



Socio-economic status (SES) score review process

A school's socio-economic status (SES) score is a measure of the capacity of a non-government school community to contribute to the recurrent costs of the school. A school's SES score is translated into a "capacity to contribute percentage", which in turn affects the amount of base per-student funding that the school attracts from the Commonwealth under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act).

There are different capacity to contribute percentages for primary schools and secondary schools. Some non-government schools¹ are taken to have a capacity to contribute percentage of 0 per cent and are not assigned SES scores.

For all other non-government schools, the Department of Education and Training (the department) determines an SES score under section 52 of the Act (as delegate of the Minister for Education and Training).

A school's SES score generally applies from the start of a particular school year, and continues in effect until it is replaced by a subsequent SES score determined by the department under the Act.

The National School Resourcing Board (the Board) reviewed the SES score methodology currently used to determine funding for non-government schools. The Board presented its report to Government in late June. More information on the Board is available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/national-school-resourcing-board>.

How is a school's SES score determined?

Subsection 52(4) of the Act requires that the Minister determine a school's SES score in accordance with the Australian Education Regulation 2013 (the Regulation), unless the Minister is satisfied doing so would result in an SES score that does not accurately reflect the general socio-economic circumstances of the persons responsible for students at the school.

Section 23 of the Regulation sets out the methodology for calculating a school's SES score, by reference to information gathered as part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing² (Census) about education, family income, household income and occupation, aggregated at the Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1)³ geographic level.

¹ Majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, special schools, special assistance schools, and sole provider schools.

² Note that, for 2018, the 2011 ABS Census will continue to be used for calculating SES scores in first instance.

³ SA1s have been designed as the smallest geographic unit for the release of ABS Census data. There are approximately 55,000 SA1s across Australia and each have an average population of about 400 persons.



Since the introduction of SES scores from 2001, there have been gradual refinements to reflect improvements in Census data used.

The Census information for the statistical areas in which the students of the school reside is used to calculate an SES score for the student cohort at a school relative to other schools, with 100 being the Australian 'average' SES score.

In accordance with section 23 of the Regulation and consistent with requests from school representative bodies, the department will generally use student residential data from 2012–2016, and the 2011 ABS Census data, in order to calculate a school's SES score for 2018.

The department can depart from the formula in the Regulation if it is satisfied that the formula produces an SES score for a school that does not accurately reflect the general socio-economic circumstances of the persons responsible for students at the school. The department will only do so on the basis of substantive evidence and analysis of the school's circumstances.

How does an approved authority seek a review of their school's SES score?

An approved authority for a school can apply to the department to undertake a review of the SES score of the school. It is advisable for an approved authority seeking a review of its school's SES score to first read this fact sheet and contact the SES Helpdesk for guidance about what information it must include in its application for a review.

An application for review must be made by an approved authority in writing, and set out the school that is the subject of the application, the school year the SES score is to start from (which cannot be before the year in which the application is made), and the reasons why the approved authority thinks the school's SES score does not reflect the socio-economic circumstances of the school community.

An application and supporting documents should be emailed to SEShelpdesk@education.gov.au or sent to:

Socio-economic Status (SES) Score Reviews
School Funding Branch
Australian Government Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 9880
LOC: C50MA9
CANBERRA ACT 2601



When might a school's SES score not reflect the socio-economic circumstances of the school community?

As noted above, an SES score for a school can only be different from that calculated using the formula in the Regulation, if that formula produces an SES score for the school that does not accurately reflect the general socio-economic circumstances of the school community.

Reasons why this might be the case generally fall into either or both of the following categories:

- the data used to calculate the SES score for the school in accordance with the Regulation does not reflect the current school population, as the school community has significantly different characteristics to the school community represented in data
- the specific socio-economic circumstances of the households who make up the school community are significantly different from the general socio-economic circumstances of the typical households in the same areas in which the school's households reside.

Examples of these facts and circumstances include things like:

- there have been significant changes in the locations from which the school draws its student cohort since its SES score was last determined
- there have been significant changes in the local economy affecting the areas from which the school draws its students – such as the closure of a major industry or the long-term effects of a natural disaster – since its SES score was last determined
- a significantly higher proportion of the households from which the school draws its students have health care cards or other government concession cards than the proportion of households in those same areas
- the households from which the school draws its students are significantly larger (and hence have fewer resources per child) than the typical households in those same areas.

Note, if an approved authority applies for a review of a school's SES score, there is no guarantee that the outcome of that review will lead to a lower SES score. Indeed, it may be the case that a higher SES score will be determined, based on the particular circumstances of the school. The review decision, including any change in SES score, will be applied irrespective of the outcome. Approved authorities should consider this prior to applying.



How will the department undertake a review?

The department will consider the empirical evidence provided in the application, including comparing the request against reviews undertaken in the past, and may require further information and analysis in order to reach a final decision.

A review may involve any or all of the following steps:

- verifying that the original SES score determination was made correctly in accordance with the Regulation
- examining the reasons for review provided by the approved authority, and considering whether additional information or evidence is required to assess whether the SES score accurately reflects the socio-economic circumstances of the school community
- obtaining expert advice to assist in assessing the information and evidence, such as the ABS
- consideration of the applicability of the latest available statement of addresses for the school to the education, family income, household income and occupation data from the ABS Census
- developing a *school community profile* that examines evidence of any special circumstances of the school, such as: high levels of families with health care and concession cards, students from large families, unemployment and other socio-economic indicators. This may also involve the undertaking of a *parental survey* (see below)
- in some limited circumstances, establishing an expert advisory panel to advise on the school's circumstances.

What is a parental survey?

Broadly, a parental survey is a survey disseminated to the persons responsible for students at the school (e.g. parents, guardians and carers) to develop a school community profile.

The survey follows the format of the most recent ABS Census. It includes questions relating to household income, occupation, education levels and number of children.

Completion of a parental survey is voluntary. However, the department generally requires a minimum response rate of 95 per cent in order to construct an accurate school community profile.

How is the parental survey undertaken?

If a parental survey is necessary to assess an approved authority's request for review of its school's SES score, the department generally adopts the following process (although some variation may be required, depending on the specific circumstances).

Historically, the parental survey was provided to schools in hard copy format to distribute to families. However, the department will work with the approved authority to determine the most efficient method of undertaking the survey, which in most cases will be electronically.



To ensure privacy is maintained, the department will not hold a list of the postal addresses or email details of parents and guardians. The school itself will distribute hardcopy surveys or online survey codes to parents and guardians directly. The results of the survey will not be accessible to the school but provided directly to the department. This means schools cannot access survey results and the department is unable to allocate results to individual families.

The approved authority or school is responsible for keeping a record of which family was allocated which family reference number, to allow them to follow up with any incomplete surveys.

The department will frequently provide a list to the approved authority of family reference numbers for surveys that have not been returned. This allows the approved authority to follow up with those families without the department identifying them.

Can an approved authority withdraw its application?

An approved authority can withdraw its application for review of a school's SES score at any time prior to the department determining a new SES score for the school.

What happens following a review of a school's SES score?

Once the department has completed its review of a school's SES score, it will notify the approved authority of its decision, and the reasons for that decision.

The department will also advise the approved authority of any further review rights available at this stage.

The department will make any necessary updates to the school's payments for the year from which the SES score starts.

Further information

View the list of all non-government schools' SES scores at:

[https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/socio-economic-status-ses-scores.](https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/socio-economic-status-ses-scores)

For further information about SES scores, contact the SES Help Desk: SEShelpdesk@education.gov.au.