few pupils continued to score very low marks even in the 2014 check.

Chart 1. Phonics check scores: all participants, banded (2012 n=156; 2013 n=513; 2014 n=494)



- Table 4 below shows that vast majorities of all pupils improved their phonics scores from 2013 to 2014 (95%), and from 2012 to 2014 (99%).

Table 4. Changes in phonics checks scores, all participants

	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	492	140
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	95%	99%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	1%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	4%	1%

Cohort 1

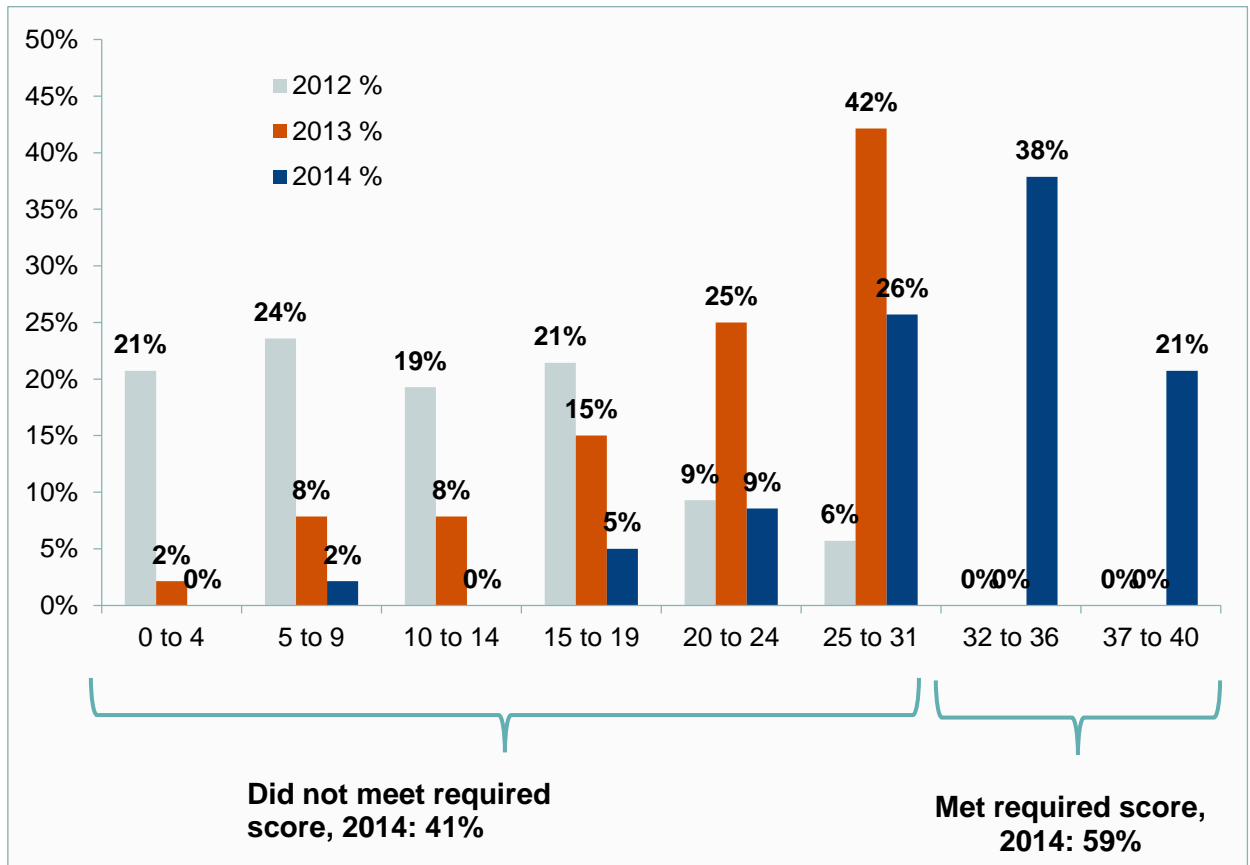
Cohort 1 (37% of pupils in Sound Check programme Year 1) were in school Year 3 in June 2014 and had been required to take the phonics check test in 2013 and 2012, scoring lower than the required standard both times. Not all in the cohort actually took the test each year so the tables and charts only look at scores of those who took the 2012, 2013 and 2014 phonics check tests.

Table 5. Phonics check scores: pupils who completed the 2012, 2013 and 2014 phonics checks

	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	140	140	140	140	140
Mean	11.6	21.7	31	+9.3	+19.4
Maximum	31	31	40	+30	+36
Minimum	0	0	8	-6	-3
Median	12	23	33	+9	+19

- Mean scores for Cohort 2 increased by 9.3 points from June 2013 to June 2014, from a mean of 21.7 in June 2013 to a mean of 31 in June 2014.
- The increase compared to the levels in the 2012 Check was even higher, with mean scores up 19.4 points, from 11.6 June 2012 to 31 in June 2014.
- Both these changes in mean scores are statistically significant.

Chart 2. Phonics check scores: pupils who completed the 2012, 2013 and 2014 phonics checks, (n=140)



- As indicated in Chart 2, pupils in Cohort 2 tended to have relatively low scores when they first took the Phonics Check in June 2012. By June 2013, on their first resit, these scores had improved strongly, with 42% scoring between 25 and 31 points.
- After the support of Year 1 of Sound Check, 59% met the required score on their second resit in June 2014. Most of these achieved scored between 32 and 36 points (38%), although some attained very high marks in the 37 to 40 range.
- Table 6 on the next page shows the proportions that improved their phonics scores year on year – in each case, the vast majority of pupils did increase their scores at least to some extent.

Table 6. Changes in scores: pupils who completed the 2012, 2013 and 2014 phonics checks

	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	140	140
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	93%	99%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	7%	1%

Cohort 2

Cohort 2 (63% of those in Sound Check programme Year 1) were in school year 2 in June 2014 and had been required to take the phonics check test only once previously in 2013, scoring lower than the required standard then. The tables and charts below only include those pupils who actually sat both tests in June 2013 and June 2014.

Table 7. Phonics check scores: pupils who completed the 2013 and 2014 phonics checks

	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	315	315	315
Mean	17.7	32.5	+14.8
Maximum	31	40	+34
Minimum	0	1	-12
Median	18	35	+14

- As Table 7 shows, phonics scores improved strongly for pupils in Cohort 2 from June 2013, when the mean score was 17.7, to June 2014, rising by 14.8 points on average to 32.5 in June 2014.
- This increase in mean scores is statistically significant.

- Chart 3 below shows the distribution of scores in the 2013 and 2014 Checks. It shows that many (28%) Cohort 2 pupils had scored closely under the 32 required level in 2013, with most others distributed fairly evenly across the lower score bands.
- By the 2014 resit, 72% met the required score, and many of these (38%) achieved particularly high scores of 37 or above. Only 28% did not meet the required score again in 2014, of which most scored just under the required level. (These pupils went on to receive continued support of the Sound Check intervention in Year 2 of the programme).

Chart 3. Phonics check scores: pupils who completed the 2013 and 2014 phonics checks, (n=315)

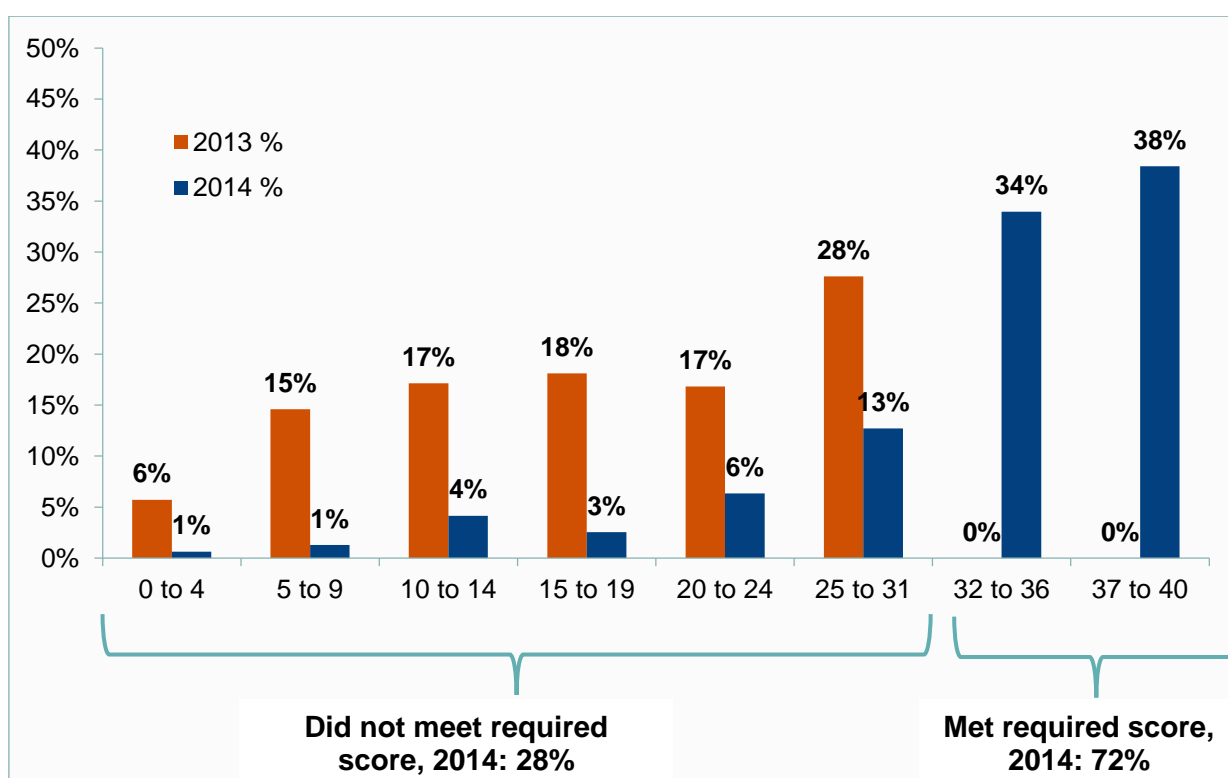


Table 8 overleaf below shows that almost all Cohort 2 pupils (98%) improved their phonics score between June 2013 and 2014, with very small minorities having an unchanged or lower score in 2014.

Table 8. Changes in scores: pupils who completed the 2013 and 2014 phonics checks

	Change between June 2013 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	315
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	98%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	1%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	1%

Comparison: Cohort 1 and Cohort 2

- Table 9 on the next page above compares the achievements of pupils in Cohorts 1 and 2 during the first year of the programme. It illustrates that a greater proportion of Cohort 2 than Cohort 1 pupils met the required score in 2014: 72% compared to 59%. This difference is statistically significant.
- Pupils in Cohort 1 increased their score by a mean of 9.3 points, compared to a greater mean increase of 14.8 points for those in Cohort 2. This difference is also statistically significant.
- More pupils in Cohort 2 improved their scores from 2013 to 2014 than those in Cohort 1: 98% of those in Cohort 2 improved their score, compared to 93% of those in Cohort 1; and this difference is also statistically significant.

Table 9. Comparison of changes in phonics check score between cohort 1 and cohort 2

	Cohort 1: Year 1 in 2012, completed 2012, 2013 and 2014 phonics checks					Cohort 2: Year 1 in 2013, completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		
	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	140	140	140	140	140	315	315	315
Mean	11.6	21.7	31	+9.3	+19.4	17.7	32.5	+14.8
Maximum	31	31	40	+30	+36	31	40	+34
Minimum	0	0	8	-6	-3	0	1	-12
Median	12	23	33	+9	+19	18	35	+14
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score				93%	99%			98%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score				0%	0%			1%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score				7%	1%			1%
Met required score, 2014			59%				72%	
Did not meet required score, 2014			41%				28%	

Control group

To compare the impact of the Sound Check intervention to a comparable population, a matched control group dataset was obtained from the DfE National Pupil Database (NPD). Based on the sample of 324 pupils in the pilot in June 2014 that had completed the test once before in 2013 (Cohort 2), a dataset that matched the demographic characteristics of Cohort 2 on 9 variables, including 2013 phonics check scores, was requested.

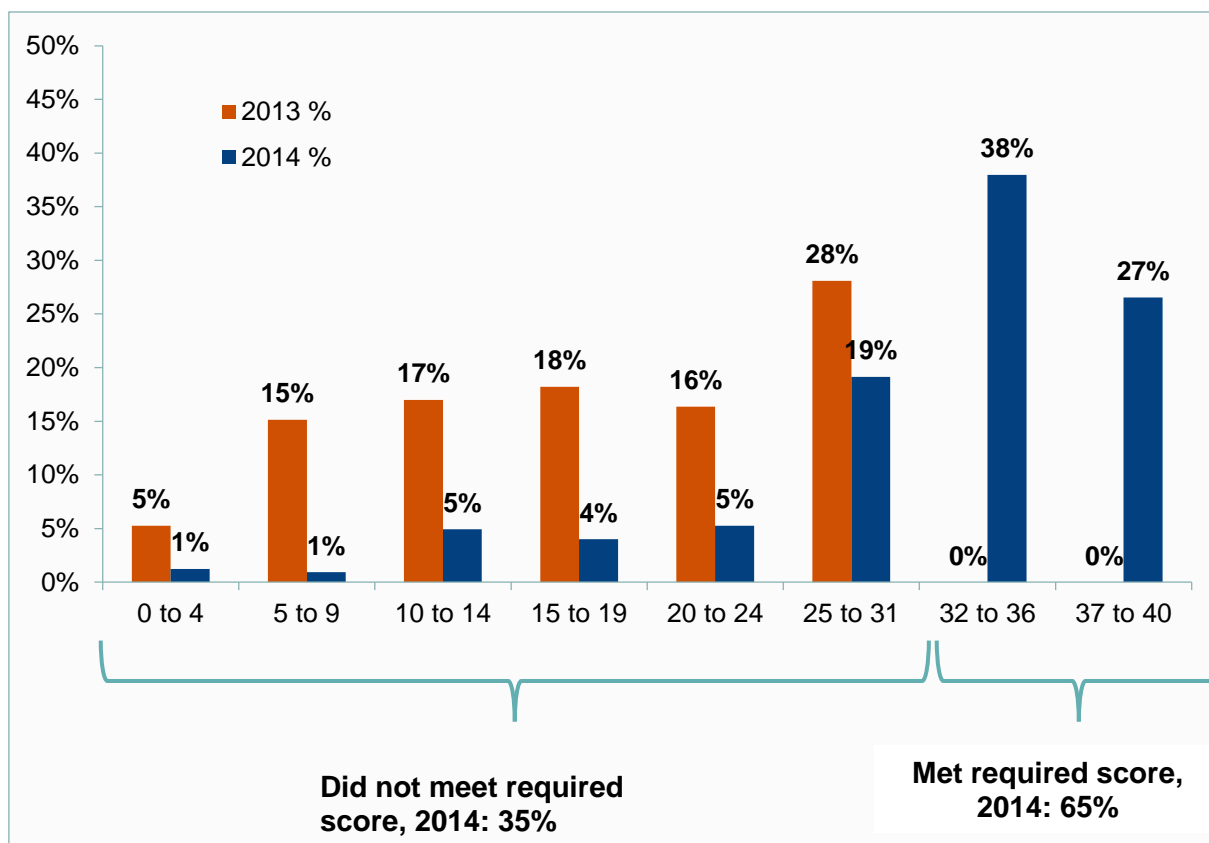
Nonetheless, it should be noted that an exact match was only possible for 237 cases; for the rest, small variations were tolerated, in birth month (71 cases – variation by up to 3 months); check scores (32 cases - variation by up to 5 points), and primary SEN type (8 cases).

Table 10. Phonics check scores: control group - completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks

	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	324	324	324
Mean	17.7	31.2	+13.5
Maximum	31	40	+40
Minimum	0	0	-5
Median	18	34	+13

- Table 10 shows that pupils in the control group, who did not receive any support from the programme, also improved their scores from 2013 to 2014, by a mean of 13.5 points. This increase in mean scores is statistically significant.
- Chart 4 below shows the distribution of their scores in 2013 and 2014. In the 2013 phonics check, scores were roughly evenly spread across the 5 to 24 point brackets, with somewhat more pupils attaining a score between 25 and 31, only slightly under the required level.
- By the 2014 Check, 65% of control group pupils met the required score, most of which scored between 32 and 36 points (38%). Only small minorities of the 35% that did not meet the required score in 2014 continued to achieve very low scores.

Chart 4. Phonics check scores: control group - completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks (n=324)



- The vast majority (96%) of pupils in the control group did improve their scores at least somewhat from 2013 to 2014, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Changes in scores: control group - completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks

	Change between June 2013 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	324
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	96%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0.3%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	3%

Matched groups comparison: Cohort 2 and control group

As indicated previously, there were some differences between the characteristics of the control group and Cohort 2, and comparisons should be made carefully.

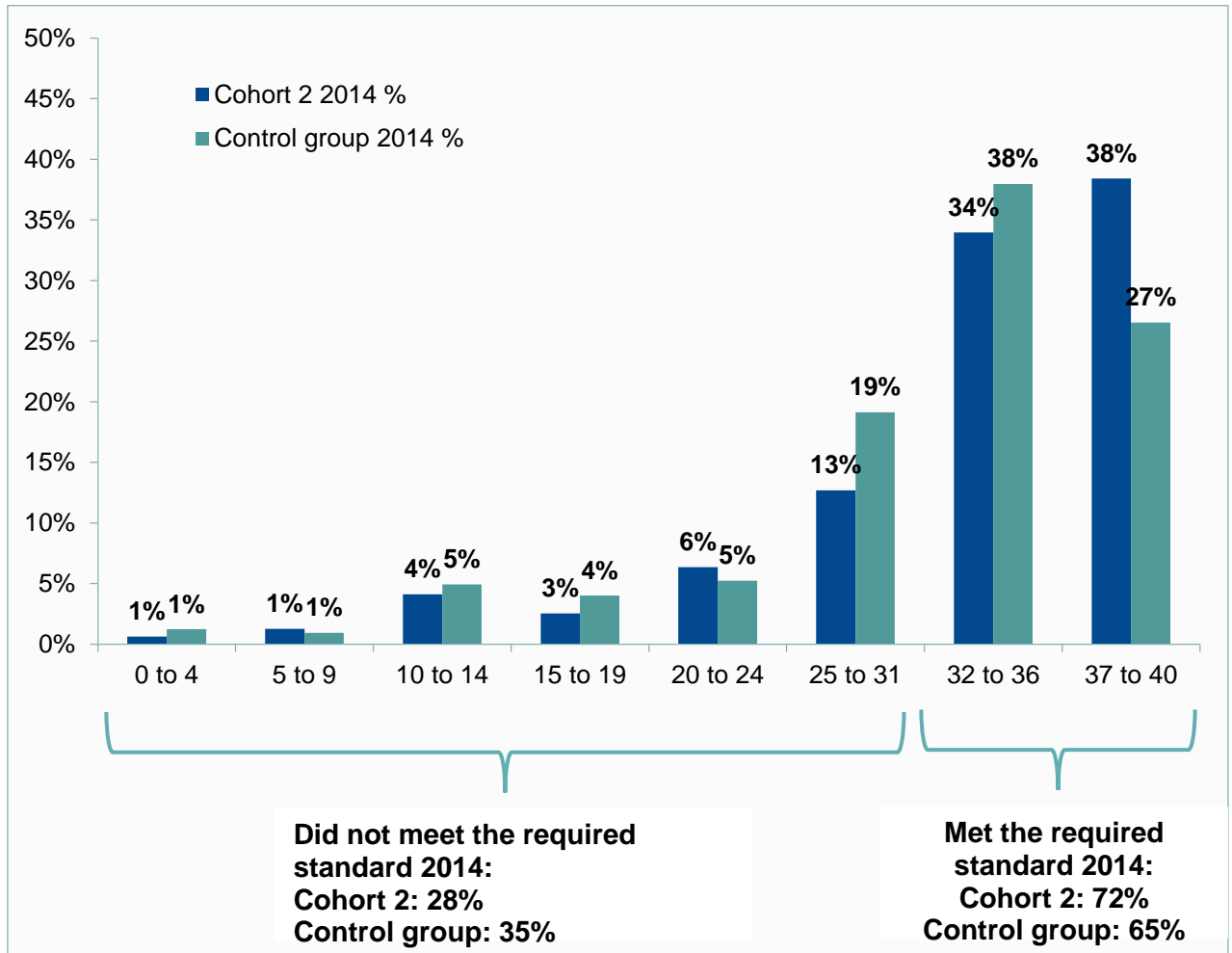
Table 12. Comparison of changes in phonics check score between Cohort 2 and control group

	Cohort 2: Year 1 in 2013, completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks			Control group: Year 1 in 2013, completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		
	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	315	315	315	324	324	324
Mean	17.7	32.5	+14.8	17.7	31.2	+13.5
Maximum	31	40	+34	31	40	+40
Minimum	0	1	-12	0	0	-5
Median	18	35	+14	18	34	+13
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score			98%			96%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score			1%			0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score			1%			3%
Met required score, 2014		72%			65%	
Did not meet required score, 2014		28%			35%	

- Pupils in Cohort 2 tended to achieve greater improvements in scores from 2013 to 2014, by a mean of 14.8 points, than their counterparts in the control group, whose scores only improved by a mean of 13.5 points. This difference is statistically significant.

- Pupils in Cohort 2 were also more likely to meet the required score in 2014 than those in the control group. Seventy-two percent of pupils from Cohort 2 met the required score, but only 65% of those in the control group. Again, this difference between the proportions meeting the required score is significant.
- Ninety-eight per cent of pupils in Cohort 2 improved their scores by at least one point, compared to 96% of pupils in the control group. This difference is however not significant.

Chart 5. Phonics check scores 2014: comparison of Cohort 2 (n=315) and control group (n=324)



Subgroup analysis: by sex

Table 13. Phonics check scores by sex, all pupils, Project Year 1

	Male: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks					Female: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks				
	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	76	274	274	274	76	64	218	218	218	64
Mean	10.8	18.2	31.8	+13.6	+20.3	12.6	19.7	31.6	+11.8	+18.3
Maximum	31	31	40	+34	+36	29	31	40	+31	+33
Minimum	0	0	1	-7	+1	0	0	4	-12	-3
Median	10.5	19	34	+13	+20	13	21.5	34	+11	+18
Met required score, 2014			68%					64%		
Did not meet required score, 2014			32%					36%		

- Boys in the programme who took the test in 2013 and 2014 improved their scores by a mean of 13.6 points, compared to a mean improvement of 11.8 points for girls. This difference in effect on boys is statistically significant.
- Comparing the change in scores between 2012 2013, boys again improved more strongly, by a mean of 20.3 points compared to 18.3 for girls. However this difference is only significant at the lower 90% interval. Note that the base sizes for this comparison are comparatively small.
- Boys in the programme were more likely to have met the required score in 2014, with 68% of these scoring 32 or above; compared to 64% of girls. However this difference is not statistically significant; in other words, the programme helped boys catch up to roughly the same level as girls.

Table 14. Comparison of changes in phonics scores by sex, all pupils, Project Year 1

	Male: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		Female: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	274	76	218	64
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	95%	100%	95%	98%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0.4%	0%	1%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	4%	0%	4%	2%

- The proportions of boys and girls with an increased score from 2013 to 2014 are very similar, both at 95%. Only slightly more boys than girls improved their scores from 2012 to 2014. However the small differences between these proportions are not statistically significant.

Matched groups comparison

Table 15. Matched group comparison of changes in phonics check score by sex

	Male		Female	
	Cohort 2	Control group	Cohort 2	Control group
Number of pupils included	177	180	138	144
Mean score June 2013	16.9	17.0	18.7	18.7
Mean score June 2014	32.5	30.8	32.5	31.7
Mean change in score 2013 to 2014	+15.7	+13.8	+13.8	+13.0
Met required score, 2014	73%	59%	72%	72%
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	98%	96%	97%	97%

- Clear differences in the impact of the intervention on boys and girls were observed, as can be seen in Table 15, which compares pupils in Cohort 2 of the programme and the control group based on sex. Boys in Cohort 2 saw a larger mean increase in scores than girls in Cohort 2, improving their scores to the point that they pulled level and indeed even slightly exceeded the performance of girls in the programme, based on mean scores as well as the proportion meeting the required score.
- No such effect was observed for boys in the control group, whose phonics performance continued to lag behind that of the girls in the control group in 2014. However boys in the control group did tend to improve slightly more than girls.
- Boys in Cohort 2 improved their scores on average by 15.7 points, from a mean of 16.9 in 2013 to 32.5 in 2014. Boys in the control group only improved their scores by a mean of 13.8 points, from 17.0 in 2013 to 30.8 in 2014. This difference between mean increases is statistically significant.
- More boys in the programme met the required score in 2014: seventy-three percent scored 32 or above, compared to only 59% of the boys in the control group. This difference is also statistically significant.
- There was less of a difference in impact of the intervention for girls. Girls in Cohort 2 improved their scores by a mean of 13.8 points, from a mean of 18.7 in 2013 to 32.5 in 2014. Girls in the control group improved slightly less strongly, by a mean of 13.0 points, from 18.7 in 2013 to 31.7 in 2014. The difference in mean increases of these two subgroups is not significant.
- The proportions of girls in the programme and those in the control group meeting the required score is almost the same, with 72% passing in 2014. Again, there was no significant difference between the two subgroups.
- The difference in proportions of boys as well as of girls increasing their phonics scores year on year between the two samples is not statistically significant.

Subgroup analysis: by Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility

Table 16. Comparison of phonics check scores by FSM eligibility, all pupils, Project Year 1

	FSM eligible: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks					Not FSM eligible: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks				
	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	65	227	227	227	65	75	265	265	265	75
Mean	11.4	17.7	31.1	+13.4	+19.3	11.8	20	32.2	+12.2	+19.5
Maximum	28	31	40	+34	+34	31	31	40	+34	+36
Minimum	0	0	1	-12	-3	0	0	1	-7	+1
Median	11	18	34	+13	+20	12	22	35	+12	+19
Met required score, 2014			64%					68%		
Did not meet required score, 2014			36%					32%		

- Those pupils in the programme taking the test in 2013 and 2014 that were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) tended to improve their scores somewhat more than those who were not FSM eligible, by 13.4 points compared to 12.2. However this difference in mean score improvements is not significant at 95% confidence level, but it is at the lower 90% confidence level.
- FSM eligible pupils were less likely to meet the required score in 2014, with 64% passing compared to 68% of non-eligible pupils. This difference is however not statistically significant.
- Comparing changes in means of those pupils eligible for FSM to those not from 2012 to 2014, those not eligible for FSM improved their scores slightly more, by a mean of 19.5 compared to 19.3. This difference in means is not significant.

Table 17. Comparison of changes in phonics scores by FSM eligibility, all pupils, Project Year 1

	FSM eligible: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		Not FSM eligible: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	227	65	265	75
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	95%	98%	95%	100%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0.4%	0%	1%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	5%	2%	3%	0%

- Table XX shows that very similar proportions of FSM-eligible and non-eligible pupils improved their scores from 2013 to 2014; and from 2012 to 2014. Differences between these proportions were small and are not statistically significant.

Matched groups comparison

Table 18. Matched group comparison of changes in phonics check score by FSM

	FSM eligible		Not FSM eligible	
	Cohort 2	Control group	Cohort 2	Control group
Number of pupils included	149	153	166	171
Mean score June 2013	16.6	16.7	18.6	18.7
Mean score June 2014	32.3	30.1	32.7	32.2
Mean change in score 2013 to 2014	+15.6	+13.4	+14.1	+13.5
Met required score, 2014	71%	61%	74%	67%
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	99%	95%	97%	97%

- Similar to the picture for the differential impact of the programme on boys and girls, we observed that pupils in the intervention eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) improved more than their counterparts in the control group, as can be seen in Table 16, which compares pupils in Cohort 2 and the control group based on FSM eligibility. The programme pupils eligible for FSM improved their scores to a point where they were nearly level with pupils not eligible for FSM.
- This effect was not observed for the control group, where pupils eligible for FSM continued to underperform compared their peers in the 2014 phonics check, with the improvement in scores almost equal for both subgroups.
- Pupils eligible for FSM in the programme improved their scores on average by 15.6 points, from 16.6 in 2013 to 32.3 in 2014. FSM eligible pupils in the control group only improved their scores by a mean of 13.4 points, from 16.7 in 2013 to 30.1 in 2014. This difference between mean increases is statistically significant.
- Pupils eligible for FSM in the programme were more likely to meet the required score in 2014; Seventy-one per cent of these achieved this, compared to only 61% in the control group. However, this difference in the proportions meeting the required score is not statistically significant at 95% confidence (although it is at 90% confidence).
- Pupils not eligible for FSM in the programme tended to improve their scores slightly more than those in the control group, but not by as great a difference. The former saw mean increases in scores of 14.1 points, from 18.6 in 2013 to 32.7 in 2014. This compares to a mean increase in scores of 13.5 points for those pupils in the control group not eligible for FSM, from 18.7 to 32.2. However the difference between the mean increase in programme pupils' scores and those in the control group is not statistically significant.
- Seventy-four percent of non-FSM eligible pupils in the programme met the required phonics check score in 2014, compared to 67% of those in the control group. Again, this difference is not statistically significant.
- Pupils in the programme not eligible for FSM were slightly more likely to pass the required score mark in 2014, with 74% achieving this, compared to only 67% in the control group. This difference however is not statistically significant.

Subgroup analysis: by First Language

Table19. Phonics check scores by First Language, all pupils, Project Year 1

	First Language English: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks					First Language not English: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks				
	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	117	382	382	382	117	23	110	110	110	23
Mean	11.8	19.1	31.5	+12.4	+19.2	10.6	18.3	32.5	+14.2	+20.6
Maximum	29	31	40	+34	+36	31	31	40	+34	+34
Minimum	0	0	1	-12	-3	0	0	11	-3	1
Median	12	20	34	+12	+19	9	19	35	+13	+21
Met required score, 2014			65%					71%		
Did not meet required score, 2014			35%					29%		

- Table 19 above compares the changes in phonics scores based on the first language of pupils. It shows that pupils whose first language was English tended to have higher scores in 2013 (mean of 19.1) compared to those whose first language was not English (mean of 18.3).
- However the latter improved their scores more strongly, by 14.2 points, to a mean of 32.5 in 2014; compared to a mean improvement of 12.4 points, to 31.5, for pupils whose first language was English. So, from lagging behind in 2013, by 2014, pupils whose first language was not English actually achieved higher scores than their peers. This difference in mean changes is significant.
- Those pupils whose first language was not English also tended to have improved more strongly from 2012 to 2014; however this difference is not statistically significant. Note that the base sizes for this comparison are very low.
- Seventy-one percent of pupils whose first language was not English met the required score in 2014, compared to 65% of those whose first language was English. This difference is not significant though.

Table 20. Comparison of changes in phonics scores by First Language, all pupils, Project Year 1

	First Language English: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		First Language not English: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	382	117	110	23
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	95%	99%	97%	100%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0.5%	1%	2%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	5%	0%	1%	0%

- Generally, almost all pupils regardless of first language improved their phonics scores from 2013 to 2014, and from 2012 to 2014. However the slight differences between the two subgroups are not significant.

Matched groups comparison

Table 21 Matched group comparison of changes in phonics check score by First Language

	First Language English: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		First Language not English: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Cohort 2	Control group	Cohort 2	Control group
Number of pupils included	239	248	76	76
Mean score June 2013	17.8	17.9	17.3	17.3
Mean score June 2014	32.3	30.8	33.1	32.6
Mean change in score 2013 to 2014	+14.5	+12.9	+15.8	+15.3
Met required score, 2014	71%	64%	76%	67%
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	98%	96%	99%	96%

- It was observed that pupils in the programme whose first language was not English tended to show greater improvements in their scores than those whose first language was English, pulling ahead even though they had been behind their counterparts in 2013. This trend was also present for the pupils in the control group and indeed was more marked, with those whose first language was English falling behind those whose first language it was not.
- Pupils in the control group whose first language was English showed a larger attainment gap in their 2014 scores compared to those in the control group whose first language was not English; this attainment gap, although present in Cohort 2, was not as marked.
- Pupils in the control group whose first language was English improved their scores by a mean of 12.9 points from 2013 to 2014, by contrast comparable Cohort 2 pupils who improved their scores by a mean of 14.5 points. This difference in means is statistically significant.
- Those pupils whose first language was English in the control group were less likely to meet the required score (64%) than those in Cohort 2 (71%); but this difference is not statistically significant.
- Pupils whose first language was not English tended to perform similarly in the control group compared to Cohort 2. Although this subgroup in Cohort 2 did show a slightly stronger improvement in mean scores (15.8 compared to 15.3 in the control group), this was not a significant difference.
- A greater proportion of these in Cohort 2 met the required score in 2014 (76%, compared to 67%), however this difference is only significant at the lower 90% level.
- Vast proportions of all pupils in both the control group and Cohort 2 improved their scores at least somewhat, with no significant differences for the different matched subgroups.

Subgroup analysis: by Ethnicity

Table 22. Phonics check scores by Ethnicity

	White British: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks					All other ethnicities: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks				
	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	92	310	310	310	92	48	182	182	182	48
Mean	11.9	19.2	31.0	+11.9	+18.9	11.0	18.4	32.8	+14.4	+20.5
Maximum	29	31	40	+34	+36	31	31	40	+34	+34
Minimum	0	0	1	-12	-3	0	0	5	-6	+1
Median	12	21	34	+12	+19	10	19	35	+14	+20
Met required score, 2014			62%					73%		
Did not meet required score, 2014			38%					27%		

- Table 22 gives an overview of performances of White British pupils compared to those of other ethnicities. Similar to the pattern for the subgroups based on First Language, White British pupils tended to have had slightly better performances in their 2012 and 2013 phonics checks. However in the course of the programme, those pupils from other ethnicities tended to improve their scores more strongly and by the 2014 Check they tended to outperform their White British peers.
- White British pupils improved their scores from 2013 to 2014 by a mean of 11.9 points, to an average score of 31.0 in 2014, compared to an improvement of 14.4 for pupils from other ethnicities, rising to a mean score of 32.8 in 2014. This stronger improvement in scores among pupils from other ethnicities is statistically significant.
- This effect was also observed comparing the improvement of scores from 2012 to 2014; White British pupils improved their scores by 18.9 points on average over this period, compared to 20.5 points for their peers. However, this difference is not significant; please also note the low base sizes for this comparison.

- Nearly three quarters (73%) of pupils from other ethnicities met the required score in 2014, compared to 62% of White British pupils. This difference in attainment is statistically significant.

Table 23. Comparison of changes in phonics scores by Ethnicity

	White British: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		All other ethnicities: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	310	92	182	48
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	94%	99%	98%	100%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0.6%	0%	1%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	6%	1%	1%	0%

- Majorities of all pupils improved their scores year on year. White British pupils were somewhat less likely to do so from 2013 to 2014 (94%) compared to those from other ethnicities (98%); which represents a significant difference.
- Almost all pupils improved their scores from 2012 to 2014, with no significant differences by ethnicity.

Matched groups comparison

- Table 24 overleaf compares changes in phonics score by ethnicity between Cohort 2 and the control group.
- Children from other ethnicities tended to improve their scores more, and greater proportions met the required score in 2014, compared to White British children, for both Cohort 2 and the control group. However the difference in improvement between White British children and those from other ethnicities was slightly more marked in the control group than for pupils in Sound Check, where the attainment gap of White British pupils was lower.
- Comparing the subgroups, White British children in the control group improved their scores by a mean of 12.5 points, compared to those in Cohort 2 who had a stronger performance, improving by a mean of 14.0 points. This difference is however only significant at the lower 90% confidence level.

Table 24. Matched group comparison of changes in phonics check score by Ethnicity

	White British: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		All other ethnicities: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Cohort 2	Control group	Cohort 2	Control group
Number of pupils included	198	206	117	118
Mean score June 2013	17.9	18.0	17.4	17.3
Mean score June 2014	31.9	30.5	33.5	32.3
Mean change in score 2013 to 2014	+14.0	+12.5	+16.2	+15.0
Met required score, 2014	69%	63%	78%	67%
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	97%	96%	99%	97%

- Children from other ethnicities tended to improve their scores more, and greater proportions met the required score in 2014, compared to White British children, for both Cohort 2 and the control group. However the difference in improvement between White British children and those from other ethnicities was slightly more marked in the control group than for pupils in Sound Check, where the attainment gap of White British pupils was lower.
- Comparing the subgroups, White British children in the control group improved their scores by a mean of 12.5 points, compared to those in Cohort 2 who had a stronger performance, improving by a mean of 14.0 points. This difference is however only significant at the lower 90% confidence level.
- Although 69% of White British pupils in Cohort 2 met the required score in 2014, compared to 63% of those in the control group, this difference is not statistically significant.
- Pupils from other ethnicities in the programme tended to perform somewhat better than those in the control group, improving their scores by a mean of 16.2 compared to 15.0 for those in the control group. However this is not a significant difference.
- More pupils from other ethnicities in the programme met the required score in 2014 (78%) compared to those in the control group (67%). This finding is only significant at the lower 90% confidence level.
- Majorities of all pupils improved their scores for each of the different matched subgroups, with not significant differences between them.

Subgroup analysis: by SEN status

Table 25. Phonics check scores by SEN status, all pupils, Project Year 1

	Identified SEN: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks					No identified SEN: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks				
	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	102	303	303	303	102	38	189	189	189	38
Mean	9.8	17.2	29.5	+12.3	+20.4	16.5	21.7	35.2	+13.5	+16.7
Maximum	31	31	40	+34	+36	29	31	40	+34	+34
Minimum	0	0	1	-12	-3	0	0	17	-3	5
Median	9	18	33	+12	+20	16.5	23	36	+13	+17
Met required score, 2014				54%				85%		
Did not meet required score, 2014				46%				15%		

- Table 25 above looks at phonics scores by SEN status. It shows that those pupils with identified SEN (either with a statement, school action, or school action plus) tended to perform less strongly than their peers in both the 2012, 2013, and 2014 phonics checks.
- Those pupils without identified SEN were far more likely to meet the required score in 2014; 85% did so, compared to 54% of those with identified SEN; which represents a significant difference.
- Looking at the changes in scores from 2013 to 2014, those pupils without identified SEN improved more strongly, from a mean score of 21.7 in 2013 to 35.2 in 2014, increasing by a mean of 13.5 points. Those with identified SEN improved less strongly, by a mean of 12.3 points, to a mean score of 29.5 in 2014. However this difference is not statistically significant.
- Pupils with identified SEN did however improve more strongly from their 2012 scores than those without (although note the low base sizes here). Over these two years, those pupils with identified SEN improved their scores by a mean of 20.4 points, from a very low level of 9.8 points in 2012. Their peers without identified SEN improved

less strongly in this period, by a mean of 16.7 points, and this difference is significant. It is worth noting here that the Cohort 1 pupils, who had not met the required level twice before, can be regarded as particularly struggling or with greater needs, and the above suggests that SEN pupils within this category improved more strongly over this period.

Table 26. Comparison of changes in phonics scores by SEN status, all pupils, Project Year 1

	Identified SEN: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		No identified SEN: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	303	101	189	38
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	93%	99%	98%	100%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0.7%	1%	1%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	6%	0%	1%	0%

- Table 26 above shows that somewhat more pupils in the programme without identified SEN improved their scores than those with SEN (98% compared to 93%). This represents a significant difference.
- Almost all pupils from both subgroups improved their scores from 2012 to 2014, with no significant differences between them.

Matched groups comparison

- In Table 27 overleaf the comparison shows scores by SEN status for Cohort 2 and the control group.
- Comparing pupils by SEN status in Cohort 2 with their counterparts from the control group, those with identified SEN in Cohort 2 tended to perform slightly better than those in the control group. From the same level in 2013, Cohort 2 pupils improved their scores by a mean of 14.7 to 2014, contrasting with a mean improvement of 13.7 points for their counterparts in the control group. However this does not represent a statistically significant difference.

Table 27. Matched group comparison of changes in phonics check score by SEN status

	Identified SEN: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		No identified SEN: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Cohort 2	Control group	Cohort 2	Control group
Number of pupils included	174	176	141	148
Mean score June 2013	15.2	15.2	20.7	20.7
Mean score June 2014	29.9	28.9	35.7	33.9
Mean change in score 2013 to 2014	+14.7	+13.7	+15.0	+13.2
Met required score, 2014	59%	52%	89%	79%
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	97%	95%	99%	99%

- Comparing pupils by SEN status in Cohort 2 with their counterparts from the control group, those with identified SEN in Cohort 2 tended to perform slightly better than those in the control group. From the same level in 2013, Cohort 2 pupils improved their scores by a mean of 14.7 to 2014, contrasting with a mean improvement of 13.7 points for their counterparts in the control group. However this does not represent a statistically significant difference.
- Somewhat more pupils with SEN met the required score in 2014 in Cohort 2 (59%) compared to the control group (52%). However again this difference is not significant. Pupils without identified SEN in Cohort 2 also tended to perform more strongly than those in the control group. The former improved their scores by a mean of 15.0 points, compared to 13.2 among the equivalent subgroup in the control group. Of the former, 89% met the required score, compared to 79% of the control group pupils without identified SEN. Both these differences are statistically significant.
- Large majorities of pupils from all subgroups improved their scores from 2013 to 2014, with no significant differences between them.

Subgroup analysis: by Date of Birth (DoB)

To enable a comparison, the samples were split into two groups:

- ‘Older’ pupils in each year whose date of birth (DoB) was between September and February of that school year.
- ‘Younger’ pupils whose birthdates were between March and August.

Table 28. Phonics check scores by DoB, all pupils, Project Year 1

	Older: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks					Younger: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks				
	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014	Phonics check score June 2012	Phonics check score June 2013	Phonics check score June 2014	Change in score between June 2013 and June 2014	Change in score between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	47	184	184	184	47	93	308	308	308	93
Mean	12.6	19.2	32.0	+12.8	+18.1	11.1	18.7	31.5	+12.8	+20.0
Maximum	31	31	40	+34	+31	28	31	40	+34	+36
Minimum	0	0	4	-12	+1	0	0	1	-7	-3
Median	13	20	35	+12	+19	11	20	34	+12.5	+20
Met required score, 2014			69%					65%		
Did not meet required score, 2014			31%					35%		

- As Table 28 indicates, younger pupils in the Sound Check programme tended to perform very slightly less strongly in their phonics checks than their older peers. Both subgroups improved their scores from 2013 to 2014 by the same amount – a mean of 12.8 points improvement; which translated into a continued minor attainment gap between the younger and older pupils.
- Younger pupils did improve more strongly between their 2012 scores to the 2014 scores, by a mean of 20.0 points compared to 18.1 points improvement for the older ones. However this is not a statistically significant difference.
- Slightly more older pupils met the required score in 2014 (69%) than younger ones (65%), but this difference is not statistically significant.

Table 29. Comparison of changes in phonics scores by DoB, all pupils, Project Year 1

	Older: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		Younger: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014	Change between June 2013 and June 2014	Change between June 2012 and June 2014
Number of pupils included	184	47	308	93
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	97%	100%	94%	99%
Year-on-year change: unchanged phonics score	0.5%	0%	1%	0%
Year-on-year change: decreased phonics score	3%	0%	5%	1%

- A slightly larger proportion of older pupils improved their scores from 2013 to 2014 than younger pupils (97% compared to 94%), but again this is not a significant difference.
- Almost all pupils improved their scores from 2012 to 2014, regardless of date of birth, with no significant differences between these proportions.

Matched groups comparison

- Table 30 on the next page illustrates the comparison between Cohort 2 and control group pupils based on their date of birth. In Cohort 2, younger pupils started in 2013 with an attainment gap compared to their older peers in 2013, but they performed slightly more strongly and were thus able to narrow this gap by 2014. The opposite effect was observed in the control group, with younger pupils improving their scores less strongly than older pupils, and falling further behind in the 2014 check.
- Comparing individual subgroups, for the older pupils differences between those in the control group and Cohort 2 were not very marked. Older pupils in Cohort 2 improved their scores by a mean of 14.6 points from 2013 to 2014, compared to a mean of 13.8 points improvement for the older pupils in the control group. The latter were slightly less likely to meet the required score in 2014, with 69% scoring 32 or above, compared to 74% of those in Cohort 2. However neither the differences in mean improvement nor in proportions meeting the required score are statistically significant.

- For the younger pupils there was a stronger improvement observed among those in Cohort 2 than in the control group: a mean increase of 15.0 points, compared to 13.2 points. This difference in mean improvement is statistically significant.

Table 30. Matched group comparison of changes in phonics check score by DoB

	Older: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks		Younger: all participants who completed 2013 and 2014 phonics checks	
	Cohort 2	Control group	Cohort 2	Control group
Number of pupils included	124	125	191	199
Mean score June 2013	18.1	18.5	17.4	17.3
Mean score June 2014	32.7	32.3	32.4	30.5
Mean change in score 2013 to 2014	+14.6	+13.8	+15.0	+13.2
Met required score, 2014	74%	69%	71%	62%
Year-on-year change: increased phonics score	98%	98%	97%	95%

- More younger pupils in the Sound Check programme also met the required score in 2014 (71%) compared to those in the control group (62%), although this difference is only significant at the lower 90% confidence interval.
- There were no significant differences between the proportions of all subgroups increasing their phonics scores from 2013 to 2014.

Attitudes to school and learning

Methodology

Teachers described pupils for different measures in both programme years, based on a 5-point scale with the following codes:

1. Always true
2. Mostly true
3. Sometimes true
4. Rarely true
5. Never true

Where a pupil has not been described for at least two terms the case has not been included in the analysis. To derive an overall score, it has been identified whether a pupil improved on at least one measure; did not change on any measure, or either fell or did not change across all measures. Pupils are thus counted as having an overall improvement if they improved on at least one measure, regardless of whether the others fell or stayed the same.

Literacy skills

These were reported in the class teachers' monitoring questionnaires between term 1 and term 2 of the 2013-14 school year, project Year 1. Note that for Year 2 of the project the same information was collected for Cohort 3 and the continuing children from Cohort 2. However, a different scale was used to record statements, which does not allow for a direct comparison with project Year 1, hence these figures have not been analysed.

As table 31 on the following page indicates, for each individual measure of literacy skills, roughly half of all pupils were reported not to have shown any change in the course of Year 1 of the project, although between 37% and 40% did improve for each individual measure. Looking across all three measures, 50% of pupils did improve on at least one or more of the three measures, with 35% showing no change across all three and 15% worsening on at least one measure and showing no change on the others.

Table 31: Changes in literacy skills, all participants, Project Year 1

	Number of pupils included	Mean T1	Mean T2	Change T1 to T2	Improved	No change	Fell
Shows greater accuracy in their knowledge of letter/sound correspondences	462	2.3	2	+0.3	37%	51%	12%
Is able to segment words and non-words with greater accuracy	459	2.4	2	+0.4	39%	51%	10%
Is able to blend sounds with greater accuracy	457	2.3	2	+0.4	40%	50%	10%
Overall - on any of the measures above	462				50%	35%	15%

Attitudes and behaviours

Table 32 overleaf shows the changes in attitudes reported by class teachers between term 1 and term 2 of the 2013-2014 school year. Note that for Year 2 of the project the same information was collected for Cohort 3 and the continuing children from Cohort 2. However, a different scale was used to record statements, which does not allow for a direct comparison with project Year 1, hence these figures have not been analysed.

Similar to the findings on literacy skills, for each individual measure the largest proportion of pupils were reported not to have improved or deteriorated in terms of their attitudes and behaviours, between 45% and 49%. Around a third of pupils did show improvements over the course of the year for each individual measure (between 32% and 40%).

Looking across all measures, around two thirds (68%) of pupils did improve on at least one of them; with around a quarter deteriorating on at least one measure and showing no change on the others, and 7% remaining unchanged across all measures.

Table 32: Changes in attitudes and behaviours, class teacher reports, all participants, Project Year 1

	Number of pupils included	Mean T1	Mean T2	Change T1 to T2	Improved	No change	Fell
Appears more confident in class	462	2.4	2.3	0.2	32%	49%	18%
Is more engaged in class	463	2.6	2.4	0.2	32%	49%	19%
Participates more willingly in class activities	463	2.5	2.3	0.2	32%	48%	20%
Shows improved concentration	463	2.6	2.5	0.2	33%	46%	21%
Seems more independent as a learner	462	2.6	2.3	0.2	34%	46%	20%
Seems more interested in books and is more willing to read	461	2.5	2.2	0.3	40%	45%	15%
Is more motivated to learn	366	2.5	2.3	0.2	35%	48%	17%
Overall - on any of the measures above	463				68%	7%	25%

Table 33 below shows the changes in attitudes reported by **specialist teachers** running the intervention between quarters 2, 3 and 4 of the 2013-2014 school year, Project Year 1. The specialist teachers were reporting on the children's progress just in their intervention sessions.

Table 33: Changes in attitudes and behaviours, specialist teacher reports, all participants, Project Year 1 (*Note 3 of these statements are negative)

	Number of pupils included	Mean Q2	Mean Q3	Mean Q4	Change Q2 to Q4	Improved	No change	Fell
seems happy in class	515	1.5	1.5	1.4	0.1	17%	72%	11%
can work well with others	515	1.9	1.9	1.8	0.1	23%	61%	15%
is focussed when working alone	516	2.2	2.1	2.0	0.2	30%	57%	13%
is able to be quiet and to listen	516	2.1	2.0	1.9	0.2	29%	58%	14%
*seems to lack motivation	516	4.2	4.3	4.3	0.2	26%	59%	15%
*seems reluctant to come to sessions	516	4.8	4.8	4.7	0.0	9%	79%	12%
*is withdrawn and uncommunicative	514	4.6	4.6	4.6	0.1	17%	73%	11%
Overall - on any of the measures above	516					61%	18%	21%

The following table shows the same information on changes in attitudes and behaviours in the specialist support classes for pupils in Project Year 2.

Table 34: Changes in attitudes and behaviours, specialist teacher reports, all participants, Project Year 2 (*Note 3 of these statements are negative **where Q1 and/or Q4 data was not available data for the nearest two quarters was considered instead)

	Number of pupils included	Mean Q1	Mean Q2	Mean Q3	Mean Q4	**Change Q1 to Q4	Improved	No change	Fell
seems happy in class	353	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	0.2	27%	67%	6%
can work well with others	349	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.7	0.4	38%	55%	7%
is focussed when working alone	352	2.4	2.1	2.1	1.9	0.5	48%	47%	5%
is able to be quiet and to listen	353	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.8	0.4	41%	51%	8%
*seems to lack motivation	353	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	0.3	32%	59%	9%
*seems reluctant to come to sessions	353	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.8	0.1	13%	80%	6%
*is withdrawn and uncommunicative	353	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.7	0.2	21%	73%	6%
Overall - on any of the measures above	353						74%	18%	8%

As for the findings reported by the class teachers, the specialist teacher reports tended to show that for each individual measure in both Year 1 and Year 2 of the project, majorities of pupils were not observed to have improved or worsened over the course of that year. The proportion that did improve varied between measures, from 9% to 30% in Year 1 and between 13% and 48% in Year 2.

Year 2 of the project saw greater proportions of pupils improving on each individual measure and this is also reflected when looking across all measures. In project Year 1, 61% of pupils improved on at least one of the measures, compared to 74% doing so in project Year 2.

In Table 35 on the following page is a comparison of impact across all measures, recorded by both specialist teachers and class teachers, for Year 1 of the Sound Check project (where such comparison was possible). This also breaks down the findings by SEN status.

Looking across literacy skills, attitudes and behaviours as reported by class teachers and specialist teachers, a great majority of pupils did show an improvement across at least one or more measures. Eighty-eight per cent showed such an improvement, with 3% not showing

any change across all measures, and 9% deteriorating on at least one measure and showing no change on all others. Broken down by SEN status, those pupils with identified SEN performed nearly just as well as their peers, with 87% improving on at least one measure, compared to 91% of those pupils without SEN.

Table 35: Comparison of changes in attitudes and behaviours across all measures, class and specialist teacher reports, all participants, Project Year 1 (*SEN = those with a statement, school action, or school action plus)

	Number of pupils included	Improved	No change	Fell	SEN* only - % improved	No SEN only - % improved
Specialist teacher reports, change Q2 to Q4	516	61%	18%	21%	61%	60%
Class teacher reports: attitude and behaviour, change T1 to T2	463	68%	7%	25%	65%	71%
Class teacher reports: literacy skills, change T1 to T2	462	50%	35%	15%	49%	51%
Class teacher reports: ALL, change T1 to T2	463	77%	5%	18%	76%	80%
COMBINED ACROSS ALL REPORTS	516	88%	3%	9%	87%	91%

Attendance

Overall school attendance

Data was analysed to show overall school attendance levels in both years of the project; as well as the mean change in attendance level, for those pupils where data was available for both terms.

Term 3 attendance figures for 2013-14 and 2014-15 were not obtainable for the Sound Check pupils; Term 3 attendance figures for 2013/14 for the control group had not yet been released by the DfE at time of writing.

Table 36 on the next page below shows changes in school attendance for the year preceding, and during, Year 1 of the project, for all Sound Check pupils involved then (Cohorts 1 and 2). It shows that attendance levels improved slightly over this time, rising from 92.6% in Term 1 of 2012-13, to 95.4% in Term 2 of 2013-14.

Table 36: Mean attendance levels to regular classes, Project Year 1

	Term 1 2012-13 %	Term 2 2012-13 %	Term 3 2012-13 %	Term 1 2013-14 %	Term 2 2013-14 %	Change T1 2012/13 to T2 2013/14
Number of participants	461	471	482	482	434	395
Mean attendance	92.6%	93.8%	94.1%	95.3%	95.4%	+3.0%

Table 37 shows the attendance levels for pupils in Year 2 of the Sound Check programme, i.e. Cohort 3 and those from Cohort 2 who did not meet the required score in 2014 and continued into the second year of the programme. For these pupils, mean attendance levels dropped slightly, from 94.5% in Term 1 of 2013-14, down to 93.9% in Term 2 of 2014-15.

Table 37: Mean attendance levels to regular classes, Project Year 2

	Term 1 2013-14 %	Term 2 2013-14 %	Term 3 2013-14 %	Term 1 2014-15 %	Term 2 2014-15 %	Change T1 2012/13 to T2 2014/15
Number of participants	279	287	281	281	281	279
Mean attendance	94.5%	93.9%	95.2%	94.7%	93.9%	-3.3%

Matched groups comparison

Table 38 overleaf compares school attendance levels for pupils in Cohort 2, Project Year 1, to the matched control group, for the year preceding the Sound Check programme (2012-13) as well as year 1 of the project. Attendance levels improved between Term 1 of 2012-13 and Term 2 of 2013-14; both for pupils in Cohort 2, by a mean of 3.4%; as well as those in the control group, by a mean of 1.8%. However this difference in means is not statistically significant.

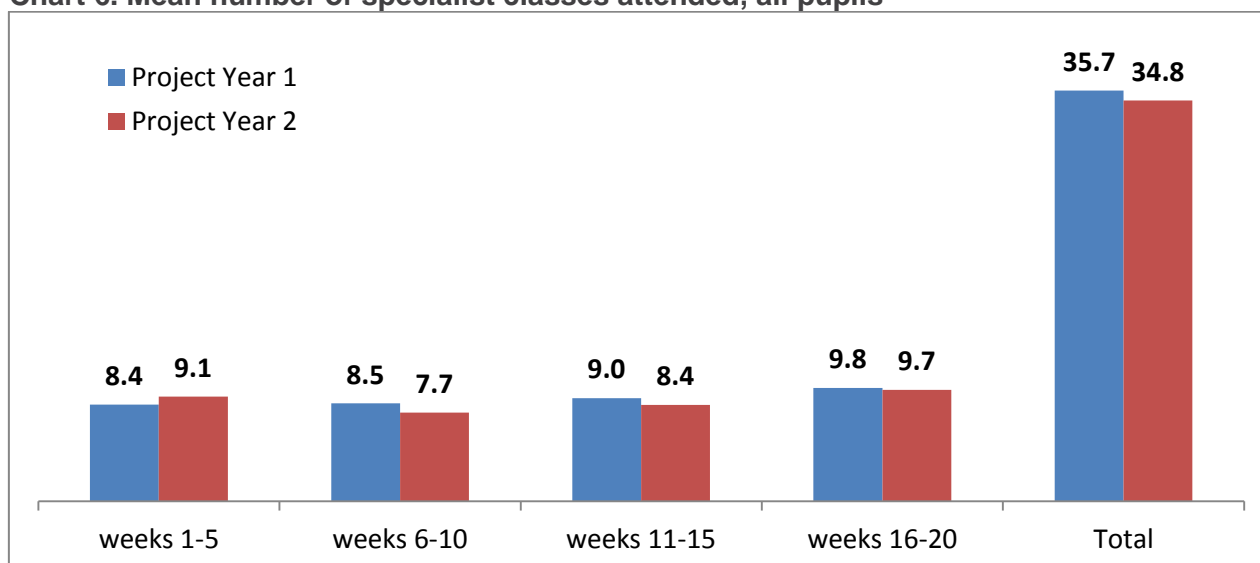
Table 38. Mean attendance to regular classes, Project Year 1, Cohort 2 and Control group pupils

		Year before Sound Check			During Sound Check Year 1		Change T1 2012/13 to T2 2013/14
		Term 1 2012-13	Term 2 2012-13	Term 3 2012-13	Term 1 2013-14	Term 2 2013-14	
Cohort 2	Number of participants	284	289	296	296	268	246
	Mean attendance	92.0%	93.4%	93.6%	95.2%	95.3%	+3.4%
Control group	Number of participants	319	318	319	319	320	316
	Mean attendance	92.9%	92.7%	93.6%	94.5%	94.3%	+1.8%

Specialist class attendance

Chart 6 below illustrates how many specialist Sound Check classes, on average, pupils attended in each five week block for the two years of the project. Variations in the number of classes on offer in each block were in part affected by the availability of the specialist teacher, and each school’s specific calendar. Thus some pupils may have been offered more or fewer than ten support classes in each block and it was not possible to calculate attendance rates to these classes. Overall pupils attended slightly fewer classes in Year 2 than in Year 1.

Chart 6. Mean number of specialist classes attended, all pupils



Exclusion

Only two of the children participating in the programme have been excluded so no analysis was conducted to look at this variable.

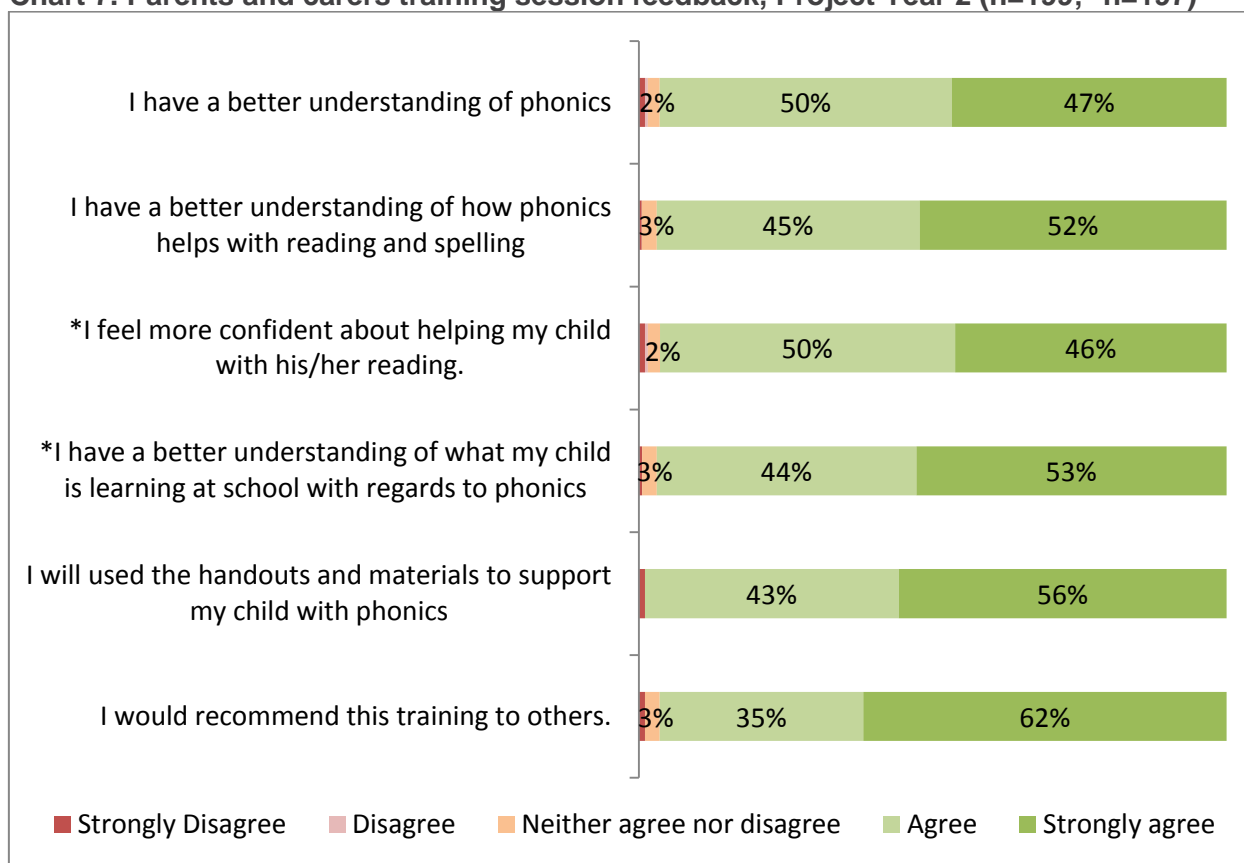
Training impact, Project Year 2³

Parents and carers training

After taking part in the training session, parents and carers were asked to complete a brief evaluation questionnaire. In Year 2 of the project, a total of 199 forms were received from parents and carers at 12 schools. Around half each of the responding parents and carers were from Manchester and Leeds, with only very few responses from Swindon.

Chart 7 below shows parents and carers' views on the training received in Year 2 of the project. It shows that the training was rated highly by the vast majority of parents and carers, across a range of different measures.

Chart 7. Parents and carers training session feedback, Project Year 2 (n=199; *n=197)



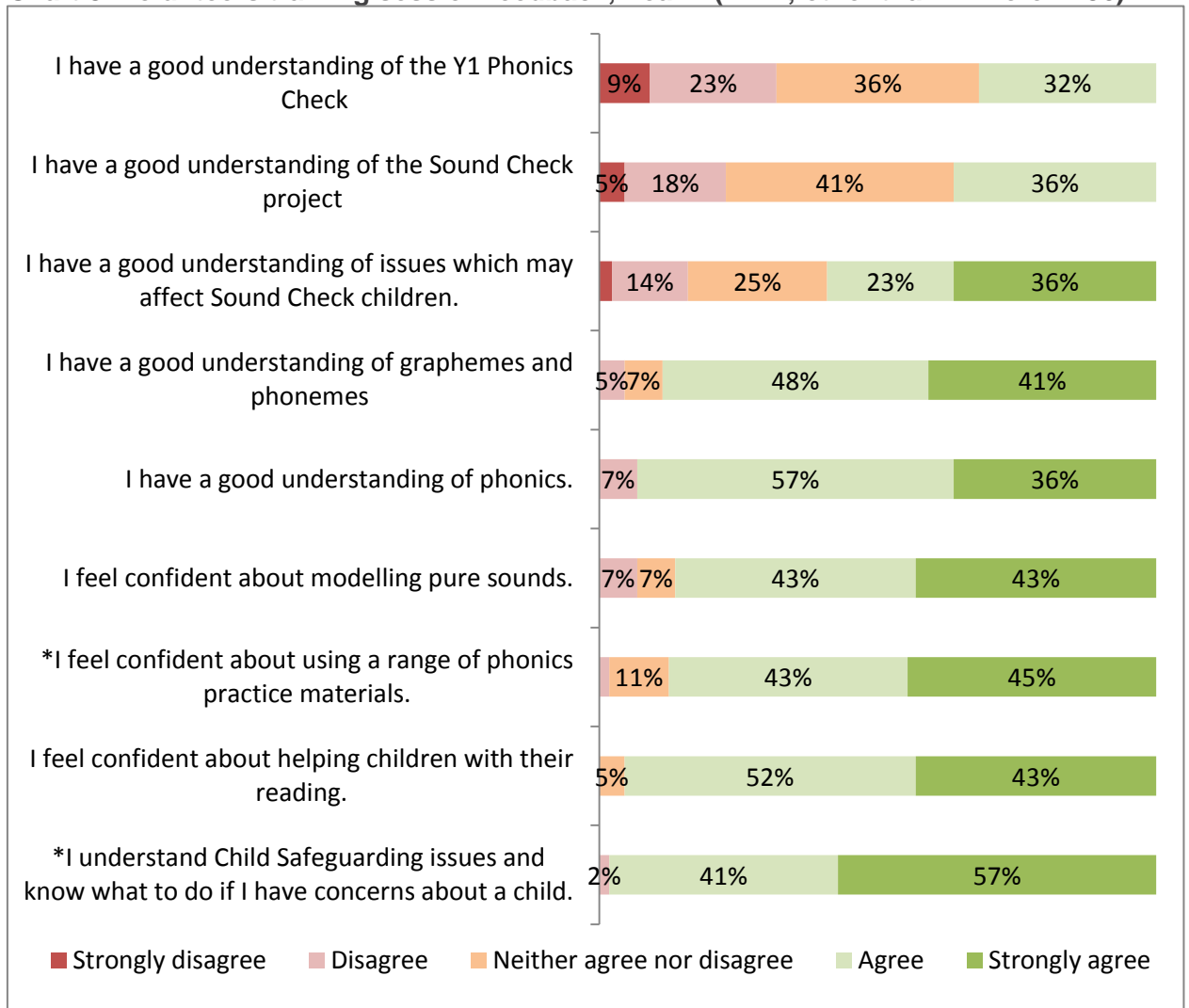
³ Note that the findings for the impact of training in Project Year 1 can be found in the end of Year 1 report.

Between 96% and 99% of all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that after the training they: have a better understanding of phonics, have a better understanding of how phonics help with reading and spelling, feel more confident about helping their child with their reading, have a better understanding of what their child is learning at school, and will be more able to help their child enjoy school. Only small minorities neither agreed nor disagreed, or disagreed outright. Nearly all (96%) would recommend the training to others.

Volunteer training

Volunteers receiving training as part of the Sound Check programme were asked to fill in an evaluation questionnaire, and 56 responded. Chart 8 shows that overall, volunteers were generally positive about the training for all, but not all, measures.

Chart 8. Volunteers training session feedback, Year 2 (n=44; other than * where n=56)



Almost all volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that they understand Child Safeguarding issues (98% in total). Large majorities of between 86% and 95% also either agreed or strongly agreed with most of the other measures, around: feeling confident about helping

children with their reading; feeling confident about using a range of phonics practice materials; feeling confident about modelling pure sounds; having a good understanding of phonics; and having a good understanding of graphemes and phonemes.

However responses were more mixed on other measures. Fifty-nine percent agreed or strongly agreed that they have a good understanding of issues which may affect Sound Check children, but a quarter (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed; and 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Large proportions also did not agree or disagree that they have a good understanding of the Sound Check project (41%) and of the Year 1 Phonics Check (36%), with substantial minorities stating they disagreed/strongly disagreed about these measures.

Whole school training

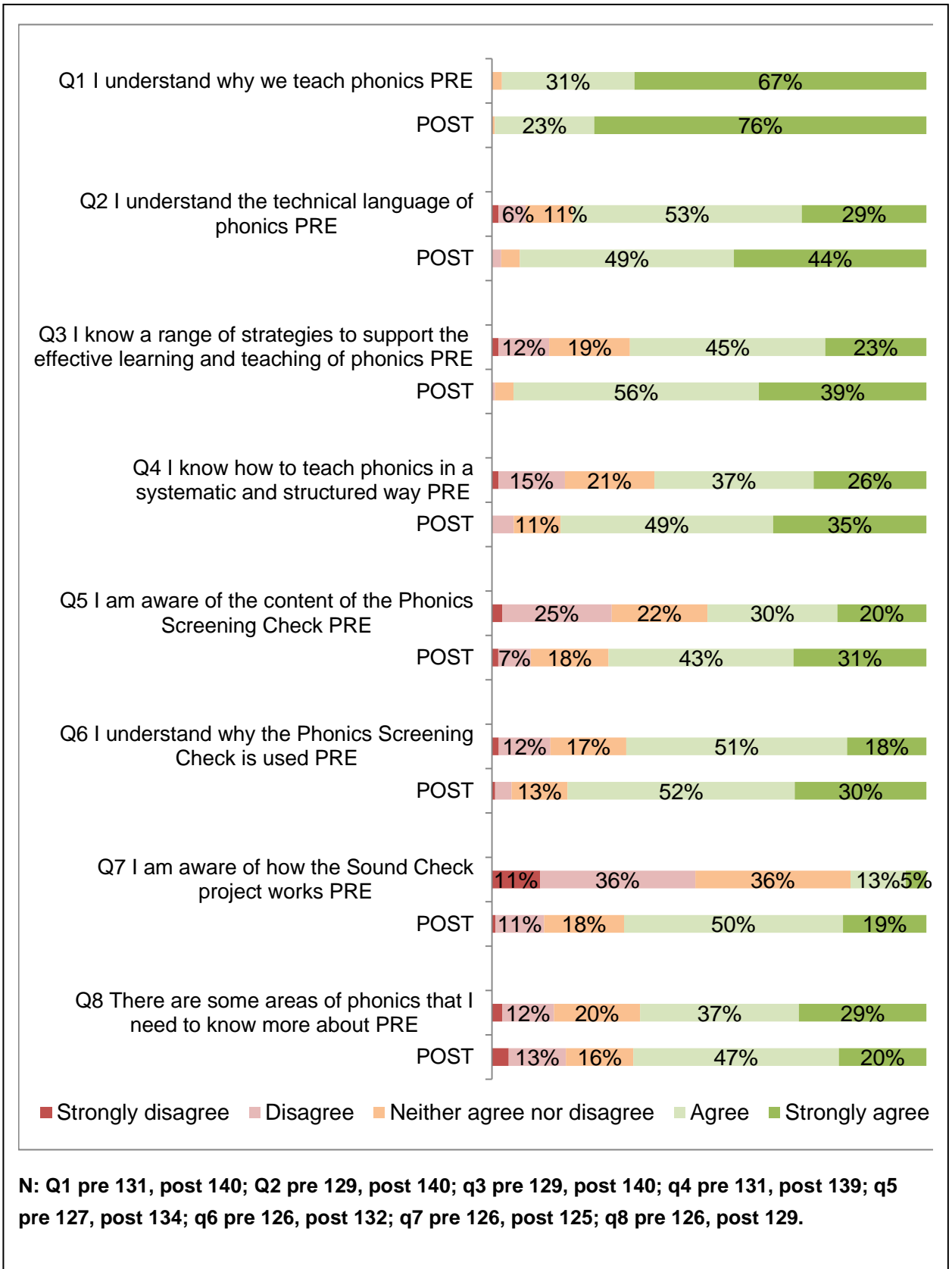
Evaluation questionnaires on the whole school training were received from 141 participants from all three areas, with responses coming mainly from Leeds and Manchester in similar proportions. These included the same set of questions before and after the training, and Chart 9 on the next page compares responses for a range of measures. Overall respondents were confident in their skills around phonics before the training, but across all measures, the proportions that were confident (either agreeing or strongly agreeing) increased.

The greatest increases were observed for the measure on 'I am aware of how the Sound Check project works'; this had the lowest proportion agreeing or strongly agreeing before (17%) rising to 70% after the training. Large increases were also observed for whether participants 'know a range of strategies to support the effective learning and teaching of phonics' (68% agreeing/strongly agreeing before, 95% after the training); for being 'aware of the content of the Phonics Screening Check' (50% before, 73% after); and for 'knowing how to teach phonics in a systematic and structured way (63% before, 84% after).

The lowest changes following the training were observed on the measure whether participants 'understand why we teach phonics': this was because participants' knowledge started from a very high baseline, with 98% agreeing or strongly agreeing before the training; rising only slightly to 99% after the training, although 9% more strongly agreed after the training.

Around two thirds (66%) of participants before the training agreed or strongly agreed that 'there are some areas of phonics that I need to know more about'; this proportion remained largely unchanged after the training (67%), although fewer strongly agreed after the training.

Chart 9. Whole school training feedback, Year 2



Dyslexia Screener scores

The table below shows changes in the scores students achieved in their further screener checks before and after the intervention in Year 1 and Year 2. As can be seen, students tended to improve their scores across all the measures tested for both before and after the intervention. Particularly large improvements in mean scores were observed on the TOWRE reading raw scores; the single word reading raw scores; and the non-word reading scores.

Table 39. Dyslexia Screener scores: all pupils taking the pre and post tests (Note RS stands for 'raw score', SS for 'standardised score').

	Project Year 1 2013-14				Project Year 2 2014-15			
	N	Mean pre intervention 2013	Mean post intervention 2014	Change in means 2013-2014	N	Mean pre intervention 2014	Mean post intervention 2015	Change in means 2014-2015
WRIT Verbal Analogies RS	514	12.2			259	11.0		
WRIT Verbal Analogies SS	514	90.9			260	89.1		
ALK Alphabet Reciting RS	514	19.9	25.3	+5.4	241	17.9	25.2	+7.3
ALK Knowledge of Letter Sounds	514	22.7	25.6	+3.0	241	23.3	25.6	+2.3
ALK Writing Lower Case Alphabet	514	22.0	25.2	+3.3	241	20.9	24.5	+3.6
ALK Knowledge of CVCs in <30 seconds	514	10.4	16.4	+6.0	241	8.3	14.7	+6.3
Single Word Reading RS	514	11.9	20.9	+9.0	239	9.1	17.1	+8.0
Single Word Reading SS	514	85.7	92.0	+6.4	239	87.8	92.5	+4.6
Single Word Spelling RS	514	8.1	12.5	+4.4	239	6.9	10.4	+3.6
Single Word Spelling SS	514	86.3	91.2	+5.0	239	89.0	90.9	+1.9
Non-word Reading RS	514	7.1	15.0	+7.9	239	6.1	13.2	+7.1
Non-word Reading SS	514	91.8	99.9	+8.1	238	94.4	100.9	+6.6
Recall of Digits Forward RS	514	10.7			261	10.9		
Recall of Digits Forward SS	514	89.4			261	92.7		
Recall of Digits Backwards RS	514	4.4			261	3.6		
Recall of Digits Backwards SS	514	87.6			261	87.4		
TAAS	514	6.2	9.4	+3.3	238	4.8	8.1	+3.3

TOWRE Reading RS	172	21.2	34.5	+13.3	96	15.2	26.8	+11.5
TOWRE Reading SS	172	88.2	93.7	+5.6	96	89.4	95.0	+5.6
TOWRE Non-word reading RS	172	8.8	15.6	+6.7	96	7.3	12.9	+5.6
TOWRE Non-word reading SS	172	89.5	93.9	+4.4	96	92.9	97.0	+4.2

Workshop findings and learning points

On March 3rd 2015 a stakeholder workshop was organised in Manchester to reflect on emergent findings from the Sound Check programme and identify learning points for the future. It was attended by staff from the three organisations running Sound Check, teachers from schools taking part in the programme, and specialist support teachers. The workshop was a chance to feed back initial findings from OPM's evaluation as well as from the case study review conducted by the British Dyslexia Association. The rest of this section gives a summary of the key points from the group discussions at the event.

Group discussion: looking to the future

What, professionally, have you learnt?

- From a specialist teacher who had been mainly in secondary schools: experience/knowledge of working in a primary school and internal management of primaries.
- From a specialist teacher: understanding how phonics fits in with the wider primary curriculum
- Communication is important, with the SENCO recognised as key – especially for the specialist teacher coming in. Communication with child protection agencies is also important in ensuring a coordinated approach.
- Monitoring children who do not meet the required phonics scores: ideally this should involve a cycle of diagnostics and intervention to prevent them falling behind further.
- There were some concerns around taking children out of regular literacy classes for the specialist support classes.

How will it inform your future practice?

- One school will be using ALK (active literacy kit) even without the Sound Check programme
- The style of learning in the programme; this was felt to be good for every child, not just those with phonics issues.
- It was generally recognised that it is important to be paying more attention to attendance as a factor linked to children struggling. Once a child has been absent, it falls behind, the question is how to bring in support to absent children, how to enable them to catch up.
- A greater awareness of the timing of any specialist support. This should come in a little later in the school year to give classes time to 'settle in' and for class teachers to get to know their children better. Also, bringing the timing of specialist support closer to the day of the Phonics Check would reduce the potential for pupils to 'fall back' in the gap between the last support classes and the check.

Which elements of the project worked well?

- Children having the opportunity to get extra, targeted, support. Being made to feel like they are getting special attention, including that of the volunteers.
- Brought about regular staff paying more attention to those children needing extra support than they normally would have done.
- Having time at the end to do work/training with teaching assistants. In one case what was particularly effective was scheduling this end of year training across two afternoon sessions with a gap in between to digest and reflect
- Visual markers/materials in the specialist classes, these were found to have been helpful for the children to learn phonics
- Lunchtime informal links between specialist teachers and class teachers. As formal contact between these was limited, being able to have informal chats about the programme and pupils when teachers met in their lunch breaks was considered useful, and a welcome opportunity to ask questions
- In one case, having dedicated spaces for the intervention. These spaces need to be quiet places where children can concentrate. There was a perceived benefit in having the same room each time, to give regularity to the children. These pupils have specific needs to support their learning, the environment must be conducive to concentration. Visual cues and space to sit properly and write properly also helped.
- Schools appreciated receiving 'free' training for teaching reading and writing

What would you change?

- Expand the programme: there were more children in each school that would benefit from such support.
- Give the programme more flexibility in which children to target (to some extent this already happened in year 2). Those who scored just below the required score may not need specialist intervention to help them reach the score the next time round. Further support around selection criteria, this could also help to get class teachers on board.
- Teaching Assistant time. A lot is asked of them. Ideally, more funding in the programme to pay towards TAs being released into Sound Check classes. Schools currently find it difficult to release TAs. TAs could then also work in the specialist groups.
- More TA training slots throughout the programme. TAs should be given the skills to deliver classes, not just play games with the children. This would also support the sustainability of the programme.
- Changing the role of the specialist teacher: not just delivering support but also as a consultant to the school, delivering training to other staff. Sound Check should also change its messaging to make it clear that specialist teachers can advise schools in this role. In this building capacity into the future
- The training delivered by Springboard needed to occur earlier on, not at the end of the programme. This training could have been tailored more to the schools' existing contexts; the starting point of the training was far too basic. Instead the training should build on the knowledge staff hold already. Their skills/needs should be assessed before going in and delivering the training, to make sure it is organised.
- Once a term or so a specialist teacher and school staff, and maybe TA, could meet, for the specialist teacher to give training and to discuss the children being supported. This would also build up better relationships.
- See earlier point about the importance of appropriate spaces for the intervention – this was not always the case. One participant suggested a “Sound Check bus.”
- Allow class teachers to observe a specialist session, or have a film of a specialist lesson to show staff – a way of feedback; could support application in regular classes.
- Alternatively to the above, training for class teachers. Suggestions for how to use the learning from specialist classes in teachers' own classes, this would also give class teachers a sense of ownership and get better buy-in
- Timing. Run the Sound Check programme later in the year, maybe a month later. Currently there is quite a large gap between the end of the specialist support in March, and the phonics check in June. Starting the specialist support a month later

would also give time for things to 'settle down' in the classes, new class relationships to settle, and the class teacher to get to know their own children better.

- Application of the teaching in reading and writing
- Volunteers were viewed as very helpful and important but sometimes encountered problems in getting teachers to allow them to take children out of class. Volunteers need to be given more authority or at least training on how to navigate the politics within a school. Teachers also need to be shown the benefits and value of the programme so that they are more likely to allow children out of class.

Thinking about your organisation – what will they be taking forward? What resource would you need to do this?

Once the intervention is finished, for the Sound Check programme to provide an ongoing contact and advice, and access to their specialist knowledge even after the specialist teacher is gone. A kind of 'safety net'. This wouldn't necessarily mean someone from Sound Check going in to schools in person – it could be by email, phone.

Summary

We have seen how the programme has worked well for pupils and teachers; but the discussion also raised a number of points to consider for how to improve the programme even further:

- 1. The communications strategy.** All partners in the project and in particular class teachers need to know what the intended outcomes of the project will be, their role and those of others, what will be delivered, and how. Class teachers need to know there will be negotiation around who what and when. This should support the embedding of learning both in the classroom and in what teaching assistants offer. Headteachers need to know and understand the potential impact of Sound Check; this will also enable them to engage the rest of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 2. The children's wellbeing: making sure all people around the children are aware** of the pressures on that child. Set up mini case conferences around struggling children to maximise impact and minimise stress, possibly including volunteers too so they are kept in the loop.
- 3. Change the role of the specialist teacher.** Do this in order for the programme to remain sustainable. The specialist teacher should share their knowledge and understanding with others in the school, not just work with the child to deliver that support. They could facilitate the work of others in the school (specialist teacher, volunteer) and build capacity to support literacy development into the future.

- 4. Timeliness.** The programme needs to look into how it can fit in with DfE's (sometimes difficult) calendars but also with the realities of the school year. Shifting timings of the support to start a month later, so that class teachers have time to identify children's learning and wellbeing needs.
- 5. Application in reading and writing.** Children need to be encouraged to apply the skills developed around phonics ability in reading and writing, otherwise the support will not impact effectively on the development of literacy overall.
- 6. Pay attention to absenteeism.** It might not have been recognised fully before but absenteeism and disengagement with the programme are an issue. Children who do not engage with the programme can become frustrated and appear more prone to absenteeism which can lead to further shortfalls in their learning and they are more likely to disengage further.
- 7. Recognise each child's own individual circumstances.**