

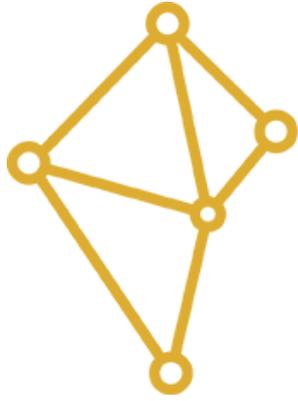
# DARA SCHOOL

School Performance Report 2020



## School Performance Report 2020

The following School Performance Report is created to be publicly available to the school and local community via the internet, as part of our funding agreement with the Australian Government (Australian Education Regulation 2013, Part 5, Section 60). This report is for the 2020 academic year and has been compiled by the Principal and Administrative staff. Regular newsletters and the school's website provide general information about school events during the year. The following information provides an overview of the 2020 school year.



# **DARA**

# **SCHOOL**

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## Contextual Statement

2020 saw the culmination of hard work and strategic planning, as Dara School moved into new premises, located at Cobham Hall, Morphettsville. The move to Cobham Hall has presented new and valuable opportunities for students and teachers to design and engage with learning experiences that utilise the premises in accordance with flexible ability grouping. In response to our new physical space, Dara has continued to purposefully design our timetable to facilitate the fluid vertical movement of students between learning groups, a key aspect of facilitating effective learning design for gifted students.

Student numbers in 2020 continued to remain steady, finishing off the year with 41 students. 2020 has also seen the retention of high-quality staff, and the subsequent cementation of a staff culture that is passionate about gifted education and committed to ongoing reflection for the improvement of professional practice.

Having achieved the move to a new premises in Term 2, 2020, the Board has had the opportunity to operate in accordance with processes and policies formulated in 2019, the purpose of which was improve efficiency and communication. Communication with both internal and external stakeholders has been a key focus area for 2020, with ongoing consultation occurring, and subsequent measures taken to ensure Dara families have the opportunity to remain updated and informed about whole school developments, and personalised communication regarding their own child. Feedback from Dara families, particularly new families, has been overwhelmingly positive, and has reinforced the direction Dara has taken in relation to implementing key communication strategies.

With confirmation of Dara's new home, 2020 has seen the continuation of Dara's core business, which is to create a unique environment that meets the academic, social and emotional needs of young people who are gifted. Dara is in the fortunate position to have the freedom and specialised knowledge to tailor learning that is flexible, responsive, individualised and holistic. Teachers purposefully implement strategies to create a safe, highly stimulating, and engaging environment where gifted learners can flourish. Furthermore, the School continues to create and nurture positive partnerships with the local and broader community.



## Vision

Dara is revolutionising the way people teach, understand and design learning for gifted children.

## Mission

Dara provides a unique learning environment designed to meet the individual educational and emotional needs of gifted students. Drawing on our collective expertise within the field of gifted education, our approach is underpinned by mutually respectful teacher-student relationships and dynamic flexible practises based on learner profiles.

Dara School promotes community understanding and awareness of gifted learners and shares our experience for the benefit of gifted students, parents of gifted students and educators across Australia.

## Values

### Compassion

- A supportive environment that promotes wellbeing through empathy, understanding, respect and joy.
- Valuing our community and celebrating our collective experiences and successes.
- Collaboration and the sharing of ideas and feedback.

### Courage

- The courage to be independent, take risks, try new ideas and challenge ourselves, with the support of quality learning experiences.
- Honesty, integrity, effort and reliability.

### Creativity

- Daring to be different through implementing creative, adaptive and reflexive approaches to learning.

### Curiosity

- Intrinsic motivation to take up new opportunities to explore, discover and develop new skills, knowledge and understandings.

### Connection

- Identifying connections between learning domains to create opportunities for deeper conceptual understanding and application in new and unfamiliar contexts.

## Teacher Standards and Qualifications

Dara School staff are purposefully selected on the basis of their professional knowledge of gifted education, and the possession of attributes and characteristics that align with the School's values. Teaching at Dara requires dedication to the ethos of the School, along with the presence of intrinsic motivation for the betterment of gifted students' academic, social and emotional development.

The School values high quality teaching that is evidence based, holistic, and grounded in the principles of a differentiated approach to learning design. Such priorities reflect Dara's continued focus on a student-centred approach that meets the needs of the individual child. Dara School teachers must meet the requirements of the Teacher's Registration Board of South Australia. This includes training in child protection and having a Working with Children Check (WWCC). All staff also have First Aid training, which is updated as required. All teachers at Dara School participate in professional development through engagement with a range of relevant courses.

Teacher Qualifications 2020

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Doctoral Degree (in progress) | 1  |
| Masters                       | 4  |
| Bachelor                      | 10 |
| Graduate Degree               | 3  |
| Diploma                       | 1  |

Currently, 45% of Dara School staff have completed a Masters Degree in Gifted Education and a further 40% of staff are working towards completion.

## Workforce Composition

For 2020, Dara School staff were comprised of 90% female and 10% male. There were no self-identified Indigenous staff members.

A summary of staff employed in 2020 is given in the table below.

Workforce Composition

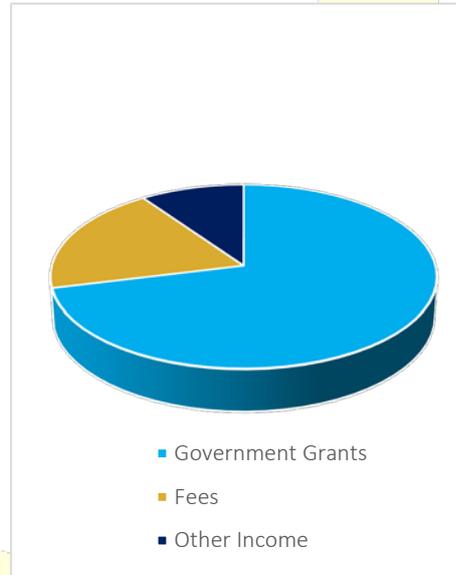
|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Teaching staff         | 7   |
| FTE teachers           | 5.2 |
| Non-teaching staff     | 6   |
| FTE non-teaching staff | 2.5 |



## School Income and Funding Sources

Income received by Dara School in 2020:

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Government Grants | \$848, 420 |
| Fees              | \$228, 480 |
| Other Income      | \$115, 935 |



## Student Attendance

Dara School places high importance on student attendance, and understands high attendance plays a key role in the continuation of students' academic, social and emotional learning and development. Dara School uses PC Schools to electronically monitor and document student attendance. The first attendance check-in is performed by teachers between 8.25am and 8.40am. The late sign-in process accounts for students arriving after 8.40am. All unaccounted student absences are followed up by 9.30am to seek clarification of the reason for absence. The aforementioned process results in the creation and maintenance of accurate and up-to-date individual and collective student attendance data.

The combined average attendance rate in 2020 was 96.30%. Overall, the average attendance rate has increased by 6.8%.

Attendance 2020

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| Year 1 | 96.70% |
| Year 2 | 94.60% |
| Year 3 | 98.30% |
| Year 4 | 96.50% |
| Year 5 | 96.90% |
| Year 6 | 92.40% |
| Year 7 | 89.20% |

## National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy 2020

NAPLAN was not undertaken this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

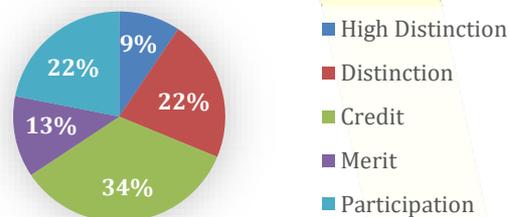
## ICAS competitions

We are delighted that five of our students were awarded an ICAS medal this year, and we are proud of all Dara students participating and working

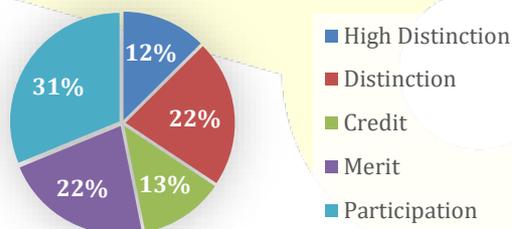
towards their personal best. As a small school of 40 students, we are a tight knit community, and it is lovely to see our students shine.

The International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) are designed to recognise academic excellence. Students are assessed on their ability to apply classroom learning to new contexts using higher order thinking and problem-solving skills. ICAS takes place in over 20 countries including Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Africa, Europe, America, and Pacific countries.

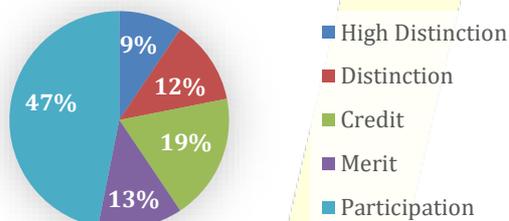
### ICAS English 2020



### ICAS Science 2020



### ICAS Mathematics 2020



## School Community Satisfaction

Implementation of a new communication strategy capturing all facets of school life, including the Parent Committee, parent and teacher communication, and our technological tools, was implemented throughout 2020.

Data from the parent satisfaction survey suggest Dara parents generally see Dara School as a place their child enjoys going and whose staff are open to talking about doing things better. Parents feel their children like attending Dara, that they can talk to teachers about their concerns, and that the school looks for ways to improve.

Parents noted:

*"Dara has been a game changer for my son. Another private school has not been able to cater to my son. This was my only other option and he has thrived in ways I never knew possible."*

*"Because the teachers understand the individual child's needs. While they expect my child to do his best, they also understand that his best can vary day to day due to emotional/physical/social reasons and they support that and make accommodations. I feel I can talk to any of the teachers about my child without being treated as an over the top parent. My child is no longer the naughty kid getting sent home from school and he is actually happy at the end of the school day. This school has had such a huge impact not just for my child but our whole family."*

*"There is great social and emotional support, children are recognised as valuable community members and treated accordingly."*

*"I am so pleased you exist, and that my child feels like they belong somewhere. I think you're getting a lot right, and that this is a never-ending process of calibration to meet the needs of child and professional alike."*

## Facility Development

2020 was much anticipated by staff, as Dara School moved from Ascot Park Primary School to a new site at Morphettsville in April 2020. The move was conducted during the school holidays in the midst of a pandemic. Incredibly, staff managed to complete the move whilst maintaining social distancing throughout the entire process. 2020's preparation of Dara's new premises included the completion of the building renovation, and finalisation of the external features, including the driveway, lawn area and the addition of our new playground equipment. Staff were ready and welcomed students for the commencement of Term 2, 2020 in our new home.

Dara's Master Plan has been developed, which clearly sets out Dara School's short-, medium- and long-term goals. Looking ahead to 2021, an extension to the playground is planned, along with additional paved pathways to provide further play options around the perimeter of the lawned area. Furthermore, landscaping is planned for the rear grounds of our Heritage Listed Mansion, also known to Historians as Cobham Hall.







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