

DARA SCHOOL

School Performance Report 2024

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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 2024 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 via email and SEQTA notifications, and to the wider community on the school's website. The following information provides an overview of the 2024 school year.

Contextual Statement

Dara School is a place where gifted learners not only have the opportunity to flourish, but are truly celebrated. Our school exists to meet students' unique intellectual, social, emotional, and creative needs, offering a space where difference is embraced, and potential is nurtured. Dara School is a secular, independent, and co-educational, progressive educational community.

We are guided by core values that reflect the spirit of our students and the purpose of our school: **Courage, Connection, Curiosity, Creativity and Compassion**. Our values shape our learning culture, are embedded in how we teach, support, and celebrate our students, and inform how we engage with our community.

Dara moved from Ascot Park Primary School to Cobham Hall in 2020, a heritage-listed manor beside the Warriparri (Sturt) River, with the purchase of the building finalised in 2023. In 2025, a new building was installed in response to the growing cohort of students, and requiring facilities specific to particular areas of learning, such as Science.

Dara School has grown from 14 students in 2017 to 91 students in 2024. Our small class sizes are purposeful and fundamental to the successful delivery of high-quality gifted education, including the implementation of a Personalised Education Plan for every student. Growth of the school has remained intentionally moderate to maintain a high level of integrity in our service delivery, given our nuanced approach to gifted education that encompasses the whole child, with careful and tailored attention to students' affective and intellectual development, which often presents as asynchronous.

In conjunction with maintaining small class sizes, Dara's staffing is carefully designed with small Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) who teach across levels R-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. Each team of teachers possesses the requisite affective and intellectual skills and knowledge to support intellectually gifted students. Teachers implement gifted educational pedagogies including the supported and purposeful development of independent learnership, the co-creation of deep, complex and connected learning opportunities, and intentional student agency throughout the teaching and learning process. Our teachers are supported to honour the personalised academic and social and emotional requirements of each student in order for them to flourish.

Student interests and learner preferences are sought out and embraced in order to facilitate student-led curriculum delivery. Within a class, students may navigate their learning in different ways and are encouraged to self-advocate and negotiate options that support their characteristics as learners to 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.

Total enrolments	93
Girls	32
Boys	61
Other	0
Full-time equivalent	100%
ATSI	2
Language other than English	17
Student Attendance rate	91.3%

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

Courage

Courage is a lifelong value for Dara learners. Gifted people are in particular need of courage because giftedness is a lived experience of difference. We value the courage to challenge yourself at your own level. We value the courage to reach for new learning and new skills. We value the courage to make mistakes and fail without giving up. We value the courage to be your own person. We value the courage to be compassionate, honest and reliable, have integrity and exert effort.

Connection

Connection is integral to our sense of self and community. Connection to self supports metacognition and self-directed personal growth. When a learner is connected to peers and adults, they are socially and emotionally supported. On a wider scale, connection to community helps us establish our sense of place and develop our own sense of identity as a member of that place. We value our community and celebrating our collective experiences and successes. We value collaboration and the sharing of ideas and feedback.

Curiosity

Dara values curiosity because a love of learning creates a sense of joy, fulfilment and self-efficacy that will be of lifelong value. We value the courage to be curious and independent in curiosity, take risks, try new ideas and challenge learning, supported by quality learning experiences. Learning should not be a chore but a pleasure.

Creativity

"Creativity is intelligence having fun." (Attributed to Einstein).

Creativity is recognised as the most challenging level of cognitive processing. A learner who can be creative is a learner who can solve problems and delight in the process. We value daring to be different through implementing creative, adaptive, reflexive approaches to learning.

Compassion

"Compassion is the basis of morality," (Schopenhauer, 1840), or, as Anne Frank said, *"no one has ever become poor by giving."*

Dara considers the active development of a child's compassion an ethical responsibility of the school. Without compassion, we live a poor facsimile of life. In valuing compassion, we value a supportive environment which promotes wellbeing through empathy, understanding, respect and joy.

Workforce Composition

During 2024, the staff employed constituted the following:

Teaching staff	14
FTE teachers	11.5
Non-teaching staff	9
FTE non-teaching staff	5.3
Indigenous	0

For 2024, Dara School staff were comprised of 78% female and 22% male.

Teacher standards and qualification

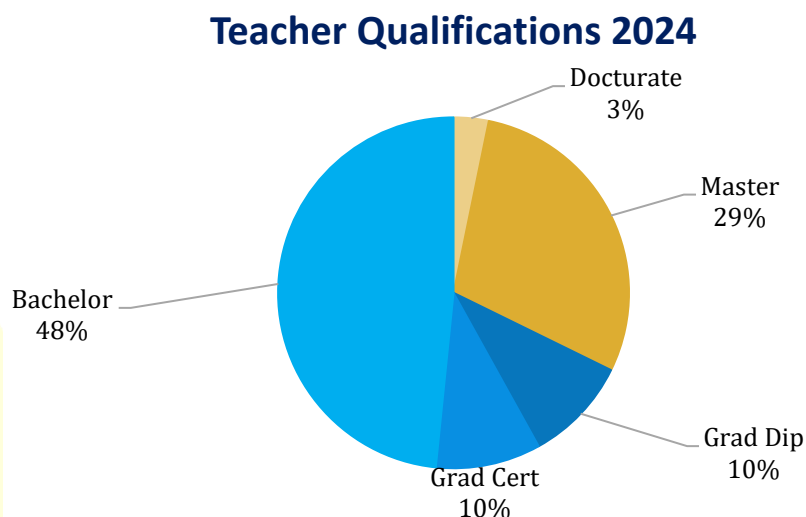
Dara School staff are carefully recruited for their professional knowledge and identified attributes and characteristics that align with the school's values. Teaching at Dara requires ongoing dedication and commitment to the ethos of the school, along with intrinsic motivation for the betterment of gifted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

Dara School teachers meet the requirements of the Teacher's Registration Board of South Australia, including training in child protection and holding a current and valid Working with Children Check (WWCC). All staff undertake First Aid training, which is updated on an ongoing basis. All teachers at Dara School participate in professional development through engagement with a range of courses relevant to the context of the school and individual student cohorts, in addition to holding qualifications through higher education. Many of our teaching staff hold multiple qualifications, as reflected in the data below.

At present, 61% of Dara School teaching staff hold a qualification in Gifted Education.

Teacher Qualifications 2024

Doctoral Degree	1
Masters Degree	9
Graduate Diploma	3
Graduate Certificate	3
Bachelor Degree	15



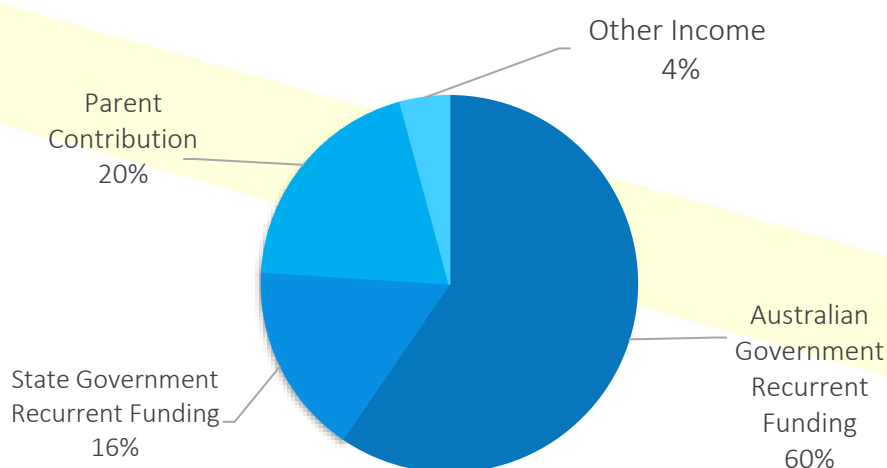
School Income and Funding Sources

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 for 2024 were audited 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 2024.

Australian Government Recurrent Funding	\$1,683,969
State Government Recurrent Funding	\$465,132
Parent Contribution	\$558,949
Other Income	\$118,772

Sources of funding



Student Attendance

Attendance remained a priority in 2024 due to the high impact of attendance on a student's engagement with academic, social, and emotional learning and development. In 2024, Dara School continued to use SEQTA Learner Management Software to electronically document and monitor student attendance.

Teachers check and document attendance between 8.30am and 9.00am. Students who arrive after 8.40am sign-in through the SEQTA Kiosk app in the Front Office to ensure accurate record keeping 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.

Students are enrolled at Dara School according to their age. Dara School aligns itself with the South Australian Government School starting age whereby students may commence Reception in Term 1 when they turn 5 before the 1st of May.

At Dara School, a student's enrolment grade is also known as a student's "base grade". The enrolment grade / base grade according to the student's age applies to all students including those accelerated at previous schools.

While students are enrolled in a base grade, they are then placed in subject classes according to their ability (or readiness level). In this context, the base grade provides a single grade level with which to refer to a student for enrolment data purposes, whereas the student may be placed across multiple grade levels in their subject ability placements.

Attendance data is reported according to base grade (age), to facilitate a single data point per student. The combined average attendance rate in 2024 was 91.34%. Overall, the average attendance rate increased by 0.84%.

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 2024

Reception	87.43%
Year 1	92.09%
Year 2	94.57%
Year 3	90.86%
Year 4	90.99%
Year 5	91.65%
Year 6	90.72%
Year 7	91.13%
Year 8	91.85%
Year 9	94.23%

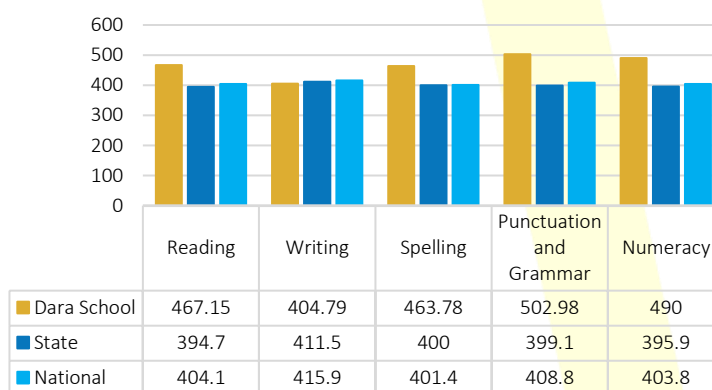
National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy 2024

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.

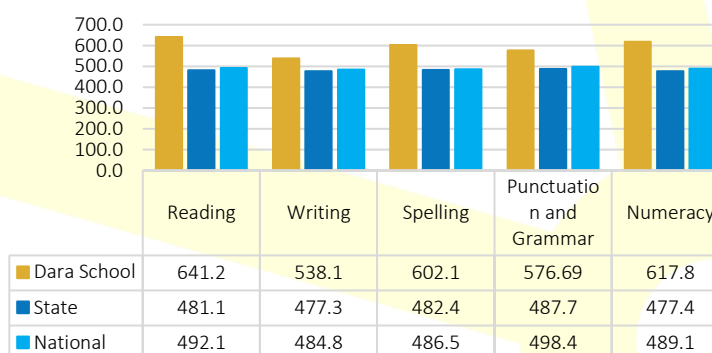
NAPLAN aims to provide a snapshot of each child's progress demonstrated through test conditions at a given point in time. The testing sequence begins with Writing (on paper for level 3 only, online for levels 5, 7 and 9), followed by Reading, Conventions of Language, and concluding with Numeracy. NAPLAN took place from Wednesday week 7, Term 1 through to Monday week 8, with catch up sessions conducted during the testing window concluding on Monday the 25th of March, week 9. NAPLAN testing follows a tailored testing approach through responsive directional test questions (questions vary depending on correct and incorrect answers) 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 compared to the South Australian and National averages for each NAPLAN testing area.

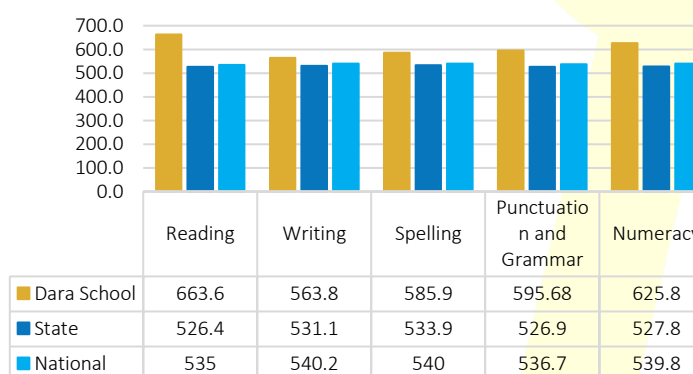
Year 3 Naplan 2024



Year 5 Naplan 2024



Year 7 Naplan 2024

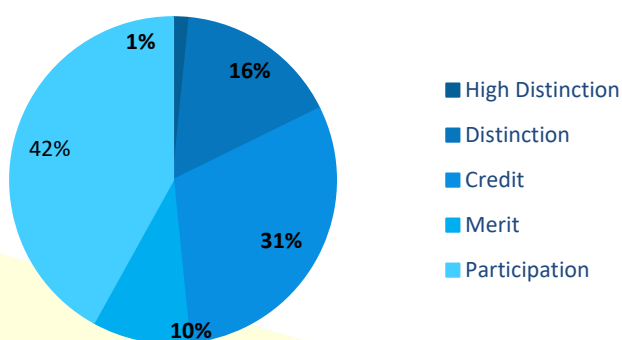


International Competitions and Assessment 2024

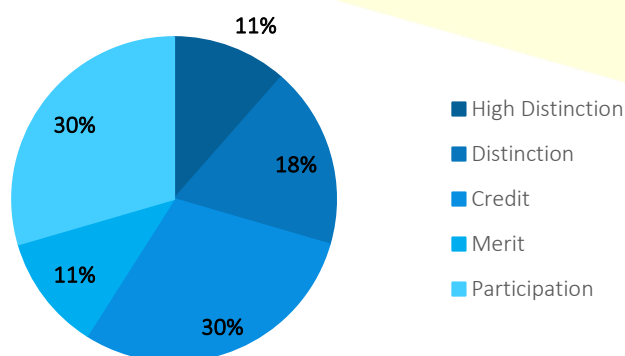
The International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) are designed to recognise students' ability to demonstrate their learning under test conditions. Students are assessed on their ability to apply classroom learning to new contexts using higher order thinking and critical thinking skills. ICAS is a historic academic competition that has been sat by over 10 million school students from 16 000 schools across 41 countries since 1981, including Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Africa, Europe, America, and Pacific countries.

We are delighted that two of our students were awarded ICAS medals in 2024, 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 who participated in ICAS and who continue to work towards their personal best.

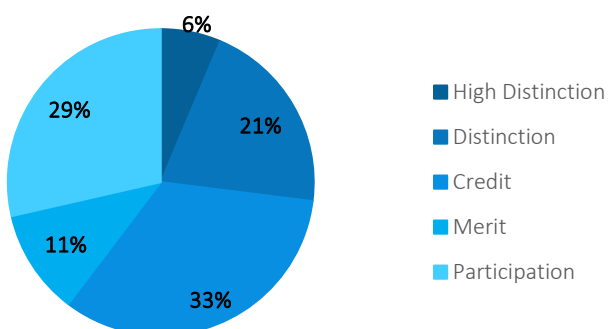
ICAS Maths



ICAS Science



ICAS English



School Community Satisfaction

2024 brings Dara School into its eighth year of operation. The school's vision is 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.'

At the heart of achieving our vision is Dara School's tailored environment for gifted learners, characterised by an inclusive and flexible learning culture; a strong staff and community; and a unique educational approach personalised to each student's needs.

As part of the school's focus on continuous improvement in the field of gifted education, in addition to a range of professional reflective practices, the school gathers data through the implementation and subsequent analysis of an annual parent satisfaction survey. The survey seeks to gather feedback from parents and caregivers about various aspects of the school's operations and environment. The survey aims to measure satisfaction levels and understand which areas are most important to families, parents and caregivers.

In 2024, the survey results indicated areas of strength, and high levels of agreement by parents and caregivers, with the strongest areas of agreement including:

- Children feel safe.
- Children enjoy attending Dara School.
- Parents also generally feel confident communicating with teachers.
- Parents believe that staff treat students fairly.

Areas expressed as having potential for growth include:

- Student feedback.
- Parent opinion processes and actions.
- How the school looks for ways to improve.

Data from the parent satisfaction survey plays an integral role in the school's review of systems and processes to facilitate informed decisions, and therefore forms a key component in shaping areas of growth and strengthening areas of success.

Parents opinions

Tailored environment for gifted learners

A number of responses conveyed strong support for the school's distinctive educational model, with parents and caregivers noting the positive impact it has had on their children's wellbeing and learning:

- *"The school provides a nurturing and intellectually stimulating environment tailored to meet the unique needs of gifted learners."*
- *"I am sick of "gifted programs" that work on the idea of quantity over anything else. Dara allows my children to be themselves without expecting them to be teacher aides or the world's problem solvers."*
- *"Dara is a safe space that understands and supports the quirks of gifted children and allows them space to grow into themselves and follow their interests without being stifled or shamed."*

Inclusive and flexible learning culture

Parents also appreciated the school's commitment to creating a safe and inclusive space that prioritises individuality and personal growth:

- *"The school is allowing our son to be himself more and not hide himself."*
- *"Our children enjoy learning at Dara, are eager to go to school, and feel like they are free to be themselves."*
- *"Fantastic for children with needs that cannot be met by mainstream schools...an opportunity for children to feel like they belong."*

Strong staff and community

There was widespread praise for the commitment and care shown by staff, as well as the sense of belonging fostered by the school community:

- *"The small size. The teachers, staff & SSO's are amazing. The understanding of neurodiversity."*
- *"Lovely small community feel."*

Unique educational approach

Parents and caregivers also valued the school's alternative approach to learning, particularly its emphasis on creativity, autonomy, and flexibility:

- *"With small class sizes, no homework, a focus on creativity and freedom of expression, and a nonconformist, experimental approach, it's truly a unique environment. I absolutely love the school!"*

Facility Development & Improvement

The purchase of the school site was completed in 2023 allowing the school to turn towards the continued expansion of facilities to enable the school to grow. With continued student growth, the need to create more space became evident. Staff worked together in a flexible manner to accommodate students. In 2023, a project to fund and build more facilities commenced, and was finalised in 2024 with a contract being signed with Fleetwood Pty Ltd to build Stage 1 of our expansion. This was made possible due to the strong financial result for 2024 which allowed the school to fully fund Stage 1 of the project.

Some minor works were completed in 2024 on the building site, but the project itself would not be completed until 2025 – a facility that all in the school looked forward to. The school plans for Stage 2 of the project to be worked on during 2025, with the aim of having the project completed in 2026, pending successful grant applications.



**DARA
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