



Resistance to research: Why don't all children receive effective, evidence-based reading instruction?

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What is FIVE from FIVE?

FIVE from FIVE is an initiative of The Centre for Independent Studies to bridge the gap between classroom practice and the research on effective reading instruction.



Why FIVE from FIVE?

Forty years of rigorous research has shown that children need explicit instruction in *the five essential components* of reading — phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension — in the first year of school when they are five years old.

Educators, policy makers and parents need to know what effective, evidence-based reading instruction is, and how to use it.

[How To Teach Reading](#) ▾

[The Five 'Keys' to Reading](#) ▾

[Publications](#)

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Get all children reading...
Give them the five keys to literacy
from the age of five.



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A study in resistance to research: phonics

Phonics is

- The relationship between speech sounds and their letter symbols (grapheme:phoneme correspondences - GPCs)
- The methods used to teach GPCs
- The process of using knowledge of GPCs to sound out (decode) words

Teaching Phonics

Implicit or Incidental Phonics

GPCs pointed out during reading of text. GPC, segmenting and blending skills and linguistic concepts (eg. split digraph rules) are not taught in isolation from text reading.

Analytic Phonics

Teaching begins with whole words. GPCs are taught by breaking down words into component parts and drawing comparisons between words that look and/or sound similar.

Synthetic phonics

Instruction is systematic and sequential, building up from the simplest and most common GPCs to more complex and less common GPCs. Sequence is carefully planned for minimal confusion and to achieve decoding quickly. Blending is introduced early.

Phonics

“That direct instruction in alphabetic coding facilitates early reading acquisition is one of the most well established conclusions in all of behavioural science.’

Prof Keith Stanovich (2000)

“It is true that some children readily acquire the skills of independent reading without highly explicit teaching, but if balanced is interpreted as offering all children only an embedded rather than an explicit approach to phonics instruction, those most in need will be further disadvantaged.”

Prof Deslea Konza (2014)

Expert teachers are essential

‘A well-prepared teacher must have a solid grasp of both the complexities of English orthography and the language systems that print represents in order to teach students recognition of written words.

Without such knowledge, the teacher is likely to promote guessing strategies (“What might make sense here?”), bypass strategies (“Skip that and go on.”), the belief that accuracy does not matter (“Nice try.”), or rote memorization of higher frequency words.

Louisa Moats (2014)

“Peter” effects

- ‘Peter effect’ - One cannot teach what one does not know. (Binks-Cantrell, Washburn, Joshi, & Hougan, 2012).
- There is a lot that teachers (and teacher educators) do not know about how children learn to read, the structure of the English language, and the most effective ways to teach it.
- Numerous studies of pre-service and beginning teachers in Australia have found weak knowledge of basic language constructs and poor understanding of effective practice.

Low knowledge of language constructs among teachers

Stark, Snow, Eadie & Goldfeld (2016)

Prep teachers in Victoria:

- 38% correctly defined phonemic awareness
- 41% correctly defined a consonant blend
- 53% correctly defined a morpheme
- 63% thought that reading difficulties could be helped using coloured lenses or overlays.

Low knowledge of language constructs among teachers

Bostock and Boon (2010)

Fourth year pre-service teachers in a Queensland university:

- Mean scores in language test: Spelling 10/14; Punctuation 10/15; Use of apostrophes 3/4; identifying nouns 12/31; identifying verbs 6/13
- Students' survey responses indicated desire for more instruction in literacy basics and grammar.
- “The results show the cohort had, in general, a high level of self-efficacy for all constructs measured, however these high levels were not mirrored by high levels of personal literacy competence.”

Low principal confidence in graduate teachers' ability to teach reading

APPA Discussion Paper (2015)

“Graduate teachers are not adequately prepared to teach without significant levels of support. They are not classroom ready. For example, over half of graduate (primary) teachers could not teach reading (54%) and mathematics (51%) to a reasonable level.”

Low employer confidence in graduate teachers' ability to teach reading

Joint submission from the NSW BOSTES, NSW DECS, CECNSW and AISNSW to TEMAG (2014):

Teachers, executive staff and employers regularly raised the issue of “a pursuit of a particular favoured teaching approach(es) to the exclusion of alternatives (for instance, a refusal to include phonemic/phonetic skills except to a rudimentary extent in some institutions)” .

Teacher Education

Widely used literacy textbooks for ITE courses provide information that is inconsistent with evidence.

“Phonic knowledge is probably best learned through lots of reading and writing, and activities that grow from reading and writing”, and “phonics needs to be taught in context”.

Emmitt, Zbaracki, Komesaroff, & Pollock. 2015. *Language and Learning: An Introduction for Teaching (6th edition)*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Teacher education and professional learning

Academics in Australian universities and professional learning consultants continue to promote ‘whole language’ ‘balanced literacy’, and multi-cueing despite extensive evidence that explicit, systematic instruction is more effective.

“Whole language approaches have a significant pedagogical edge over phonics based approaches. They are intrinsically engaging because they begin with the end game on view for the students - meaning. This gives an immediate purpose and motivation for learning, and engages the students.”

Misty Adoniou, Senior Lecturer, University of Canberra (*Independent Education*, 2016)

“Competent, experienced readers sample just enough visual information to feel satisfied that they have grasped the meaning so far of whatever text they are reading.”

Robyn Ewing, Professor of Teacher Education, University of Sydney (AARE blog, 2016).

“Consider the word *wind*. Did you just read it as a word rhyming with *sinned* or as a word rhyming with *find*? It’s only when you know how the word is being used, and what it means, that you can ‘sound it out’ correctly.”

David Hornsby, Literacy consultant.

Advice given to parents in a WA primary school

Listening to Students Read

What to say

- Listen and respond to the reading performance. You are the audience!
Correct a word if it doesn't sound right
eg "Did that sound sensible?" or "I didn't understand that, read it again." "That makes sense."

Example of acceptable Miscues	Examples of Unacceptable Miscues
'a' in place of 'the' eg The horse /a horse trotted down the street	'they in place of 'the' eg They horse /the horse trotted down the street
'house for 'home' eg That is my house/home	'horse' for 'house' eg I rode my horse/house down the street
'You can't go over/on my bridge'	'You can/can't go over my/me bridge
'Mr Wolf was so frightened/scared, he ran far, far away'	'He was/saw so frightened, he ran/rained far, far away'

- The feedback you give, and how you give it plays an important role in building attitudes to reading.

Try saying ...

Good try. Keep going!

That was really good how you went back to fix that!

I like the way you corrected yourself!

You solved heaps of problems today!

I enjoyed listening to you read.

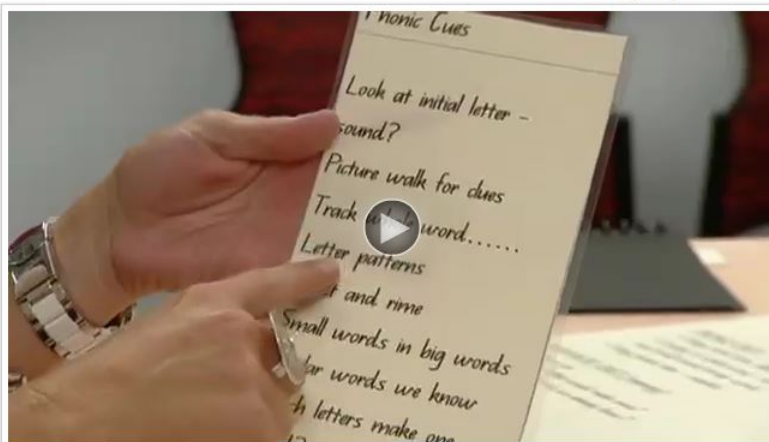
That was fun

Note:

Avoid sounding out words, or encouraging students to sound out, as their knowledge of phonics is limited at this stage and it slows down their reading and causes child to lose meaning

Reading – explicit teaching

Player keyboard shortcuts



Audio Description OFF



Context

Developing knowledge and skills to support phrasing and fluency

In this vignette, the Foundation teacher and her colleague discuss how she explicitly teaches the use of contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge to support the development of phrased and fluent reading. She demonstrates explicit teaching, beginning with reviewing the students' learning

Reading – explicit teaching
– Foundation

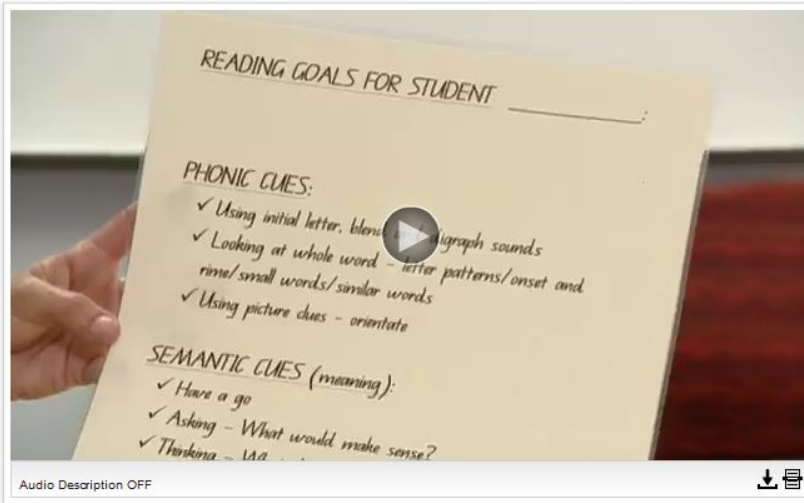
Reading – building
knowledge – Foundation

Reading – comprehension –
year 3

Language features – year 7

Reading – explicit teaching

Player keyboard shortcuts



Context

Developing knowledge and skills to support phrasing and fluency

In this vignette, the Foundation teacher and her colleague discuss how she explicitly teaches the use of contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge to support the development of phrased and fluent reading. She demonstrates explicit teaching, beginning with reviewing the students' learning goals and modelling phrased and fluent reading.

Video on Victorian Dept of Education website

“This series of reading videos is presented to support teachers to make consistent and accurate judgements of student progress in the reading mode of AusVELS English Achievement Standards.”

Learning and Teaching Resources > Discipline-based Learning > English

English Developmental Continuum P-10

History

Languages

Mathematics

Science

The Arts

Interdisciplinary Learning

Physical, Personal and Social Learning

Career Education





Curriculum Planning

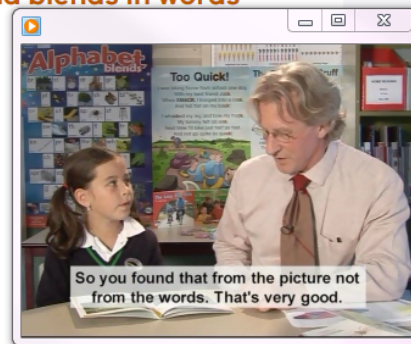
Curriculum Design Frameworks

[AusVELS English – Reading achievement standards and progression points – Level 2](#)

A student progressing towards AusVELS Reading Level 2

Can recognise a wide range of letters and sounds and blends in words of more than one syllable

- [AusVELS English Reading - Level 1.5 video 1 \(WMV - 4.8Mb\)](#) 
video duration - 58sec, download time - 1min
- [Download the transcript of this video \(HTM - 2Kb\)](#) 
- [AusVELS English Reading - Level 1.5 video 2 \(WMV - 3.0Mb\)](#) 
video duration - 1.03min, download time - 1min
- [Download the transcript of this video \(HTM - 2Kb\)](#) 



Professional Organisations

Peak literacy organisations publish statements promoting ‘balanced literacy’ and multi-cueing, and misrepresenting evidence-based reading instruction.

ALEA and PETAA advocate the explicit teaching of phonics and word knowledge in the context of real and relevant texts as part of the regular intensive pedagogical work by teachers on learning to read and write in the early years.

Assessment of phonics is important. Children's learning needs to be assessed and monitored so that essential knowledge, skills and understanding are not overlooked. Assessment is most useful when it is built into the teaching and learning process. ALEA and PETAA support teaching & assessment of phonics in context.

Literacy programs and assessments do not consistently reflect evidence on reading instruction

- The central early literacy program (L3) in the NSW government's Literacy and Numeracy Strategy does not include explicit, systematic instruction in the five keys to reading, and has no systematic phonics instruction.
- L3 contradicts the advice on effective reading instruction from the NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE).
- Only around one third of schools using L3 have had an improvement in Year 3 NAPLAN scores (one quarter of schools experienced a decline).

‘Word Work’ in L3

“The words, letters and sounds chosen for explicit lessons in Word Work are drawn from the language of the text. There is not a predetermined sequence to follow. The text itself creates the gradient of complexity and determines the content for instruction.”

L3 teaching guidelines for Kindergarten (2011)

Word Work on Magenta 1 and Magenta 2 texts: Direction, Orientation, Sequence (DOS)

DOS is an essential part of reading instruction. DOS represents three critical aspects of print:

- **Direction** of print (second)
- **Orientation** of letter (third)
- **Sequence** of letters (first)

Immediately following the reading of every new book students will engage in Word Work.

Word Work involves the use of a text, magnetic letters and individual whiteboards. The words used for Word Work are taken directly from the text the students have just read. It involves systematic and explicit instruction. When students are writing the word in DOS they are also learning how to form letters.

Procedure

Select a word from the text which is an unknown word. In other words the word has not been used as a word to learn in Guided Writing lessons.

Prompt the students to look for the word in the text.

Teacher: *Am. Find "am."*

Teacher: *Read and stop at "am".* The students are learning how to locate a word.

Students: "I am ..."

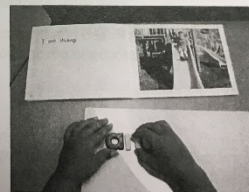
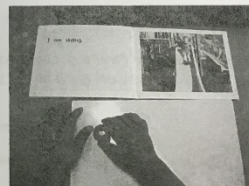
The teacher gives each student the two magnetic letters "a" and "m".

Teacher: *Make "am."*

The teacher observes the students constructing the word. Are the students:

- picking up the letters in correct sequence?
- putting the word together in the right direction?
- orientating the letters correctly?

When students have difficulty with any aspect of DOS fix it quickly and quietly for them.



This is not explicit instruction. He went straight to "you do"

Prompting for cross checking on information

Teacher: *It could be ... but look at ...*

Teacher: *Could it be ...?* (meaningful substitution that requires letter knowledge).

Teacher: *Check. Does it look right and sound right to you?*

Searching for and using information**Early**

- Searching for meaning

Teacher: *You said ... does that make sense?*

- Searching further on meaning

Teacher: *Try that again and think what would make sense.*

- Searching for structure

Teacher: *You said ... can we say it that way?*

- Searching further on structure

Teacher: *Try that again and think what might sound right.*

- Searching for visual information

Teacher: *You said ... does it look right?*

- Searching further on visual information

Teacher: *Try that again and get ready to say the first sound.*

- General

Teacher: *What's wrong with this?* (repeat sentence)

Teacher: *Try that again and think what would make sense/sound right/look right.*

Later

Teacher: *How did you know it was ...?*

X Teacher: *What could you try?*

X Teacher: *Do you know a word like that?*

X Teacher: *Do you know a word that starts with those letters?*

Teacher: *What do you know that might help?*

Self correcting**Early**

Teacher: *I liked the way you fixed that all by yourself.*

Later

Teacher: *You made a mistake on that page. Can you fix it?*

*Just decode
the word!*

- No Australian state or territory government school system currently has an assessment program that assesses phonics adequately, even though they claim to.
- For example, the Year 1 ‘phonics’ component of the Queensland Best Start assessment has ten items, only four of which assess accurate word reading. The words are: bin, blossom, battery, bacteria.
- The ‘phonics’ component of the PIPS assessment actually assesses phonemic awareness.
- NT has made the most progress, with the introduction of the FELA (Foundations of Early Literacy Assessment).

“Phonics in Context”

“When students are reading, they problem-solve unknown words by using a range of information. They might use some background knowledge, syntactic knowledge and some pictorial cues to make predictions, and letter-sound knowledge to confirm or question these predictions.”

Draft Literacy Guidelines prepared for Catholic Education Melbourne

The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

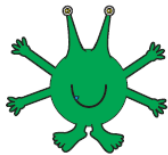
- Following the findings of the Rose report in 2006, the UK government mandated that schools include systematic synthetic phonics instruction in reading lessons in the first two years of school.
- After an initial improvement following the SSP mandate, reading achievement plateaued again.
- There were concerns that not all schools were using SSP methods effectively - still using a 'mix of methods'.
- Phonics Screening Check was designed to identify whether children had reached an expected level of phonic knowledge and decoding ability.

The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

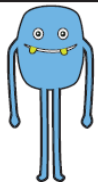
- Administered at end of Year 1 (after two years of school)
- 40 items: 20 real words, 20 pseudo words
- 5-7 minutes per student
- Teacher-administered in 1:1 setting
- Simple to score (right or wrong)
- No incentives or penalties for teachers or schools
- Tests phonetic decoding only

Section 1

fip



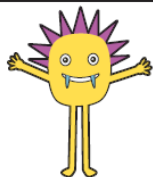
pon



hab



ulb



Section 1

shed

long

soil

chart

Why use pseudo-words?

- A pure check of decoding ability
- Not affected by sight word memory
- Not skewed by language or social background
- No evidence that ‘good readers’ are disadvantaged
- Careful word selection and guidance to teachers avoids inconsistency in scoring

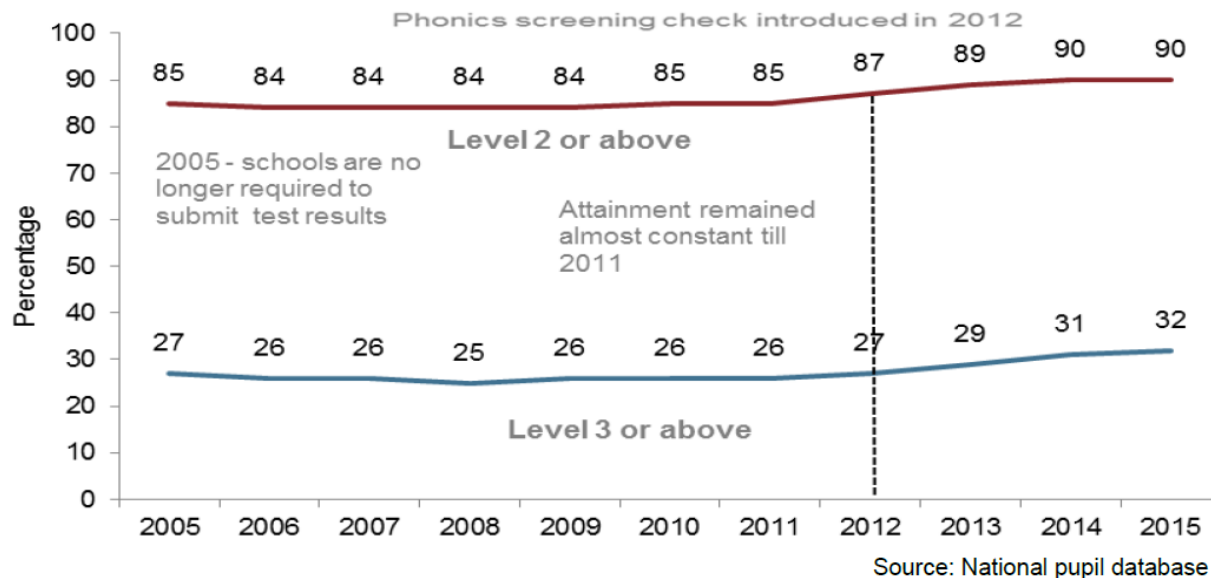
PSC scores have improved each year

	Year 1	Year 2	Improvement from Year 1 to Year 2 (Percentage points)
2016	81%	91%	14
2015	77%	90%	16
2014	74%	89%	20
2013	69%	85%	27
2012	58%	Not applicable	

UK Department for Education. 2016. Phonics screening check and Key stage 1 assessments in England, 2016.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/556769/SFR42_Phonics_KS1_2016.pdf

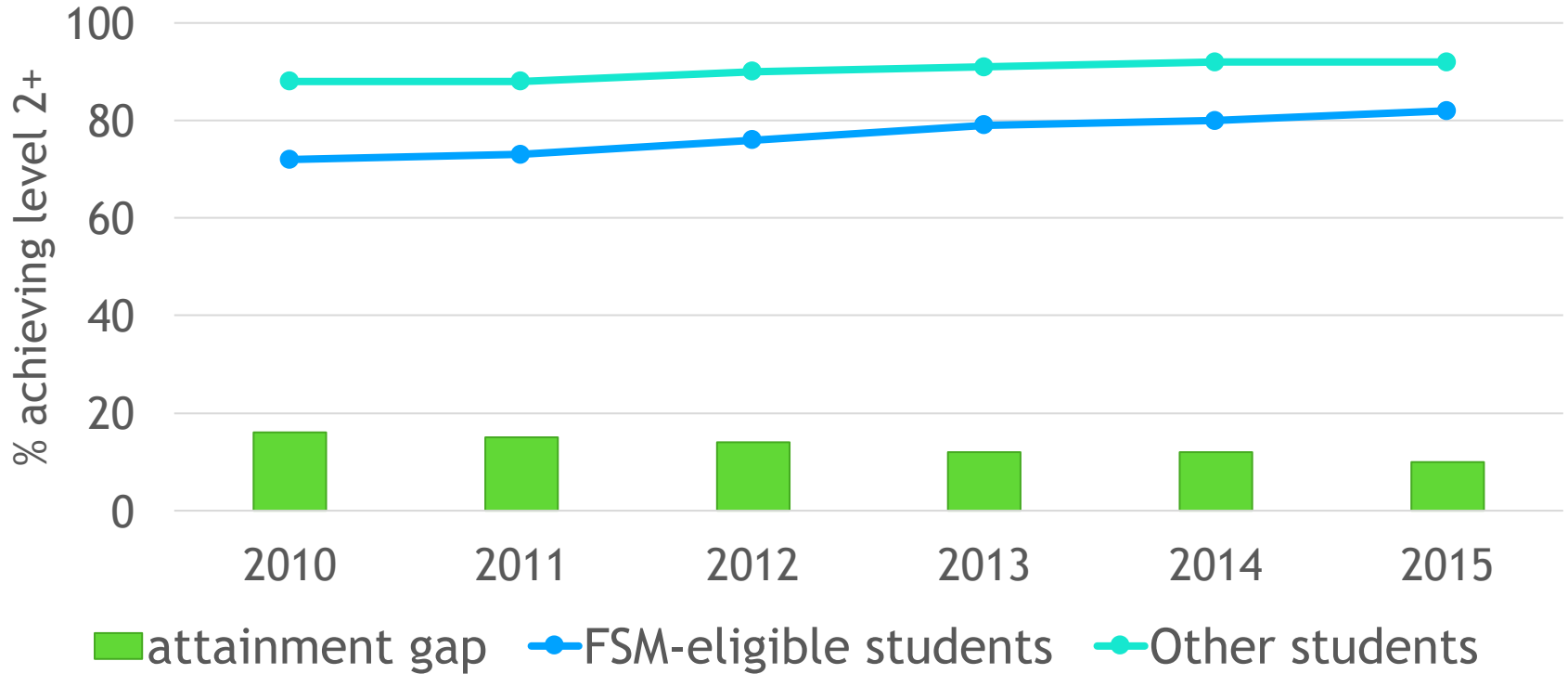
KS1 (Year 2) reading scores have improved

Figure 2: Attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1:
England, 2005 to 2015



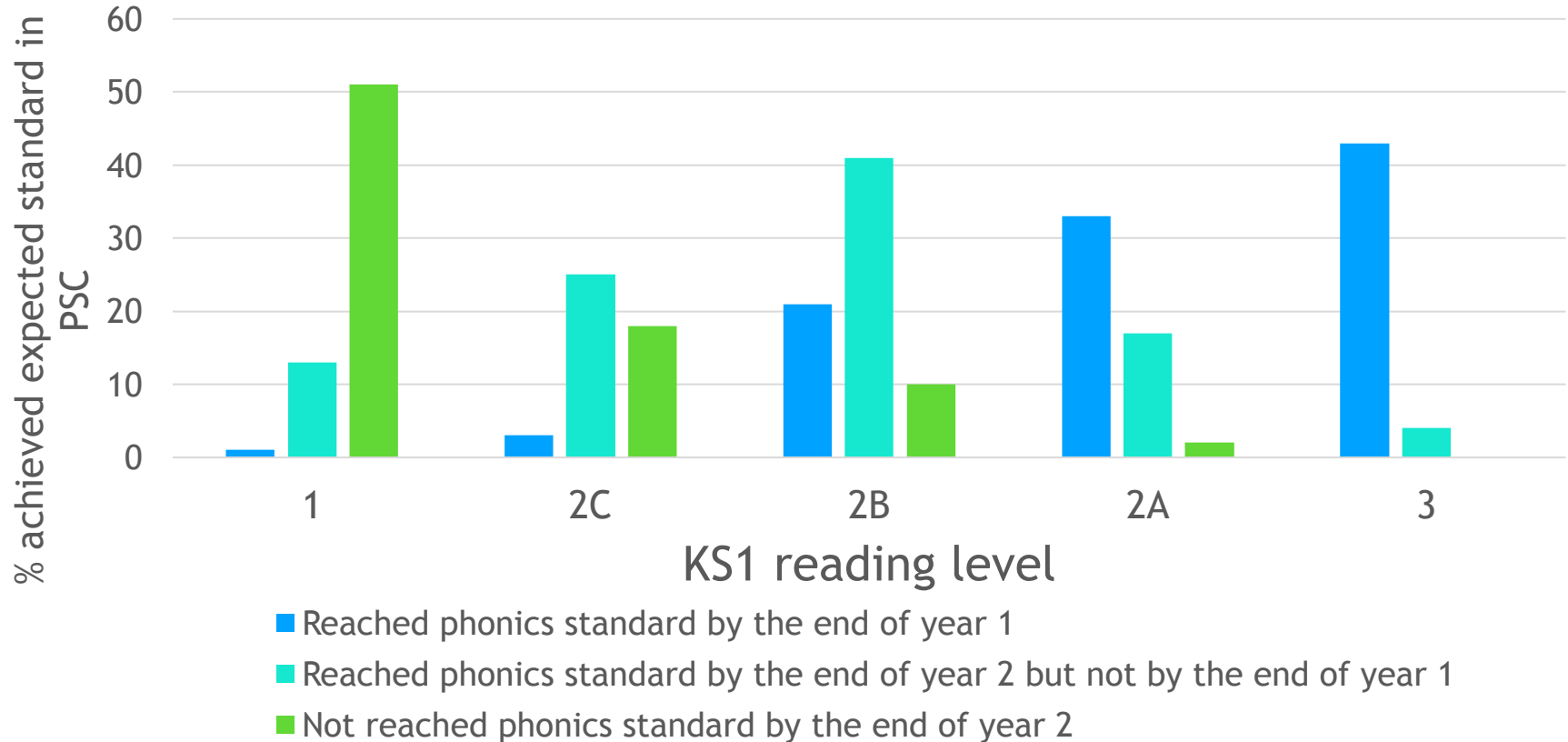
UK Department for Education. 2016. Phonics screening check and Key stage 1 assessments in England, 2015.

Reading attainment gap at KS1 has decreased



UK Department for Education. 2016. Phonics screening check and Key stage 1 assessments in England, 2015.

PSC score strongly predicts KS1 reading level



Evaluations of the PSC

Validity and reliability

Convergent validity and discriminant reliability.
Accurately identified children at risk of reading difficulties (Duff et al 2015)

Evaluations of the PSC

Time and cost

PSC takes 5-7 minutes per student.

Cost associated with the introduction of the PSC and on-going annual cost estimated to be £400-500 per school (£10-12 per student) per year. (Walker et al 2015)

Evaluations of the PSC

Effect on teaching practice

- The majority of schools had made changes in their teaching practices
 - faster paced lessons
 - longer duration
 - more frequent
 - more systematic
 - better monitoring and assessment

“the national results show an improvement in performance in phonics, as measured by the Check, which would be consistent with adjustments to teaching methods reported” (Walker et al 2015)

Why is research resisted?

Ignorance ('Peter effect')

Impatience (explicit instruction is 'boring')

Intransigence (change is too difficult)

Interests (careers/reputations at stake)

Indoctrination (double standards; no room for debate)

Ideology (low standards of evidence)

Investment (programs that are too big to fail)



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