



Government of South Australia

Office of the Guardian
for Children and Young People

Children and Young People in State Care in South Australian Government Schools

2008-2018

June 2019

Guardian for Children and Young People

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NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The following terms are used in particular ways in this report -

Aboriginal – Reflecting community preference, the term Aboriginal in this report is inclusive of children and young people of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Government schools – As of May 2018, the Department for Education and Child Development became the Department for Education. This report uses the term ‘government schools’ for Department for Education schools.

‘In care’ or ‘in state care’ – Refers to children and young people under guardianship, or in the custody, of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017.

NESB – We follow Department for Education usage of the term NESB for students from a non-English speaking background.

School aged - Refers to children and young people aged between 5 and 17 years.

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1 Introduction

This is the sixth annual report from the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People (GCYP) about the education participation of children and young people attending government schools who are under the guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection.¹ It uses data which has been kindly provided by the education department.

Comment focuses on areas of significant difference between, or changes in results for, children and young people in state care and the equivalent results for all students attending government schools.

No equivalent information is available from the Independent or Catholic school systems making the situation of children in care enrolled in those system relatively opaque. The enrolment rate of children in care in government schools has remained steady at just below 60 per cent of the total care population since 2013. Data from the Independent or Catholic school systems would help us gain a fuller picture of the experience of students in care, and its collection should be encouraged.

The GCYP has consulted with children and young people who acknowledge that the benefits of attending school can go far beyond their academic results. At school they can be with friends, learn about new things, and find stability in the same places and faces. They are usually able to do the same things as everyone else their age and school contributes positively to their social and emotional wellbeing. Aboriginal children and young people in care also highlight the importance of culture and identity and its connection to their education.

Part 6 of this report considers the NAPLAN performance and participation of children and young people in care (undertaken annually by students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9). Data consistently demonstrates that children and young people in care on average achieve poorer outcomes in relation to performing at or above the National Minimum Standard in all test areas compared to all enrolled government students.

¹ The Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection undertook the guardianship function when the final sections of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* were commenced in October 2018. This is in line with a recommendation of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission to ensure decision making occurs as close as possible to the child.

What information do we present?

Twenty charts demonstrate the situation of children and young people in care in government schools in 2018 and over time.

- **CHART 1** - Proportion of children in care attending Department for Education schools, 2008 to 2018
- **CHART 2** - Proportion of children in care enrolled in Department for Education schools compared to the state average - selected demographic categories, Term 3, 2018
- **CHART 3** - Age groupings of children in care in Department for Education schools, Term 3, 2018
- **CHART 4** - Proportion of Aboriginal children in care compared with all Aboriginal students enrolled in Department for Education schools 2008 to 2018
- **CHART 5** - Absence rate comparison, Aboriginal children in care compared to Aboriginal children enrolled at Department for Education schools, Semester 1 2018
- **CHART 6** - Proportion of children in care with a disability compared with all students with a disability enrolled in Department for Education schools, 2008-2018
- **CHART 7** - Primary recognised disability of children in care enrolled in Department for Education schools in Term 3 2018
- **CHART 8** - Rate of suspensions, children in care compared with Department for Education school population, 2008-2018 (Term 2)
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- **CHART 12** - Absence rates for children in care and all Department for Education students, Semester 1 2018
- **CHART 13** - Absence rates for students in care attending Department for Education schools from a non-English speaking background, all students from a non-English speaking background attending Department for Education schools, and the state rate, Semester 1 2018
- **CHART 14** – Percentage of results at or above the National Minimum Standard for students in care attending government schools compared with all South Australian students, 2018
- **CHART 15a** - Percentage of children in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Reading 2016 - 2018

- **CHART 15b** - Percentage of children in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Writing 2016 - 2018
- **CHART 15c** – Percentage of children in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Numeracy 2016 - 2018
- **CHART 16** – NAPLAN participation rate of children in care in Department for Education schools by year level and discipline category
- **CHART 17** – Rate of participation in NAPLAN testing, percentage of eligible children in care in Department for Education schools, 2018
- **CHART 18a** - Percentage of absences in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2018
- **CHART 18b** - Percentage of exemptions in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2018
- **CHART 18c** - Percentage of withdrawals in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2018

2 Summary

In South Australia in 2018, 60.9 per cent of all students in care were enrolled in government schools. The other 39.1 per cent may attend in the non-government school system, or are below school-age, and a small number will be non-identifiable for other reasons.

This report demonstrates that for those in care attending government schools –

- The proportion of all children and young people in care who attended government schools in 2018 was 60.9 per cent, which is an increase from 57 per cent in 2017.
- In 2018, 34.7 per cent of children and young people in care in government schools identified as Aboriginal, compared to Aboriginal students comprising 6.4 per cent of all government students.
- There are lower rates of school absence for Aboriginal students in care compared to the overall population of Aboriginal students attending government schools.
- A greater proportion of all children and young people in care have learning disabilities compared to the overall government school student population, notably in speech and language skills.²
- The proportion of children and young people in care with an intellectual disability is nearly seven times, and those with a global developmental delay are four and a half times that of the rate of disability in the overall government school student population.
- Children and young people in care enrolled in government schools are over four times more likely to be suspended or 12 times more likely to be excluded than the broader government school student cohort.
- Data consistently demonstrate that children and young people in care who are in government schools achieve poorer outcomes on average in relation to performing at or above the NAPLAN National Minimum Standard.
- There are very high NAPLAN non-participation rates for students in care in government schools. We know very little about the proficiency of half of all Year 9 students, just over one-quarter of Years 3 and 5 students, and one-third of Year 7 students in care enrolled in government schools in 2018.
- Absence, withdrawal, and exemption rates for NAPLAN testing for children and young people in care attending government schools are higher in every year level and testing category than the broader South Australian school cohort.³

² The GCYP submission to the Legislative Council Inquiry into Access to the Education System for Students with Disabilities in September 2015 can be accessed [here](#).

³ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2018, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2018*, ACARA, Sydney p 304. The full report can be found [here](#).

Information summarised in this report suggests that the circumstances of students in care attending government schools warrants further attention in some areas, including with respect to

- speech and language delays experienced by children before and on commencement of school;
- access to appropriate disability support services, for example in relation to intellectual disability (including a focus on whether and how the NDIS will contribute to the necessary support);
- the evidence around the use of disciplinary measures such as school suspension and exclusion – and options for alternatives, particularly for younger children;
- monitoring hours of attendance at school so that part-day absences and reduced-hours arrangements are reported and minimised;
- the experience of culturally diverse children and young people in care including those who do not speak English as a first language; and
- developing a better appreciation of the reasons for the high non-participation rate in NAPLAN testing and the implications this has for properly understanding the educational experience of children and young people in care.

Education and youth justice detention

In addition to holding the position of Guardian for Children and Young People, Penny Wright is Training Centre Visitor (TCV) for the Adelaide Youth Training Centre (AYTC) under the *Youth Justice Administration Act 2016*.

The TCV Unit engages with the Department for Education's AYTC Youth Education Centre (YEC) to implement the TCV's independent visiting, advocacy and inspection functions. Details about the YEC can be found [here](#).

In 2017-18, 329 individual children and young people were admitted to the AYTC (sometimes more than once, giving a total number of 671 separate admissions in that period). Of those 329 individuals, 21 per cent were female, 50 per cent identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and 23 per cent were under Guardianship orders at the time of admission. Most were aged between 13 and 17 years of age (some 90 per cent of the total), noting that 10 is the minimum age for admission to youth detention in South Australia.

Consideration of and reporting about the education participation and experiences of children and young people in youth justice detention will be part of the work of the TCV Program in future years.

3 Profile

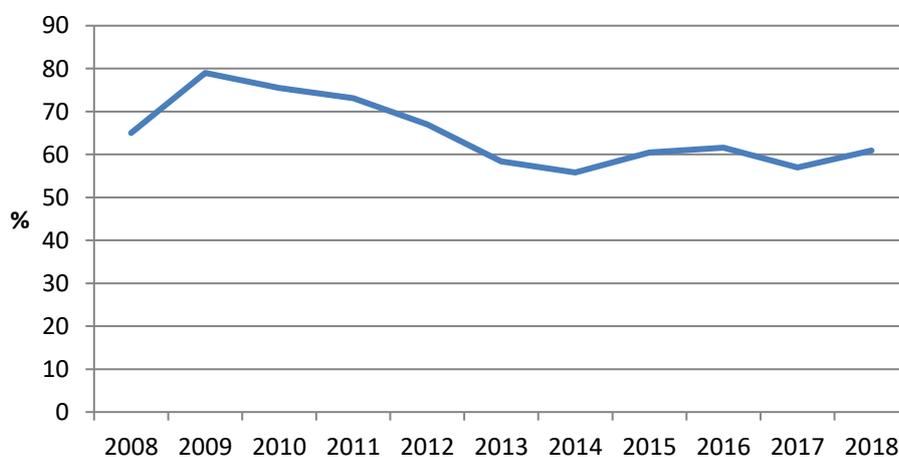
In Term 3 2018, there were 2,072 children and young people in care enrolled in government schools, an increase of 207 students from 2017's data.

Of the 2,072 students enrolled in government schools in 2018 –

- 1,005 were female (48.5 per cent) and 1,067 male (51.5 per cent);
- 1339 were enrolled in primary school (64.6 per cent) and 733 were enrolled in secondary school (35.4 per cent); and
- 791 were enrolled in country schools (38.2 per cent) and 1,281 were enrolled in metro schools (61.8 per cent).

Children and young people in care attending government schools represented 1.2 per cent of the government school student population in 2018 (total of all government school students 174,991).⁴ The proportion of all children in care who attended government schools in 2018 was 60.9 per cent, which is an increase from 57 per cent in 2017. Chart 1 demonstrates the annual proportion of children in care attending government schools since 2008.

CHART 1 - Proportion of children in care attending Department for Education schools, 2008 to 2018



While the number of children and young people in care attending government schools in 2018 showed an annual increase, the 60.9 per cent proportion remains lower than the highest rate of

⁴ The proportion of children in care *not* identified in the DE school attendance census includes those enrolled in non-government schools, students under the age of compulsion and students over the age of compulsion who have left school. Data quality may be affected by the inability to match records due to the use of alias names.

79 per cent reported in 2009. This may reflect a changing age profile of children and young people in care rather than enrolment numbers.

Chart 2 compares students in care attending government schools with all government school students in selected demographic categories in Term 3 2018.

CHART 2 - Proportion of children in care enrolled in Department for Education schools compared to the state average - selected demographic categories (Term 3, 2018)

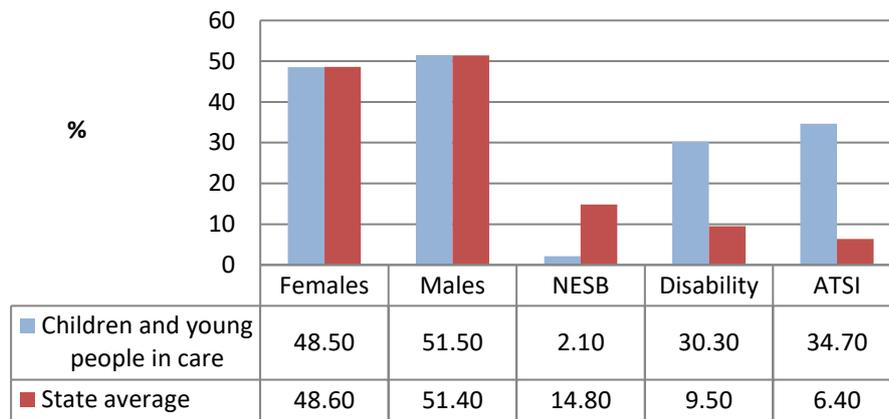
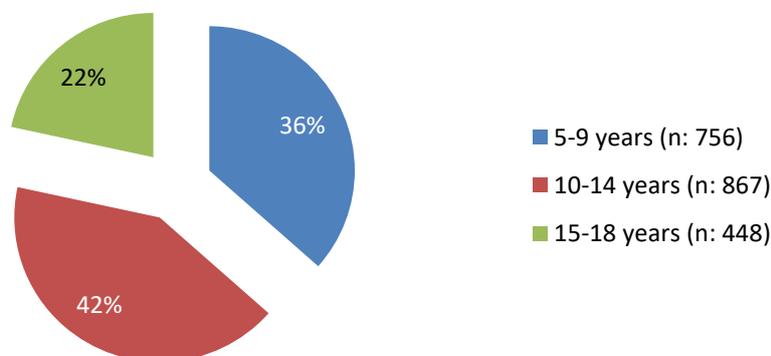


Chart 3 demonstrates the age groupings of children and young people in care across three age groups in Term 3 2018. The corresponding proportions for all government school students at the same time were 39.5 per cent aged 5-9 years, 37.3 per cent for 10-14 years, and 21.9 per cent for 15-18 years.

CHART 3 - Age groupings of children in care in Department for Education schools Term 3, 2018



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

The proportion of children and young people in care in government schools who identify as Aboriginal is substantially higher than Aboriginal children and young people as a proportion of all students attending government schools.

In Term 3 2018, 34.7 per cent of children in care in government schools identified as Aboriginal, compared to the state average of 6.4 per cent of all students. The below chart demonstrates the trend and growing disparity that can be tracked from 2008 to 2017, with a slight decrease in proportion in 2018.

CHART 4 - Proportion of Aboriginal children in care compared with all Aboriginal students enrolled in Department for Education schools 2008 to 2018

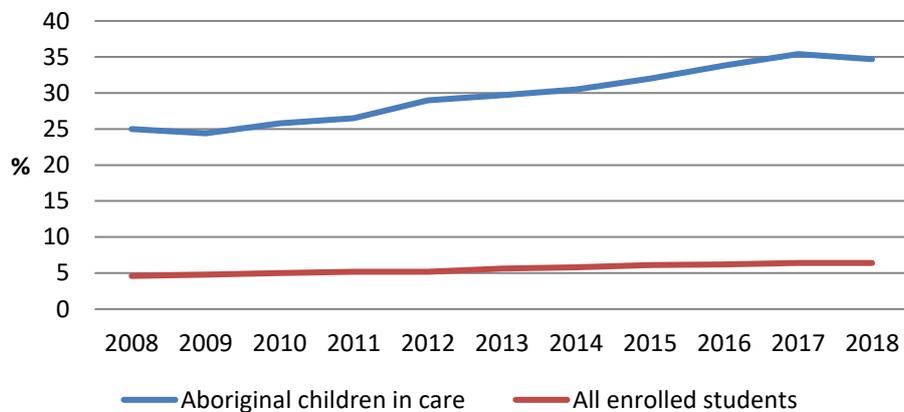
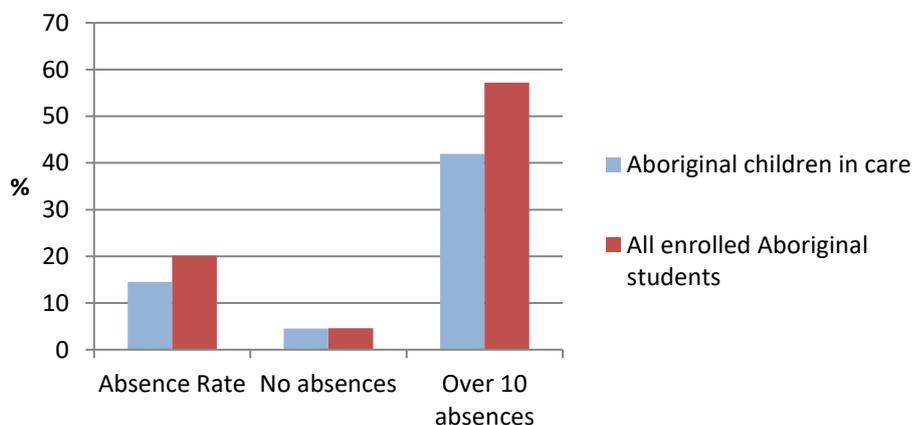


Chart 5 demonstrates lower rates of school absence for Aboriginal students in care compared to the overall population of Aboriginal students in government schools.

CHART 5 - Absence rate comparison, Aboriginal children in care compared to Aboriginal children enrolled at Department for Education schools, Semester 1 2018



Students with disabilities

The proportion of children and young people in care enrolled in government schools who have an identified disability has continued to be significantly higher than the proportion in the broader government school student cohort.

In Term 3 2018, 628 students in care attending government schools had an identified disability. This represents 30.3 per cent of children and young people in care attending government schools, compared to the state average of 9.8 per cent of all students.

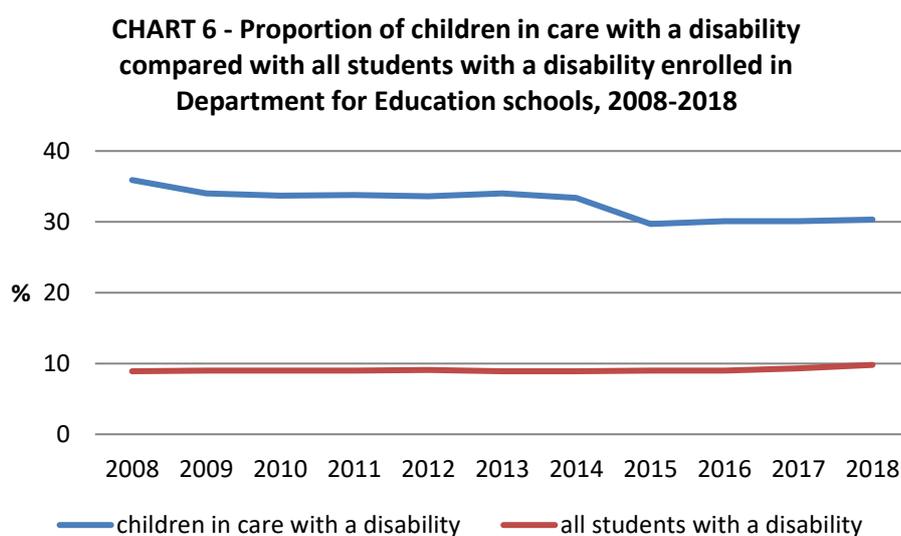


Chart 7 demonstrates the categories of primary disabilities of children and young people in care enrolled in government schools in 2018. The numbers are too small in some categories to compare children in care with state totals with much utility. The categories of *Language and Communication*, *Autistic/Asperger's Disorder*, *Intellectual Disability*, *Global Developmental Delay* and *Speech and/or Language* feature prominently for children and young people in care.

Examples are that –

- the proportion of children and young people in care attending government schools in 2018 with an intellectual disability was almost seven times that of this group within the overall government school student population;
- the proportion of children and young people in care attending government schools in 2018 recorded as having a speech and language related disability is over three times that of this group within the overall government school student population; and
- those with a global developmental delay are over four times the proportion of this group within the overall government school student population.

CHART 7 - Primary recognised disability of children in care enrolled in Department for Education schools in Term 3 2018

Primary Disability	Number of children in care in government schools	As a % of children in care in government schools	% of all students enrolled in government schools with a disability
Speech and/or Language	236	11.4%	3.4%
Intellectual disability	212	10.2%	1.5%
Autistic/ Asperger's disorder	104	5%	3.3%
Global development delay	45	2.2%	.5%
Physical disability	12	.6%	.3%
Language and Communication	7	.3%	.3%
Sensory disability (hearing)	7	.3%	.3%
Sensory disability (vision)	5	.2%	.1%
Total	628	30.3%	9.8%

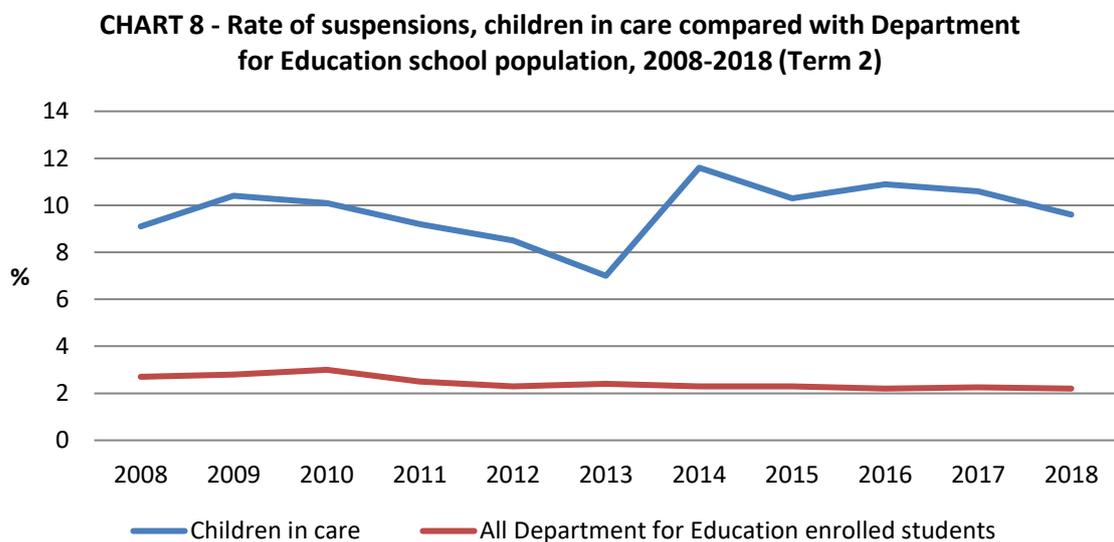
4 Suspensions and exclusions

The education department defines suspensions and exclusions as follows -

- **Suspension** – The student does not attend school for one to five school days.
- **Exclusion** - The student does not attend that school for either four to ten weeks, for the remainder of a term or, for students over 16, the remainder of the semester.⁵

Suspensions

Suspensions of students in care decreased steadily from a high rate in 2009, until a low point in 2013. This then rose sharply in 2014, peaking at a suspension rate of 11.6 per cent. Rates remained steady at just above 10 per cent from 2015, and decreased to 9.6 per cent in 2018. The lower rate for the government school population as a whole has remained steady, sitting just above 2 per cent. This disparity in suspension rates means that children in care in government schools are suspended at a rate over four times higher than government school students who are not in care.



⁵ See: [Suspension & exclusion - Information for parents and caregivers](#)

During Term 2 2018, there was 295 suspensions of children in care, compared to 5,051 incidents of suspension for other government school students. Some students in both groups were suspended more than once. The data shows that there were 182 suspension incidents of primary students in care, and 113 suspension incidents of secondary students in care. Chart 9 demonstrates the top three reasons why suspensions occurred.

CHART 9 - Comparison of main reasons for suspension, students in care and all students, Department for Education schools, Term 2 2018

Reason for suspension	Children in care %	All students %
Violence – threatened or actual ⁶	48.5	44.5
Threatened good order	20.7	22.8
Threatened safety or wellbeing	16.3	16.2

Exclusions

Children and young people in care enrolled in government schools are more likely to be excluded than the broader government school student cohort, but the small number of exclusion incidents makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions. During Term 2 2018, there was 24 exclusion incidents of children in care, compared to 209 for other government school students, giving a comparative rate of 1.2 to 0.1 per cent.

The following chart demonstrates the increase in numbers of exclusion incidents from Term 2 2016 to Term 2 2018, across both children and young people in care, and the broader government school population.

⁶ The proportions of threatened violence and actual violence is:

Threatened violence – 25% (of the 143 incidents)

Actual violence – 75% (of the 143 incidents)

Children and young people in care have often experienced numerous adverse childhood experiences, many including bearing witness to, and being victims of violence. The trauma that these children and young people experience can manifest in violent behaviours.

CHART 10 - Number of exclusion incidents, Department for Education students compared with children in care, 2016 - 2018 (Term 2)

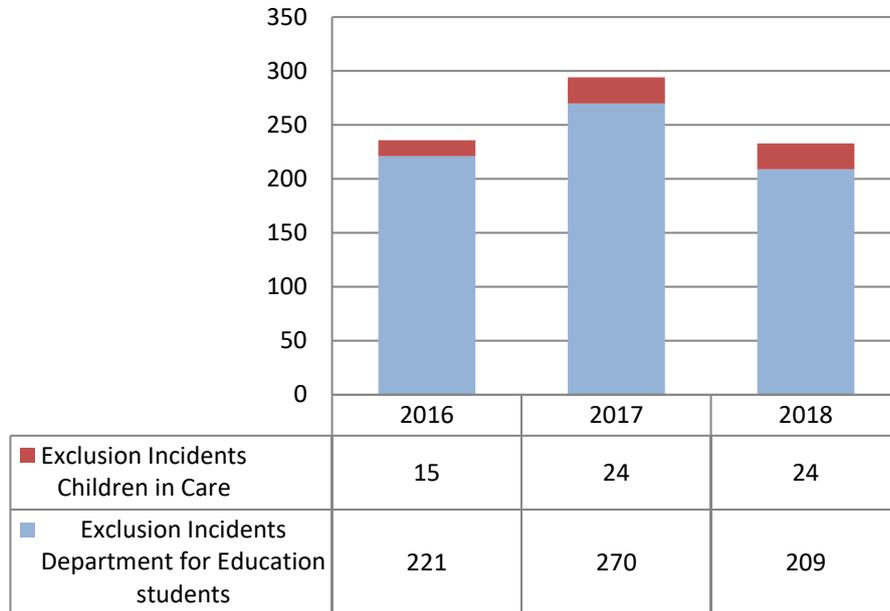
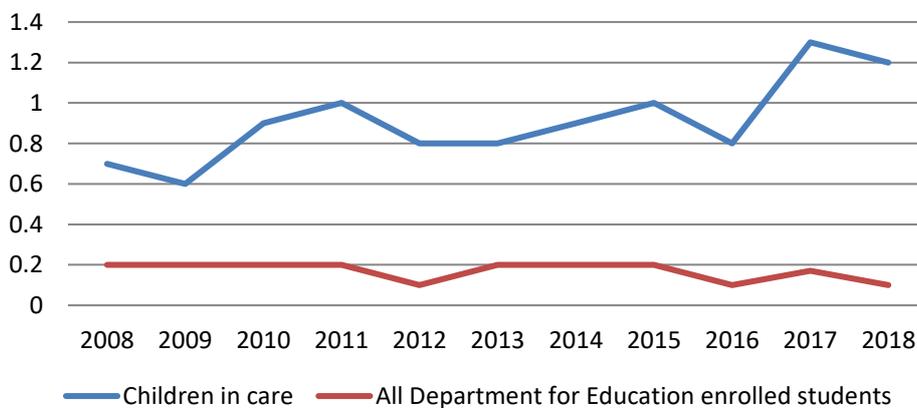


Chart 11 shows the rate of exclusions of children and young people in care compared with the government school student cohort. In 2018, the comparative exclusion rate of 1.2 to 0.1 per cent means that children in care are 12 times more likely to be excluded. In 2017, the comparison rate was 1.3 and 0.17 which meant that they were 7.6 times more likely to be excluded.

CHART 11 - Rate of exclusions, children in care compared with Department for Education school population, 2008-2018 (Term 2)



5 Absence and attendance

Children and young people in care enrolled in government schools in Semester 1 2018 demonstrated a higher rate of absence than the overall government school population (13 and 9.5 per cent respectively). A small but significant number of students in care attend school for periods of as little as one hour per week by negotiated arrangement. These are not recorded as absences.

Particular results worth noting are -

- The absence rate for students in care with a disability has increased from 12.3 per cent in 2017, to 14.5 per cent in 2018. In 2017, this was a *lower* absence rate than that reported for children with a disability in the broader government school population. However, in 2018, the absence rate for children in care is *higher* than those with a disability in the broader government school population (14.5 and 13.9 per cent respectively), meaning that students in care with a disability are *less* likely to be attending school than those who have a disability but who are not in care.
- The absence rate for Aboriginal children in care is 14.5 per cent, compared to 20.1 per cent for Aboriginal students not in care. This demonstrates that Aboriginal children in care are *more* likely to be attending school than Aboriginal students not in care.
- Conversely, students in care from non-English speaking backgrounds have an absence rate of 10.5 per cent, compared to that of students from non-English speaking backgrounds who are not in care, who have an absence rate of 7.1 per cent.
- The absence rate for children and young people in care is higher for secondary students (18.5 per cent) than for those in primary school (9.9 per cent).

It is worth noting that these rates have been relatively steady since GCYP commenced monitoring in 2008.

CHART 12 - Absence rates for children in care and all Department for Education students, Semester 1 2018

Cohort	Number children in care	Absence rate % children in care	State absence rate
Total	2,072	13.0%	9.5%
Males	1,005	14.3%	9.6%
Females	1,067	11.5%	9.3%
From non-English speaking backgrounds	44	10.5%	7.1%
Disability	628	14.5%	13.9%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	660	14.5%	20.1%
Country schools*	791	13.7%	10.8%
Metro schools*	1,281	12.5%	8.9%
Primary schools	1,339	9.9%	8.3%
Secondary schools	733	18.5%	11.7%

* Note: Figures are based on the location of the school at which the student is enrolled

Students in care from non-English speaking backgrounds

The chart below demonstrates the contrast between rates of absence for children and young people in care from non-English speaking backgrounds, all children and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and all government school students.

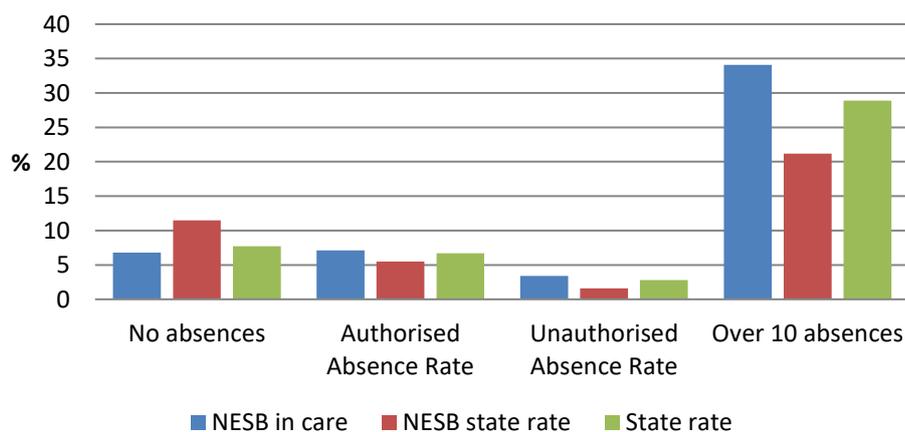
It is worth noting that there were 44 'NESB' students in care attending government schools during the reporting period, compared to 313 the previous year but the 'counting rules' have changed.

Counting rules for NESB children and young people in care have changed for 2018 data. Prior counting rules included -

- P1 – Children and young people born in a non-English speaking country,
- P2 – Children and young people with parents/caregivers born in a non-English speaking country,
- P3 - Children and young people who identify as coming from a non-English speaking background; and
- A – Aboriginal children and young people who speak an Aboriginal language.

These counting rules were inconsistent with how 'NESB' status was applied to the broader student cohort, which only included those in the P1 and P2 categories. Therefore 2018 data for NESB children and young people in care now only includes those students in the P1 and P2 categories.

CHART 13 - Absence rates for students in care attending Department for Education schools from a non-English speaking background, all students from a non-English speaking background attending Department for Education schools, and the state rate, Semester 1



6 Literacy and numeracy

National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing occurs each year for children and young people in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Data consistently demonstrates that children and young people in care who are in government schools achieve poorer outcomes on average in relation to performing at or above the National Minimum Standard.

It should be noted that the NAPLAN data used for comparison has been extracted from the National Report, which draws upon data from all South Australian schools, not just government schools. This means that, while attendance and performance data relating to children in care is derived from those attending government schools, it is being compared to similar data for all children in all schools (including government, Catholic and Independent). As such, the data sets are not directly comparable and should only be referred to as a guide for illustrative purposes.

The National Minimum Standard represents the 'agreed minimum acceptable standard of knowledge and skills without which a student will have difficulty making sufficient progress at school', with students not reaching this minimum standard 'likely to need focused intervention and additional support to help them achieve the skills they require to progress in schooling'.⁷

Chart 14 below demonstrates that if children and young people in care are to achieve their potential, they must continue to be a focus for such intervention.

This chart does not include data from students in care who are exempt. For reporting purposes, they are deemed to be below the national minimum standard. Exempt students are included in calculations of percentages of students below national minimum standard.⁸

⁷ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2018, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2018*, ACARA, Sydney p v. The full report can be found [here](#).
⁸ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2018, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2018*, ACARA, Sydney, p v. The full report can be found [here](#).

CHART 14 – Percentage of results at or above the National Minimum Standard for students in care attending government schools compared with all South Australian students, 2018⁹

2018	Reading		Writing		Numeracy	
	Children and Young People in Care	State	Children and Young People in Care	State	Children and Young People in Care	State
Year 3	79.4	91.6	76.6	91.7	87.4	94.4
Year 5	80.8	91.3	50.7	84.1	85.2	93.6
Year 7	85.6	92.5	69.2	87.7	93.0	94.6
Year 9	79.1	90.3	38.2	73.7	83.3	93.1

⁹ Excluding exempt students in children and young people in care data.

In 2018, the percentage of children and young people in care at or above the National Minimum Standards decreased for Years 3 and 5, and improved in years 7 and 9 when compared to the previous year. Results in 2018 generally show a decline when comparing across 2016 and 2017, except for numeracy results for Years 3, 5, and 7, which made improvements. Numeracy results for Year 9 in 2018 have declined compared to 2017 levels, but are slightly improved since 2016.

CHART 15a - Percentage of children in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Reading 2016 - 2018

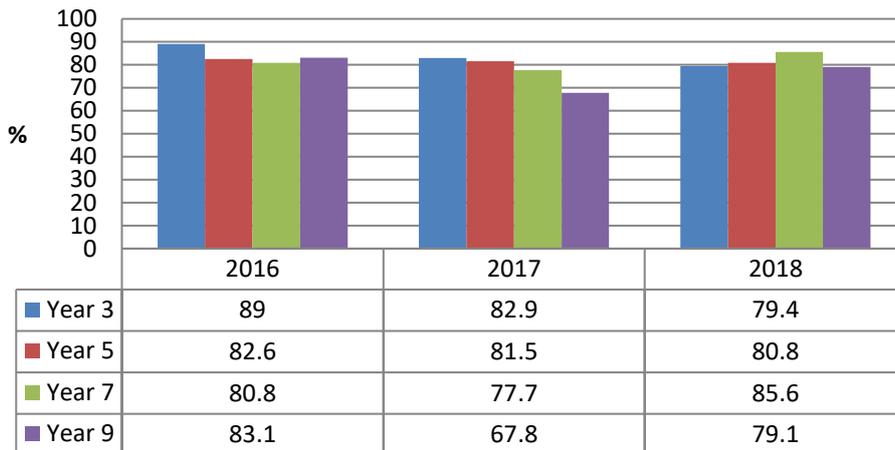
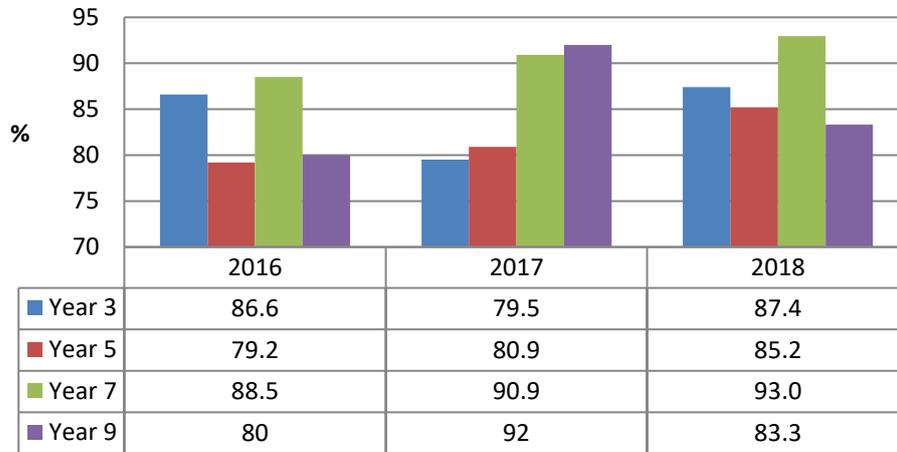


CHART 15b - Percentage of children in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Writing 2016 - 2018



CHART 15c - Percentage of children in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Numeracy 2016 - 2018



2018 participation and non-participation rates

Seven hundred and thirty seven (737) children and young people in care, enrolled in government schools were eligible to participate in NAPLAN testing in 2018. This number was comprised of 189 Year 3 students, 190 Year 5 students, 189 Year 7 students, and 169 Year 9 students. Of those eligible, the average number of students who participated was 135 Year 3 students, 143 Year 5 students, 129 Year 7 students, and 86 Year 9 students.

Children and young people in care continue to have very high non-participation rates. The NAPLAN National Report defines participation as follows -

Participation rates are calculated as assessed students as a percentage of the total number of students in the year level, as reported by the school. Assessed = present + exempt.¹⁰

We must note the caution sounded in the NAPLAN 'commentary on participation' publication in this context –

It is important to note, however, that the relationship between non-participation and achievement has not been established, so it is not possible to comment explicitly on the effect that differences in participation rates might have on achievement.¹¹

Acknowledging that participation rates are very low for children and young people in care across all categories, achievement levels for those who do participate consistently show performance rates below other government school students in all categories as demonstrated in Chart 14.

As exemption rates are so high in children and young people in care, the NAPLAN definition of 'participation' (assessed = present + exempt)¹² is not reflective of the true rates of participation for this cohort. As the numbers of children and young people in care attending government schools who are eligible to sit the NAPLAN test is so small, the numbers of exempted students represent a significant proportion.

¹⁰ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2018, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2018*, ACARA, Sydney, p v. The full report can be found [here](#).

¹¹ Ibid p 325.

¹² Ibid.

Chart 16 shows the number of children and young people in care in each year group who are eligible to participate in NAPLAN testing. It then shows the number of students who are absent, exempt, or withdrawn from testing, which then shows a final participation rate per year level and category. In order to reflect the true participation of children and young people in care, in NAPLAN testing, we have included exempted students for these purposes.

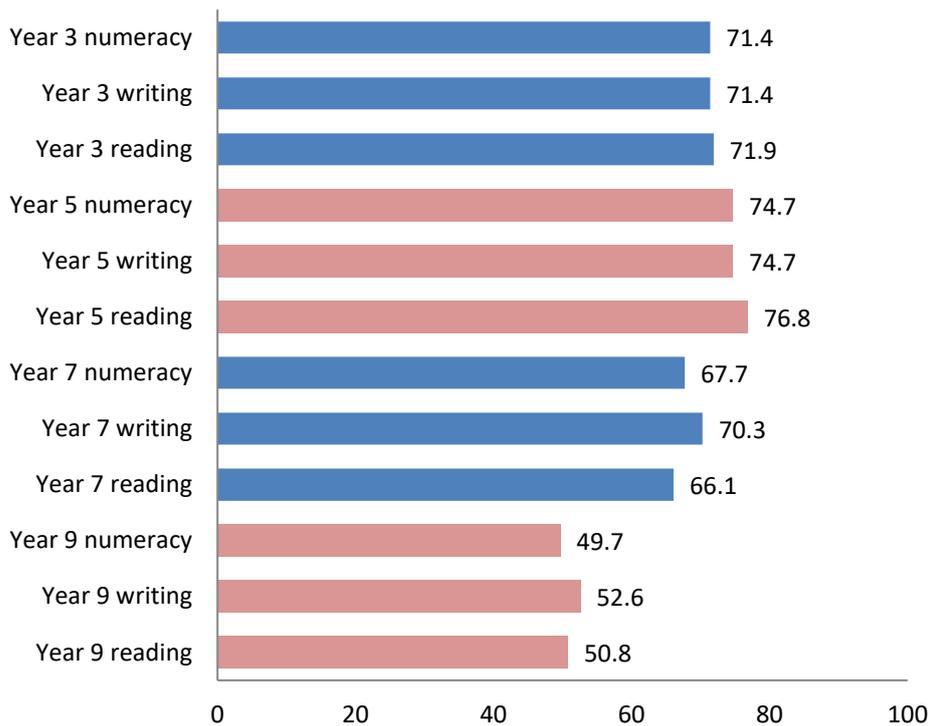
CHART 16 - NAPLAN participation rate of children in care in Department for Education schools by year level and discipline category, 2018

Year and category	Number of enrolled children in care	Number absent	Number exempt	Number withdrawn	Number actually tested	Participation rate (%) of children in care
Year 3 reading	189	9	18	26	136	71.9
Year 3 writing	189	8	19	25	135	71.4
Year 3 numeracy	189	11	18	25	135	71.4
Year 5 reading	190	7	23	14	146	76.8
Year 5 writing	190	11	24	13	142	74.7
Year 5 numeracy	190	10	23	15	142	74.7
Year 7 reading	189	17	22	25	125	66.1
Year 7 writing	189	12	22	22	133	70.3
Year 7 numeracy	189	16	22	23	128	67.7
Year 9 reading	169	34	32	17	86	50.8
Year 9 writing	169	31	32	17	89	52.6
Year 9 numeracy	169	35	32	18	84	49.7

Many students have valid reasons for not participating in the testing however the disparity between participation rates of children and young people in care, compared to the participation rates of the broader government school student cohort, is concerning and means that tracking NAPLAN performance for government school students in care is difficult. Further efforts must be made to ensure we have a better understanding of the reasons why these NAPLAN participation rates are so low.

Chart 17 demonstrates the percentage of eligible children and young people in care attending government schools who actually participated in NAPLAN testing. This demonstrates that we know very little about the proficiency of half of all Year 9 students, just over one-quarter of Years 3 and 5 students, and one-third of Year 7 students in care enrolled in government schools in 2018.

CHART 17 - Rate of participation in NAPLAN testing, for children in care in Department for Education schools, 2018



The three charts below demonstrate the disparity between participation rates of children and young people in care, and those of the broader South Australian student cohort.

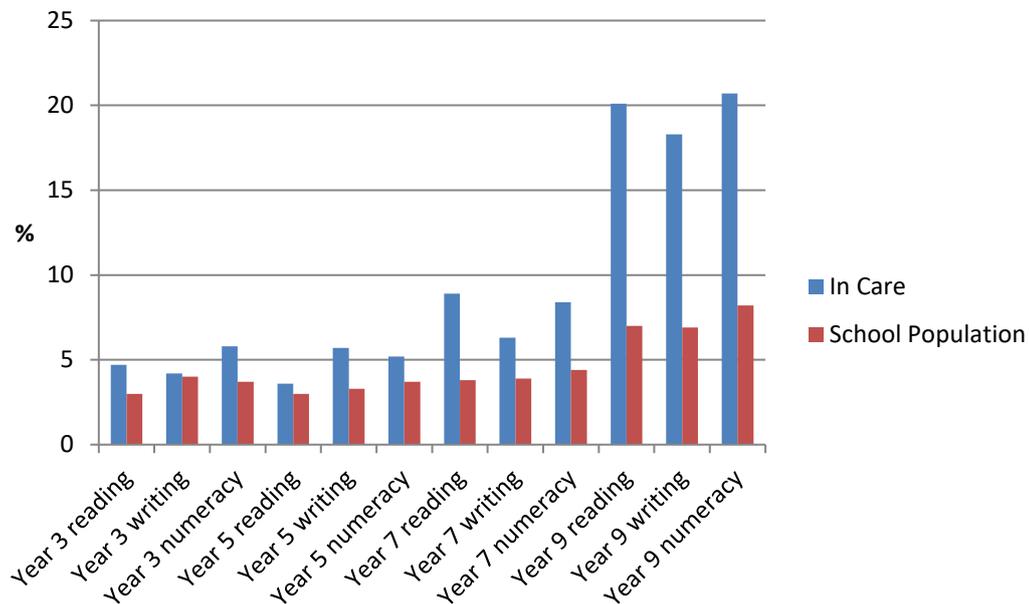
There are three non-participation categories counted by NAPLAN - absent, exempt and withdrawn.

Absent – Means that students were not present at school when the test was administered.¹³

Exempt – Includes students with a language background other than English, who arrived from overseas less than a year before the tests, and students with significant disabilities. Exempt students are included in the calculation of participation rates. Exempt students do not sit the tests. For reporting purposes, they are deemed to be below the national minimum standard. Exempt students are included in calculations of percentages of students below national minimum standard.¹⁴

Withdrawn - Students may be withdrawn from the testing program by their parent/carer. Withdrawals are intended to address issues such as religious beliefs and philosophical objections to testing.¹⁵

Chart 18a - Percentage of absences in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2018

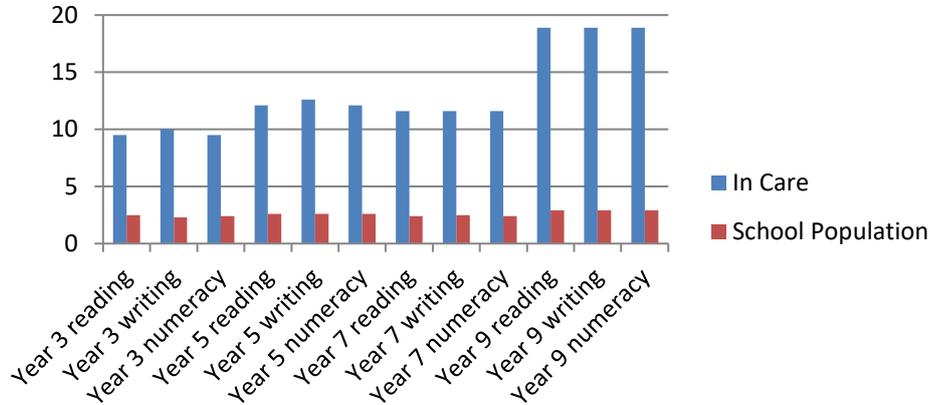


¹³ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2018, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2018*, ACARA, Sydney, p vii. The full report can be found [here](#).

¹⁴ Ibid.

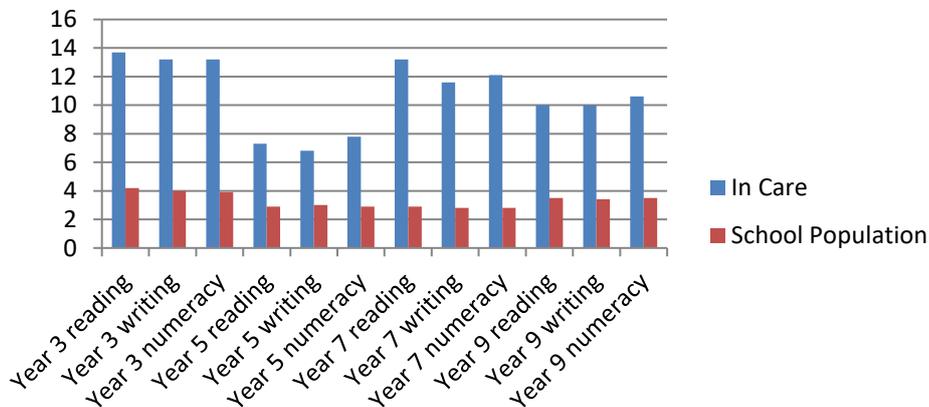
¹⁵ Ibid.

CHART 18b - Percentage of exemptions in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2018



Given the higher proportion of children and young people in care with a disability, compared to the broader government school population (30.3 per cent and 9.8 per cent), exemption rates of students in care would be understandably higher.

CHART 18c - Percentage of withdrawals in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2018



Withdrawal rates which are intended to allow students to not participate in NAPLAN testing due to religious or philosophical reasons accounts for a high proportion of non-participation for students in care. To obtain a NAPLAN withdrawal, a parent or caregiver must complete a form which must also be signed by the Principal. It is unclear why such high rates of students in care attending government schools have religious or philosophical reasons for not participating in NAPLAN testing. For Year 7 students in care, the withdrawal rate for reading is four and a half times higher than students not in care.