

DARA SCHOOL

School Performance Report 2021

A decorative background pattern consisting of several thick, yellow, stylized lines that radiate from a central point, creating a star-like or sunburst effect. The lines are of varying lengths and angles, some ending in small circles or loops.

School Performance Report 2021

The following School Performance Report is publicly available online to the school and local community. The Report is a part of our funding agreement with the Australian Government (Australian Education Regulation 2013, Part 5, Section 60). This report is for the 2021 academic year and has been compiled by the principal and administrative staff. General information about the school and events during the year are communicated to the school community through the school app and to the wider community on the school's website. The following information provides an overview of the 2021 school year.



DARA
SCHOOL

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Contextual Statement

Having settled into the Cobham Hall site in 2020, 2021 saw the progress of strategic planning, and identification of growth and development opportunities for Dara. The school has its sights set on further infrastructure development on the school grounds to accommodate for growth up to Year 12 by 2025.

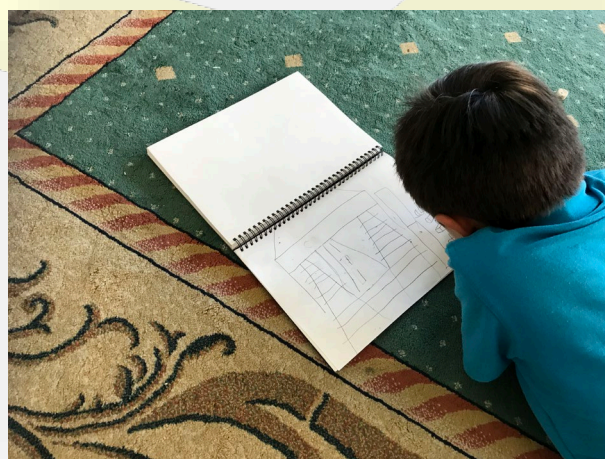
Teachers and students continued to design and engage with learning experiences that used the full capacity of the premises. In addition, Dara School leadership continued to prioritise the purposeful design of our timetable to facilitate the fluid vertical movement of students between ability-based learning groups. This is key to our model of facilitating effective learning design for gifted students.

In 2021 the Dara School community expanded with six new staff joining and student enrolments increasing to 55. 2021 also saw the retention of our high-quality staff, with most having either completed or working towards post-graduate qualifications in gifted education. We continue to foster a staff culture of teachers who are enthusiastic about gifted education and committed to ongoing development and implementation of best practice.

The board applied continued focus on improvement of communications and process efficiency across Dara. Several consultations provided valuable data from our school community, parents, students, and staff to inform and shape communication strategies. In addition, we established use of short videos each week to highlight an aspect of life at Dara, as well as regular notices published through the school app.

Dara is committed to ensuring families are updated and informed about whole school developments, and that they receive personalised communication regarding their own child. We continued to receive positive feedback from new and continuing families that Dara creates a unique environment meeting the academic, social, and emotional capacity of their gifted child.

Dara remains intentional in applying specialised knowledge in gifted education to tailor learning that is flexible, responsive, individualised, and holistic. Throughout 2021 teachers purposefully implemented strategies to create a safe, highly stimulating, and engaging environment where our gifted learners flourished. Furthermore, the School continued to identify, 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 innovative 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 accept 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 for their professional knowledge of and applied experience in gifted education. Each teacher is identified as demonstrating the attributes and characteristics that align with the school's values. Teaching at Dara requires ongoing dedication to the ethos of the school, along with intrinsic motivation for the betterment of gifted students' academic, social, and emotional development.

Dara School values high quality teaching that is evidence-based and holistic. Our teaching is grounded in learning principles that are uniquely designed for gifted students. These priorities reflect Dara's continued focus on a student-centred approach to create an engaging learning environment for each child. Dara School teachers must meet the requirements of the Teacher's Registration Board of South Australia. This includes training in child protection and holding a current and valid 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 2021

Doctoral Degree	1
Masters	7
Bachelor	15
Graduate Degree	4
Diploma	12

Currently, 45% of Dara School teaching staff have completed a master's degree in Gifted Education and a further 18% are working towards completion.

Workforce Composition

For 2021, Dara School staff were comprised of 66% female and 34% male. There were no self-identified Indigenous staff members.

A summary of staff employed in 2021 is provided in the table below.

Workforce Composition

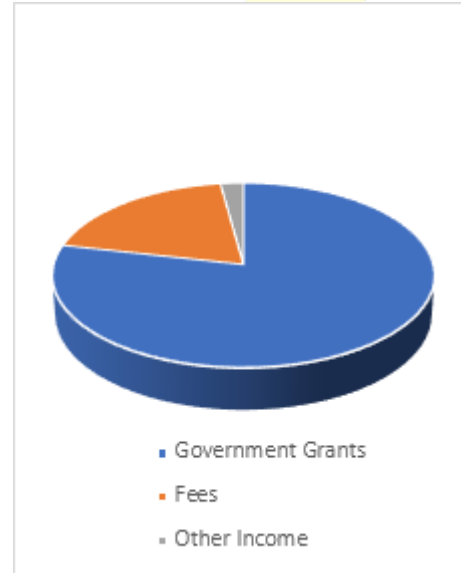
Teaching staff	11
FTE teachers	8.8
Non-teaching staff	7
FTE non-teaching staff	3.9



School Income and Funding Sources

Income received by Dara School in 2021:

Government Grants	\$1,245,442
Fees	\$307,418
Other Income	\$34,343



Student Attendance

Despite another school year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Dara School continued to prioritise student attendance. High attendance plays a key role in students' engagement with 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. This 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 2021 was 94.28%. Overall, the average attendance rate has slightly decreased by 1.5%.

Attendance 2021

Reception	96.20%
Year 1	94.10%
Year 2	96.30%
Year 3	93.00%
Year 4	94.50%
Year 5	95.30%
Year 6	94.20%
Year 7	90.60%

National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy 2021

Students in Years 3, 5 and 7 participated in the national literacy and numeracy test. Due to the small student population in Year 7, these results were not published.

The table below reports the mean scores for Dara School against the South Australian and National averages for each aspect of the NAPLAN test.

Year 3	Dara School	State	National
Reading	544.6	426.1	437.3
Writing	373.8	411.5	425.4
Spelling	440.8	412.1	421
Punctuation and Grammar	597.2	418.3	433.2
Numeracy	461.2	393.8	403.4

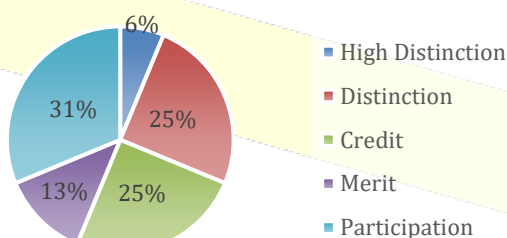
Year 5	Dara School	State	National
Reading	628.3	501.4	511.6
Writing	541.3	461.6	480
Spelling	587.7	498.9	504.5
Punctuation and Grammar	578.8	490.5	502.8
Numeracy	627.1	482.4	495.2

ICAS competitions

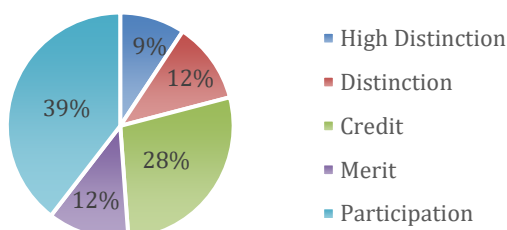
We are delighted that two of our students were awarded an ICAS medal in 2021, and we are proud of all Dara students participating and working towards their personal best. As a small school of fifty-five students, we are a tight knit community, and it is lovely to see our students shine.

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 critical thinking skills. ICAS takes place in over twenty countries including Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Africa, Europe, America, and Pacific countries.

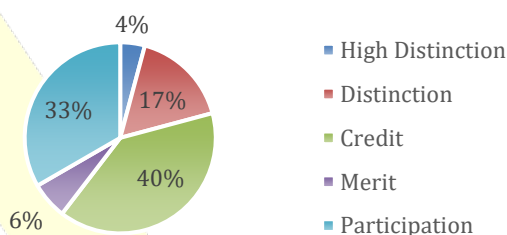
ICAS Science 2021



ICAS Mathematics 2021



ICAS English 2021



School Community Satisfaction

In 2021, Dara School remained committed to the ongoing development and implementation of communication strategies. These included drawing on the expertise of the Dara School Parent Committee, new parent, and teacher communication methods, and improving our technological tools.

Data from the parent satisfaction survey identified a significant increase in parent satisfaction overall, with noteworthy improvement in:

- Parents being able to approach their child's teachers about their concerns.
- Parents feeling included in working with Dara in supporting their child's learning.
- Teachers expecting and encouraging students to do their best.

Dara's parents 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 changed our lives. For the first time we feel understood, our child feels like she belongs and loves going to school. Her anxiety is less severe and far more manageable, and our family is much happier and more functional."

"I don't know why anyone in SA with a gifted child wouldn't send them here. It's a game changer, and we love it."

"I have recommended the school to so many parents already and have been pleased to see those families join the school and enjoy the benefits."

"The changes I have seen in my kids and those of other families has been life changing. The parent body is open and welcoming. The building is beautiful, and the school is heading in the right direction."

Facility Development

The playground extension and paved pathways were finalised in accordance with the Master Plan, providing further play options around the perimeter of the lawned area.

- State Government Community Environment Grant: revegetation of the Butterfly Garden at the South end of Cobham Hall with the removal of toxic weeds and replaced with natives and established to reduce the sediment run off storm water that was flushing into the delicate ecosystem.
- Redevelopment of back garden with lawn as a play area.
- Playground extension including additional equipment and sandpit.
- Climate control in the annex.
- Asset and Master Plan completed for building grant, relating to purchase of current building and future developments onsite. Application ongoing.
- Scaled up IT infrastructure within the school with a comprehensive wi-fi upgrade.





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