

# DARA SCHOOL



School Performance Report 2023

## **School Performance Report 2023**

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 2023 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 2023 school year.

## Contextual Statement

Dara School supports intellectually gifted students by providing a nurturing environment for their educational and personal growth. We are structured around the provision of whole-school research-informed practices to facilitate a holistic approach to Gifted Education. Dara School is a secular, independent, and co-educational, progressive educational community.

Dara School has grown from only 14 students in 2017 to 72 students in 2023. The growth of the school has remained intentionally moderate to allow the school to develop responsively and purposefully alongside our student cohort. We are fortunate to house our campus in a heritage-listed manor along the Warriparri (Sturt) River. Dara moved into Cobham Hall in 2020 and finalised purchase of the building in 2023.

Dara School maintains small class sizes with a highly collaborative and knowledgeable team of teachers to support a student-centred and student-led approach, which allows students to drive their own development of skills, knowledge and understandings through personalised education.

Student interests and learner preferences are embraced in order to facilitate student-centred curriculum delivery. Within a class, student may navigate their learning in different ways, and are encouraged to self-advocate and negotiate options that support their characteristics as learners and meet their learning goals as well as the requirements of the Australian Curriculum. This provides students with an active role in designing and engaging in authentic and relevant learning experiences, to increase their confidence, resilience, and sense that their learning contributes value to their lives and communities.



<b>Total enrolments</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Girls</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Boys</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Non-binary</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Full-time equivalent</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Language other than English</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Student Attendance rate</b>	<b>90.5%</b>

## 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 2023, the staff employed constituted the following:

Teaching staff	12
FTE teachers	10.3
Non-teaching staff	10
FTE non-teaching staff	4.0
Indigenous	0

For 2023, Dara School staff were comprised of 72% female and 28% male.

## Teacher standards and qualification

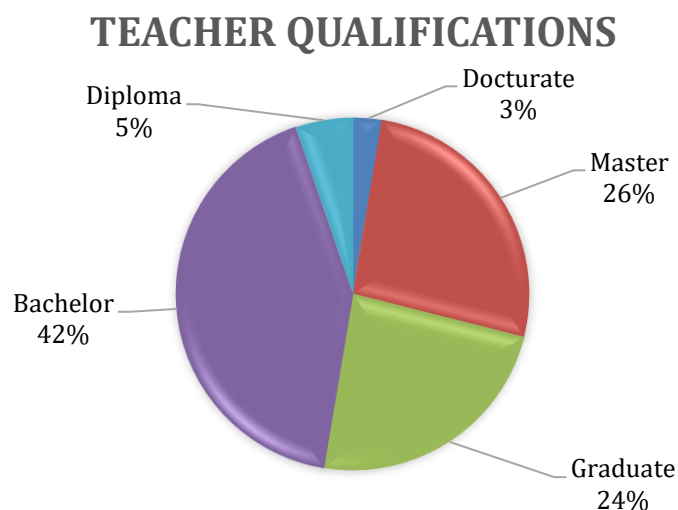
Dara School staff are purposefully selected for their professional knowledge and identified attributes and characteristics that align with the school's values. Teaching at Dara requires ongoing dedication to the ethos of the school, along with intrinsic motivation for the betterment of gifted students' 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.

## Teacher Qualifications 2023

Doctoral Degree	1
Graduate Certificate	9
Masters Degree	10
Bachelor Degree	16
Diploma	2

At present, 54% of Dara School teaching staff have completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Gifted Education and a further 15% who commenced their studies in 2023.



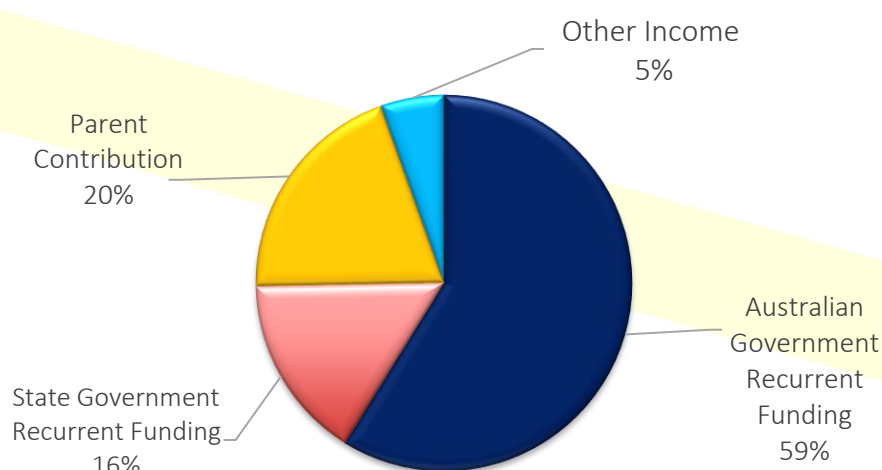
## School Income and Funding Sources

The primary source of funding as an independent school, comes from parent contributions in the form of tuition and property donations. Additionally, the Commonwealth and State Government provide important resources that are managed meticulously by the school to ensure financial viability. The school has also received grants from the Australian Sports Commission for the Sporting Schools Program.

The school's financial reports are audited every year by Accru Harris Orchard an independent auditor. In their judgement, the financial reports give a true and fair view of the school's financial performance for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Australian Government Recurrent Funding	\$1,353,650
State Government Recurrent Funding	\$365,666
Parent Contribution	\$456,732
Other Income	\$125,522

### Sources of funding





## Student Attendance

Attendance remained a priority in 2023 due to the high impact of attendance on a student's engagement with academic, social, and emotional learning and development. In 2023, Dara School began using SEQTA Learner Management Software to electronically document and monitor student attendance.

Teachers check and document attendance between 8.25am and 9.00am. Students who arrive after 8.40am sign-in through the SEQTA Kiosk app in the Front Office to ensure accurate record of time of arrival and sighting by Reception staff. Unexplained student absences are followed up by 9.30am by the Receptionist who seeks contact with parents/caregivers to obtain clarification of the reason for the absence. Through this process, Dara School maintains accurate and up-to-date individual and collective student attendance data.

The combined average attendance rate in 2023 was 90.50%. Overall, the average attendance rate increased by 1.42%.

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

### Attendance 2023

Reception	91.31%
Year 1	89.23%
Year 2	89.55%
Year 3	90.31%
Year 4	92.72%
Year 5	86.59%
Year 6	90.59%
Year 7	92.38%
Year 8	91.80%



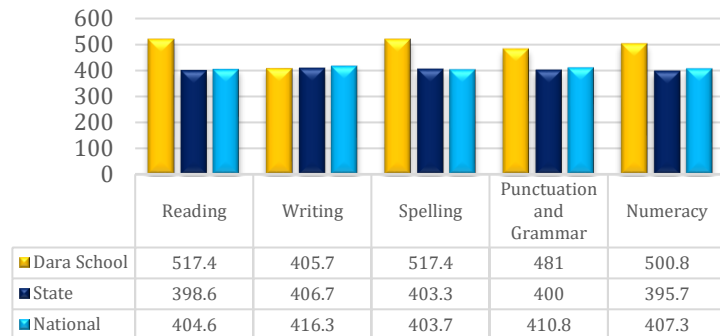
## National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy 2023

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.

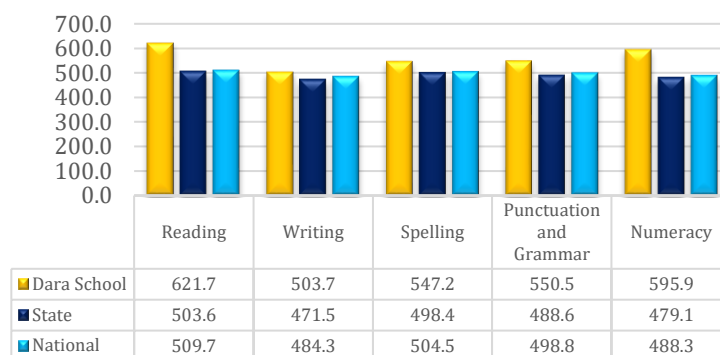
NAPLAN assesses the literacy and numeracy skills that students are learning through the school curriculum and such data provides a snapshot of each child's progress demonstrated through test conditions at a given point in time. It is important to note that NAPLAN was moved to week 7, Term 1 for the first time in 2023. 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 tables on this page display the mean scores for Dara School against the South Australian and National averages for each aspect of the NAPLAN test.

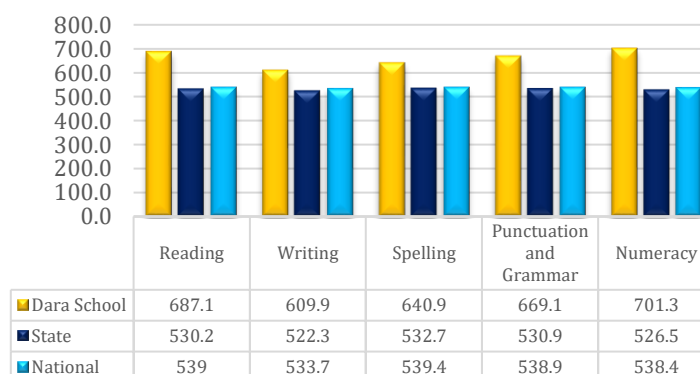
### Year 3 Naplan 2023



### Year 5 Naplan 2023



### Year 7 Naplan 2023



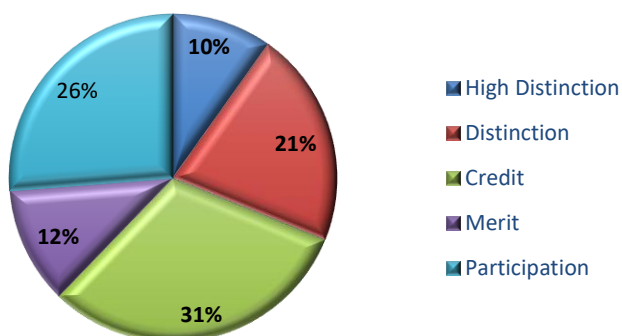


## International Competitions and Assessment 2023

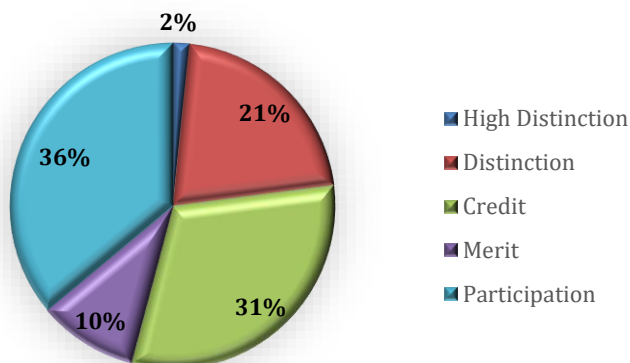
The International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) are designed to recognise students' ability to demonstrate their learning under test conditions. Students are assessed on their ability to apply classroom learning to new contexts using higher order thinking and critical thinking skills.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

We are delighted that two of our students were awarded ICAS medals in 2023, one medal in the mathematics category and one medal in the Science category, which means that both 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.

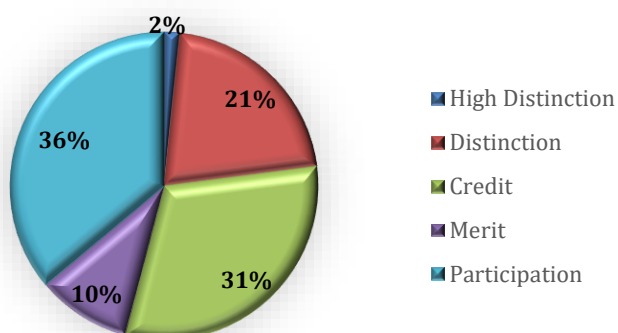
### ICAS Maths



### ICAS Science



### ICAS English



## School Community Satisfaction

Dara School is now in its seventh year of operation. The school seeks 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.'

In support of this aim, the school has focused on building relationships with all stakeholders and to foster collaboration between staff, students, parents and the wider community. To measure our success in meeting our goals, we have implemented surveys 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. This information provides practitioners in understanding and responding to their communities' perceptions and providing leaders with data for consideration for continuous improvement in their schools.

In 2023, there is a strong sense of satisfaction among all stakeholders. However, there are some points of difference for improvement. Overall, we are having a significantly positive impact on the students. Additionally, whole-school, generalized communication has improved, while personalized communication has been identified as an area of growth.

Significant points for improvement identified by parents/caregivers include:

- Parent to teacher communication.
- An overview of what is being taught.
- The current School app is not efficient.

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, we are engaging a program called SEQTA, which will allow us to:

- Improve teacher communications with parents,
- Allow live assessments and information to be available (including feedback),
- Publish curriculum overviews across all areas of the school, and
- Facilitate simpler access to notices and policies.

## Parents opinions

- *"My child loves coming to school and is making good educational and social progress."*
- *"We love Dara. It has made a huge difference."*
- *"This is a very special, wonderful school."*
- *"Acceptance/accommodation of student quirks, similar peer group, teacher/community support."*
- *"Dara is one of a kind."*
- *"Uniqueness in its approach, focus on social-emotional learning, and embracing of the individual."*
- *"Overall, I am extremely satisfied with Dara."*
- *"This school has been great for us, but it's not for everyone."*
- *"We've had a broadly positive experience at Dara, which provides many benefits and opportunities compared to our experience with mainstream schooling. We are also aware that there are some circumstances that can mean Dara may not be the right fit for all gifted children."*
- *"It has been a good fit for my child at this age."*
- *"Dara provides excellent support and education for gifted students."*

## Facility Development & Improvement

The first stage of the Master Plan was completed with the purchase of Cobham Hall by the School.

Architects were engaged to undertake feasibility and concept design for future building works for the 'big-picture Master Plan' along with other consultants to assist.

Paving was undertaken in the area between the storage shed and the Annex to provide an outdoor learning area for art and other subjects, made possible with funds from the State Governments Grants program.

Minor modifications have been made within the Annex to help reduce noise and improve the facilities for OSHC staff and parents.

Future planning continued throughout the year with plans well under way for the construction of a new building ready for 2025.





## **DARA SCHOOL**

**P** 08 8137 6020  
**A** 4 Gordon Terrace,  
Morphettville, SA 5043  
**A** PO Box 656,  
Park Holme, SA 5043  
**ABN** 42661209283  
[www.daraschool.sa.edu.au](http://www.daraschool.sa.edu.au)