

DARA SCHOOL

School Performance Report 2022

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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 2022 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 2022 school year.

Contextual Statement

Dara School is a progressive educational community. We nurture learning and personal growth in intellectually gifted students. Dara is a secular, independent and co-educational school, specialising in Gifted Education.

In 2017 we opened our doors with fourteen students, each year we have deliberately grown slowly and now accommodate 63 students. Dara's setting is unique, housed in a heritage-listed manor. Our individualised approach to teaching and learning seeks to equip our gifted students with the skills, knowledge and understandings to maximise their potential. To facilitate such an approach, our class sizes are small, our pedagogical practices are dynamic and relevant to our students' learning profiles, and our teaching team is collaborative and highly knowledge able in the area of Gifted Education.

Dara's student-centred approach includes a curriculum that encompasses student interests and learner preferences (choice in how the student learns and in how the student demonstrates their skills, knowledge and understanding). The way a child is navigating their learning may look different compared to others in their class. We value the unique and individual gifts of our children and understand the importance of your child being able to see themselves in their learning. This approach facilitates authentic and relevant learning experiences. Dara students are placed in the driver's seat of their learning: they are not passive receivers of new knowledge, but rather curious and connected seekers who engage deeply with meaningful learning experiences. Such learning experiences provide opportunities for Dara students to experience relevance and value in their learning and to connect this relevance and value to their own lives and to those around them, locally and globally.

Our teachers and support staff contribute to our progressive culture in creating an outstanding learning environment, with an emphasis on innovative teaching and learning approaches. Every day is different and presents the opportunity to genuinely support the personal growth and wellbeing of our students and, in doing so build relationships that make a difference to the students and families which comprise the heart of the Dara community. In building relationships provides the foundation for real authentic learning, where our teachers serve as both mentor and facilitator of learning.

Total enrolments	65
Girls	20
Boys	44
Other	1
Full-time equivalent	100%
Indigenous	4
Language other than English	7
Student Attendance rate	89.1%



Vision

To enable each individual to choose their adventure of learning, capture moments of wonder and delight, embrace opportunities to make a difference, and shape who they can become.

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.

Workforce Composition

During 2022, the staff employed constituted the following:

Teaching staff	12
FTE teachers	9.6
Non-teaching staff	9
FTE non-teaching staff	4.7
Indigenous	0

For 2022, Dara School staff were comprised of 72% female and 28% male.

Teacher standards and qualification

Dara School staff are purposefully selected for their professional knowledge and identified 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 students. These priorities reflect Dara's continued focus on a student-centred

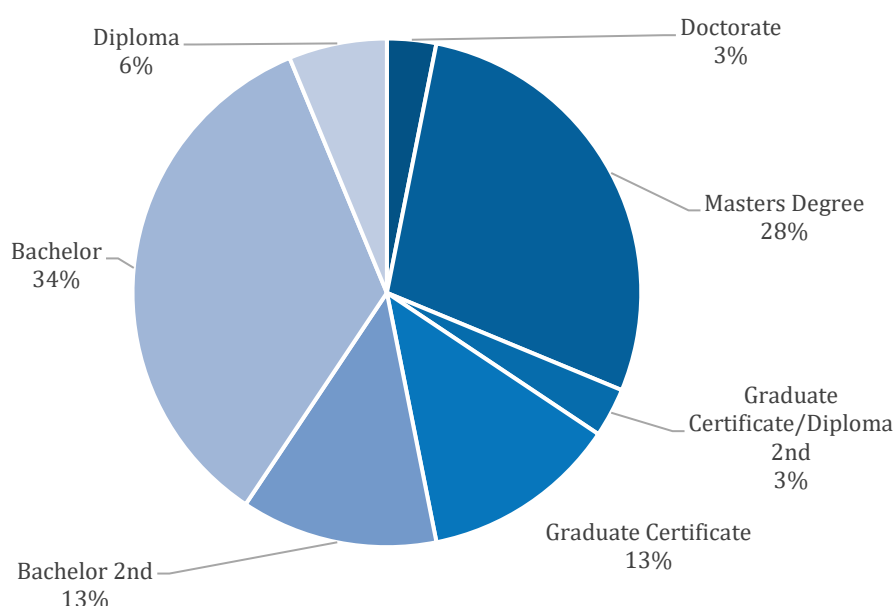
approach to create an engaging learning environment for each child. Dara School teachers must meet the requirements of the Teacher's Registration Board of South Australia. This includes training in child protection and holding a current and valid Working with Children Check (WWCC). All staff also have 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. that is evidence-based and holistic. Our teaching is grounded in learning principles that are uniquely designed for gifted students.

Teacher Qualifications 2022

Doctoral Degree	1
Masters Degree	9
Graduate Certificate/Diploma 2nd	1
Graduate Certificate	4
Bachelor 2nd	4
Bachelor	11
Diploma	2

Currently, 45% of Dara School teaching staff have completed a Master or Graduate Certificate in Gifted Education and a further 42% who commenced their studies.

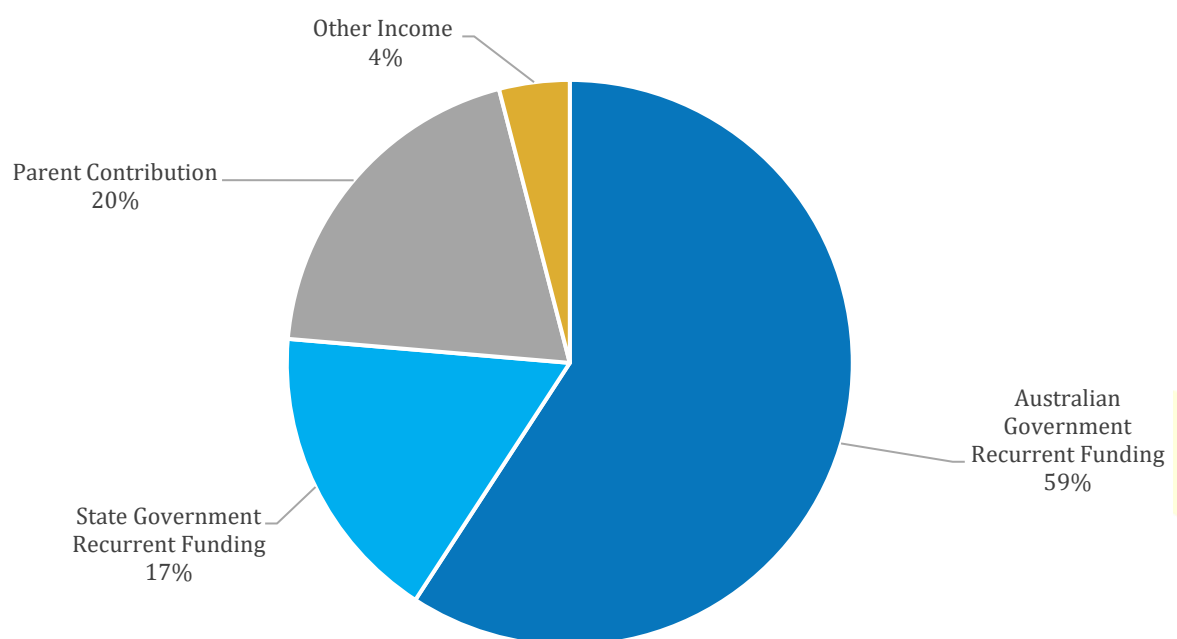
Teacher Qualifications



School Income and Funding Sources

The primary source of funding as an independent school comes from parent contributions in the form of tuition and curriculum fees. Additionally, the Commonwealth and State Government provide important resources that are managed meticulously by the school to ensure financial viability. The school's financial reports are audited every year by Accrue Harris Orchard. In their judgement, the financial report provides "a true and fair view of the [school's] financial position".

Sources of funding



Student Attendance

Dara School continued to prioritise student attendance in 2022. 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 2022 was 89.08%. Overall, the average attendance rate decreased by 5% and is attributed to another school year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The percentage figure for the average student attendance rate shows the proportion of days that each student, on average, attended School over the whole year.

Attendance 2022

Reception	87.70%
Year 1	92.50%
Year 2	89.80%
Year 3	89.50%
Year 4	86.70%
Year 5	88.60%
Year 6	89.40%
Year 7	88.40%

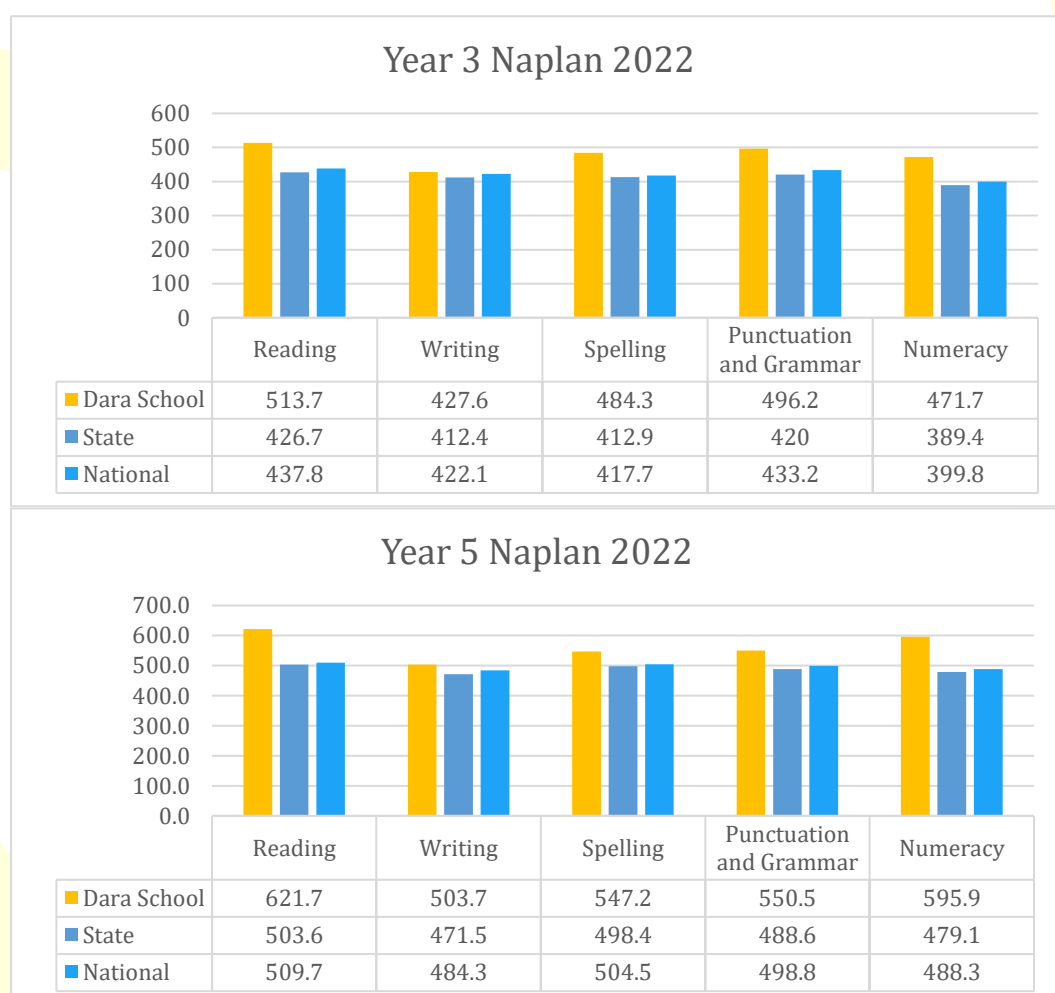


National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy 2022

NAPLAN is a national literacy and numeracy assessment that students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sit each year. It is the only national assessment all Australian students have the opportunity to undertake. Students sit assessments in writing, reading, conventions of language (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy. The questions assess content linked to the Australian Curriculum: English and Mathematics.

NAPLAN assesses the literacy and numeracy skills that students are learning through the school curriculum and such data provides a snapshot of each child's progress demonstrated through test conditions at a given point in time. It is important to note that NAPLAN was moved to week 7, Term 1 for the first time in 2022. The other change to note is that NAPLAN testing now follows a tailored testing approach which allows a wider range of student abilities to be assessed with the purpose of measuring student achievement more precisely. As a result, a student's overall NAPLAN result is based on both the number and complexity of questions they answer correctly.

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

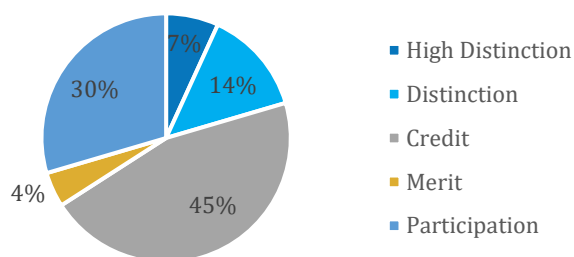


International Competitions and Assessment

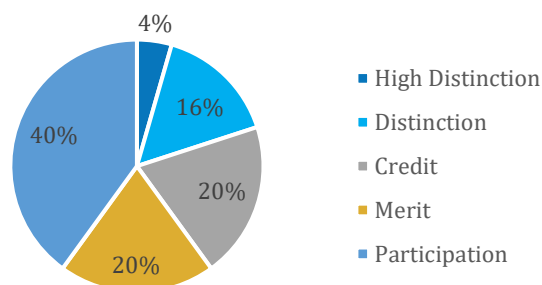
The International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) are designed to recognise students' ability to demonstrate their learning under test conditions. Students are assessed on their ability to apply classroom learning to new contexts using higher order thinking and critical thinking skills. ICAS takes place in over twenty countries including Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Africa, Europe, America, and Pacific countries.

We are delighted that three of our students were awarded ICAS medals in 2022, two medals in Mathematics and one medal in the Science category, which means each of the three students achieved the highest score in South Australia and Northern Territory. We are proud of all Dara students participating and working towards their personal best.

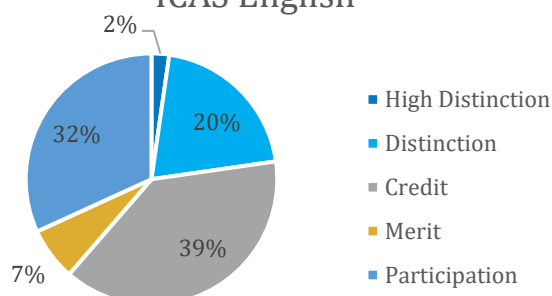
ICAS Science



ICAS Mathematics



ICAS English



School Community Satisfaction

Dara School is now in its sixth year of operation and during this time we have focused on building relationships with all stakeholders to foster collaboration between staff, students, parents and the wider community. To measure our success in meeting our goals, three surveys were designed based on questions that are part of the Student and Parent School Surveys. These were designed by the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (Questions are found on the [ACARA website](#)) acknowledging the importance to schools, schooling systems and jurisdictional authorities of gathering and analysing school opinion information and changes to that information over time. The final survey was designed to capture specific element from staff: teachers, educational support and administration. Overall, the results from the surveys are invaluable in understanding and responding to our community's perceptions and allowing school leadership to focus continuous improvement in our school.

A summary of the most consistent and important feedback is provided below, together with the initial actions we are taking to improve.

Parents opinions

- *"the best school in the world! The teachers are flexible and responsive to the needs of the individual student, and my child feels happy and safe there.*
- *My child is thriving at Dara after struggling at another school.*
- *I have many times already. Dara works well with children's needs.*
- *Social and emotional needs are met.*
- *Because on pick up 99% of time my child is happy and enjoyed their day at school*
- *Dara is the best things happens to my son life.*
- *Best option available if looking for a gifted specific school*
- *The school focuses on the giftedness part of the kids and provides personisled learning experiences according to the student's level. Teachers are well trained to work in this environment."*

What we are doing to be even better

There is a strong sense of satisfaction among all stakeholders. As Dara continues to grow and improve, we set a foundation for the future of our school. There is no school like Dara for us to use as a template. As such, we take feedback very seriously.

In response to the feedback we have received, the following will be the focal point for 2023:

- Installation of a pedestrian access gate.
- Reviewing our Language offerings.
- Continued growth of the high school cohort.
- Next steps of the Master Plan.
- A Term-by-Term information evening program for parents to provide them with understandings of the Dara model, and
- Redesign of current communications, including investigating app options to improve teacher communications with parents.

Facility Development

Facility development undertaken in 2022 was varied, from short-term student-led initiatives to long-term planning.

Some of our students applied for a sustainability grant which allowed them to establish vegetable gardens. These gardens have provided the students with a sense of ownership and pride and supported Biological Science and Health learning as well as providing produce.

To extend our outdoor learning spaces, we installed a fence between the lawn and the staff carpark, providing increased safety and allowing students to access the area.

In response to student feedback, we redeveloped the sandpit, moving it to under a tree to provide shade and installing rocks around the outside which students enjoy as seating during recess and lunch.

Our Front Office layout has been redesigned and new office cupboards installed to reflect use of space and provide increased efficiency and a welcoming aesthetic.

We have installed a Visual Arts and Physical Education learning space which will also accommodate storage of equipment.

Finally, we commenced forward planning of site development into 2023 and beyond.





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