



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

2009-2019

June 2020

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.

Further Information

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1 Introduction

This is the seventh 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 Department for Education and covers the decade up to the end of the 2019 calendar year.

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 comparable information is available from the Independent or Catholic school systems, making the situation of children in care enrolled in those systems relatively opaque. Catholic Education South Australia is currently establishing protocols with the Department for Child Protection to share data for those in care attending Catholic schools. Catholic Education South Australia has indicated to the GCYP that this will then enable them to provide education data for future reports.

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 at 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 achieve, on average, 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?

Charts demonstrate the situation of children and young people in care in government schools in 2019 and over time.

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CHART 2 - Proportion of children and young people in care enrolled in Department for Education schools compared to the state average - selected demographic categories, Term 3, 2019

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CHART 15a – Percentage of results at or above the National Minimum Standard for students in care attending government schools compared with SA school population, 2019

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CHART 17 – Rate of participation in NAPLAN testing, percentage of children and young people in care (of those enrolled in years 3, 5, 7 and 9) in Department for Education schools, 2019

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2 Summary

In South Australia in 2019, 58.6 per cent of all students in care were enrolled in government schools. The other 41.4 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 2019 was 58.6 per cent, which is a decrease from 60.9 per cent in 2018.
- In 2019, 35.9 per cent of children and young people in care in government schools identified as Aboriginal, compared to Aboriginal students comprising 6.6 per cent of all government school 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 over eight and a half times, and those with complex social/emotional/behavioural needs are nine times higher than the overall government school student population.
- Children and young people in care enrolled in government schools are four times more likely to be suspended and eight 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 than the general government school population 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, and approximately one-quarter of Years 3, 5 and 7 students in care enrolled in government schools in 2019.
- 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 2019, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2019*, 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-

- supports available for those in care who have a disability and/or complex social/emotional/behaviour needs;
- monitoring hours of attendance at school so that part-day absences and reduced-hours arrangements are reported and reduced;
- the experience of Aboriginal and 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 and proficiency 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 the 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 2018-19, 299 individual children and young people were admitted to the AYTC (sometimes more than once, giving a total number of 608 separate admissions in that period). Of those 299 individuals, 19.3 per cent were female, 50.5 per cent identified as Aboriginal, and 31.1 per cent were under Guardianship orders at the time of admission. Most were aged between 13 and 17 years of age (some 87.2 per cent of the total), noting that 10 is the minimum age for admission to youth detention in South Australia.

Department for Human Services, Youth Justice Directorate's forthcoming *Disability Screening Assessment Project Report* found that from a sample of residents at the Adelaide Youth Training Centre, approximately 9 out of 10 were found to have disability-related needs.⁴

Children and young people detained at the Adelaide Youth Training Centre have reported that they can access good support for their learning at the YEC, with many stating that they had not engaged with school consistently whilst in the community. One young person told a member of the TCV Unit "If you're in here for a long time you get actual schooling in here. I'd like to learn to be a mechanic in here."

⁴ Department for Human Services (forthcoming 2020) *Disability Screening Assessment Project Report: Identification of Population Needs at the Adelaide Youth Training Centre (Kurlana Tapa)*. Adelaide, Australia: Youth Justice Assessment and Intervention Services.

3 Profile

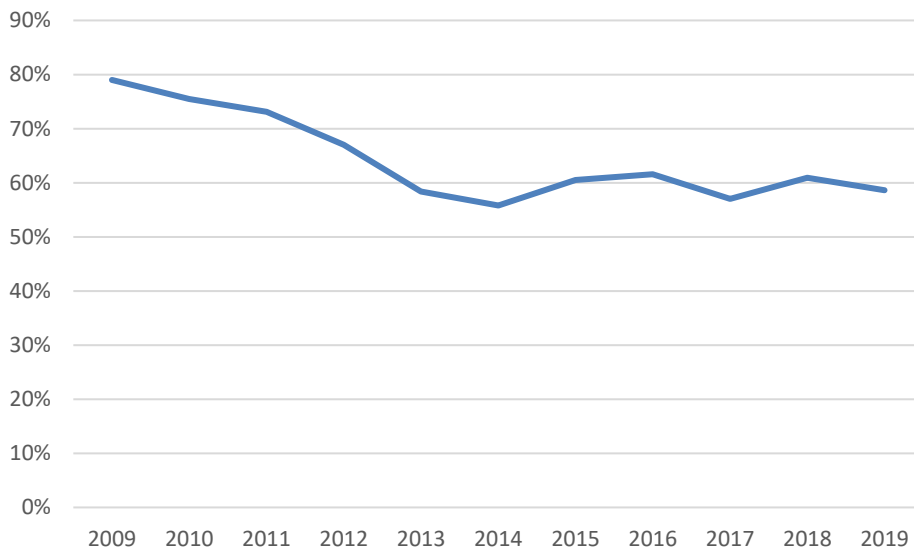
In Term 3 2019, there were 2,223 children and young people in care enrolled in government schools, an increase of 151 students from 2018 data.

Of the 2,223 students enrolled in government schools in 2019 –

- 1,083 were female (48.7 per cent) and 1,140 male (51.3 per cent);
- 1,418 were enrolled in primary school (63.8 per cent) and 805 were enrolled in secondary school (36.2 per cent); and
- 865 were enrolled in country schools (38.9 per cent) and 1,418 were enrolled in metropolitan schools (61.1 per cent).

Children and young people in care attending government schools represented 1.3 per cent of the government school student population in 2019. The proportion of all children in care who attended government schools in 2019 was 58.6 per cent, which is a decrease from 60.9 per cent in 2018. Chart 1 demonstrates the annual proportion of children in care attending government schools since 2009.

CHART 1 - Proportion of children and young people in care attending Department for Education schools, 2009 to 2019



The number of children and young people in care attending government schools in 2019 showed an annual decrease, with the 58.6 per cent proportion remaining lower than the highest rate of 79 per cent reported in 2009. It is important to note 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 2019.

CHART 2 - Proportion of children and young people in care enrolled in Department for Education schools compared to the state average - selected demographic categories, Term 3, 2019

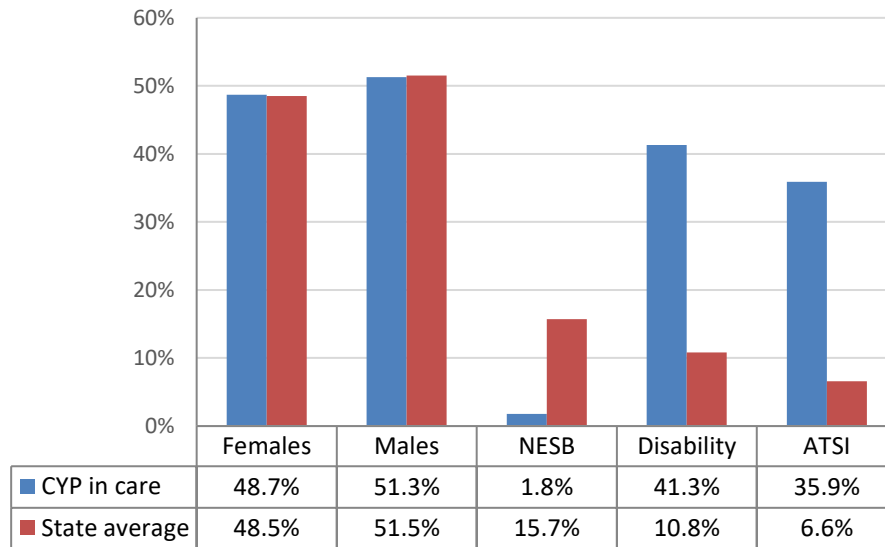
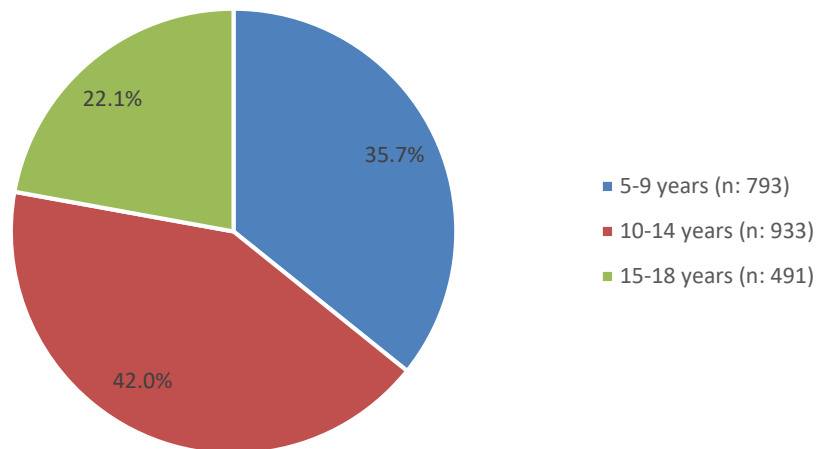


Chart 3 demonstrates age groupings of children and young people in care in Term 3 2019. The corresponding proportions for all government school students at the same time were 39.3 per cent aged 5-9 years, 37.6 per cent for 10-14 years, and 21.9 per cent for 15-18 years.

CHART 3 - Age groupings of children and young people in care in Department for Education schools, Term 3, 2019



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 2019, 35.9 per cent of children in care in government schools identified as Aboriginal, compared to the state average of 6.6 per cent of all students. The below chart demonstrates the trend and growing disparity that can be tracked from 2009.

CHART 4 - Proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in care compared with all Aboriginal students enrolled in Department for Education schools 2009 to 2019

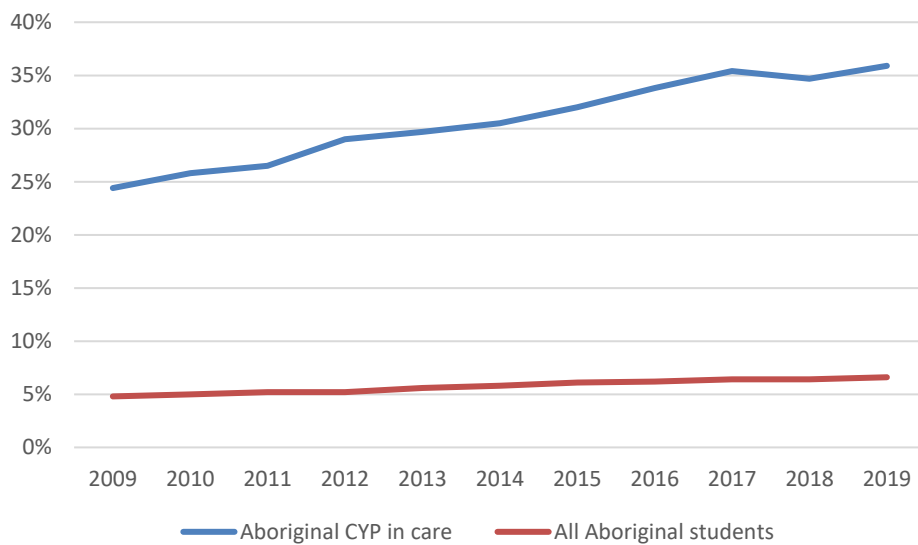
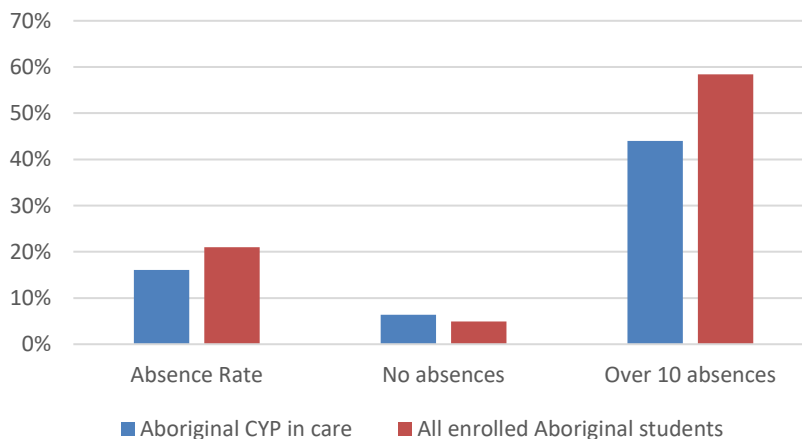


Chart 5 demonstrates lower rates of school absence for Aboriginal students in care compared to the overall population of Aboriginal students in government schools.

CHART 5 - Absence rate comparison, Aboriginal children and young people in care compared to Aboriginal children and young people enrolled at Department for Education schools, Semester 1 2019



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.

This year, the Department for Education has expanded its coverage on disability and has, for the first time, reported under the new heading of 'complex social/emotional/behaviour needs'.

The Inclusive Education Support Program's (IESP) funding model, which supports students with disabilities, was introduced in 2019. The Department for Education states that IESP eligibility criteria have been developed to align with national disability legislation and guidelines, focused on a child's needs rather than disability diagnosis or label. This approach recognises all disabilities and learning difficulties including mental health, trauma, complex behaviours and complex health care needs. As a result, children (and, in this case, students) with 'complex social/emotional/behaviour needs' are eligible.

The IESP replaced the previous disability support program. There are additional supports available for students, depending on individual needs, as well as supports for schools and preschools to build their capacity to engage and assist students with complex social/emotional/behaviour needs.

In Term 3 2019, 918 students in care attending government schools had an identified disability. This represents 41.3 per cent of children and young people in care attending government schools, compared to the state average of 11.0 per cent of all students. The new category of 'complex social/emotional/behaviour needs' has resulted in a significant increase in the number of those reported to have a disability compared to 2018 reporting.

CHART 6 - Proportion of children and young people in care with a disability compared with all students with a disability enrolled in Department for Education schools, 2009-2019

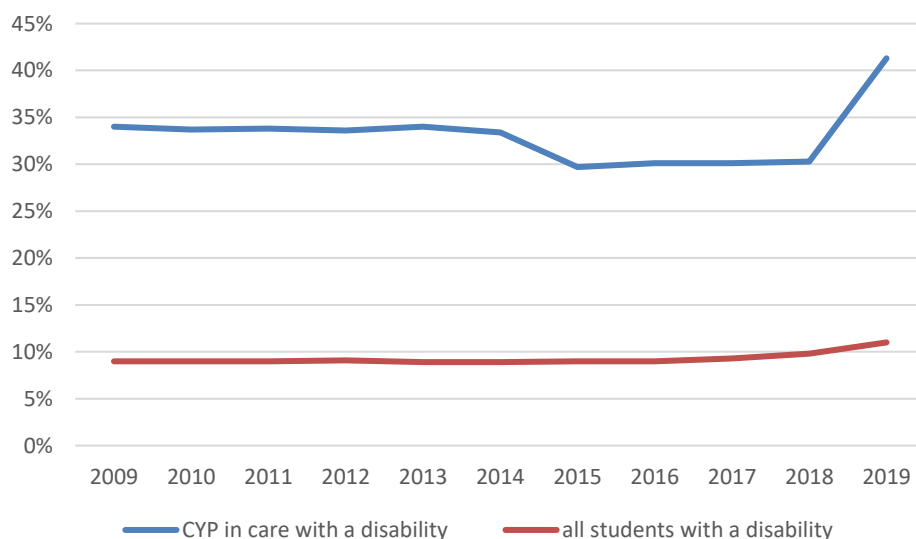


Chart 7 demonstrates the categories of primary disabilities of children and young people in care enrolled in government schools in 2019.⁵ The numbers are too small in some categories to compare those in care with state totals with much utility. The categories of speech and/or language, complex social/emotional/behaviour needs, and intellectual disability feature prominently for children and young people in care.

Examples are that –

- The proportion of children and young people in care who have complex social/emotional/behaviour needs are nine times the proportion of this group within the overall government school student population;
- the proportion of children and young people in care attending government schools in 2019 recorded as having a speech/language related disability is over three times that of this group within the overall government school student population; and
- the proportion of children and young people in care attending government schools in 2019 with an intellectual disability was almost seven times that of this group within the overall government school student population.

⁵ The disability data provided is listed by primary disability. It is recognised that children and young people may experience more than one disability and additional disabilities can be, and are, recorded. However, it is the primary disability that is included in this dataset.

CHART 7 - Primary recognised disability of children and young people in care enrolled in Department for Education schools in Term 3 2019

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	245	11.0%	3.4%
Complex social/emotional/behaviour needs	241	10.8%	1.2%
Intellectual disability	228	10.3%	1.5%
Autism Spectrum	122	5.5%	3.6%
Global development delay	49	2.2%	0.5%
Physical disability	15	0.7%	0.3%
Hearing	7	0.3%	0.3%
Communication (Early Intervention)	6	0.3%	0.1%
Vision	5	0.2%	0.1%
Total	918	41.3%	11.0%

4 Suspensions and exclusions

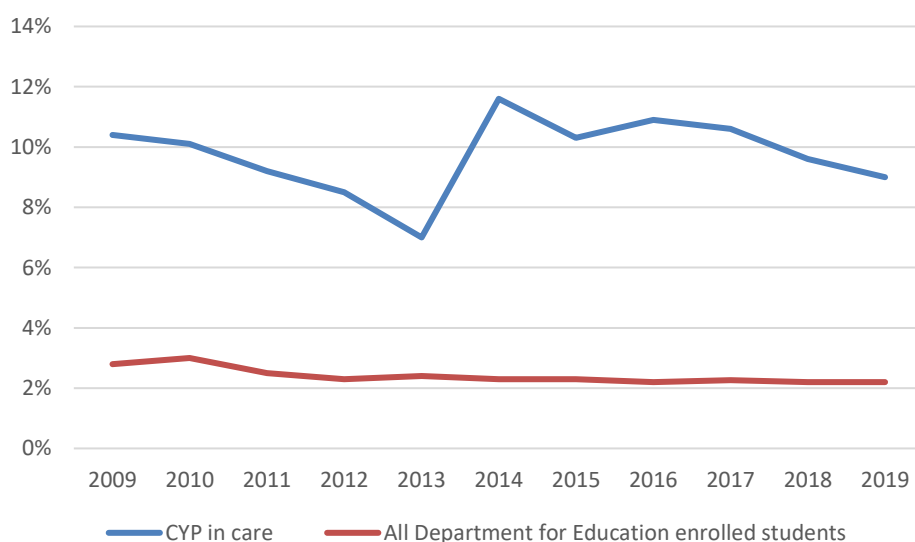
The education department defines suspensions and exclusions as follows -

- **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.⁶

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 9.0 per cent in 2019. 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.

CHART 8 - Rate of suspensions, children and young people in care compared with Department for Education school population, 2009-2019 (Term 2)



⁶ See: [Suspension and exclusion - Information for parents and caregivers](#)

During Term 2 2019, there were 307 suspensions of 201 individual children in care, compared to 4945 suspensions for 3733 individual government school students. Some students in both groups were suspended more than once. Chart 9 demonstrates the top three reasons suspensions occurred.

CHART 9 - Comparison of main reasons for suspension, students in care and all students, Department for Education schools, Term 2 2019

Reason for suspension	Children in care %	All students %
Violence – threatened or actual	41.0%	40.7%
Threatened safety or wellbeing	26.7%	23.5%
Threatened good order	23.1%	22.1%

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 2019, there was 17 exclusion incidents of children in care, compared to 212 for other government school students, giving a comparative rate of 0.8 to 0.1 per cent.

The following chart demonstrates the increase in numbers of exclusion incidents from Term 2 2016 to Term 2 2019, across both children and young people in care, and the broader government school population.

CHART 10 - Number of exclusion incidents, Department for Education students compared with children and young people in care, 2016 - 2019 (Term 2)

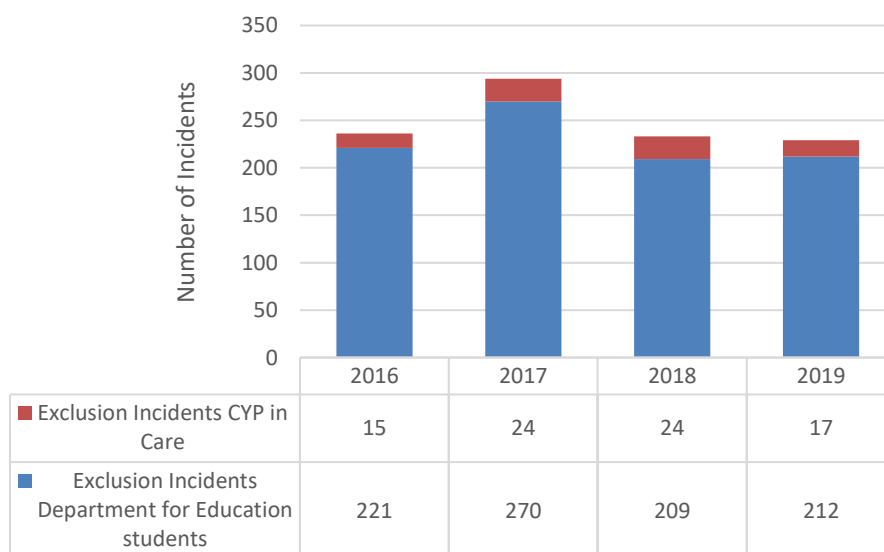
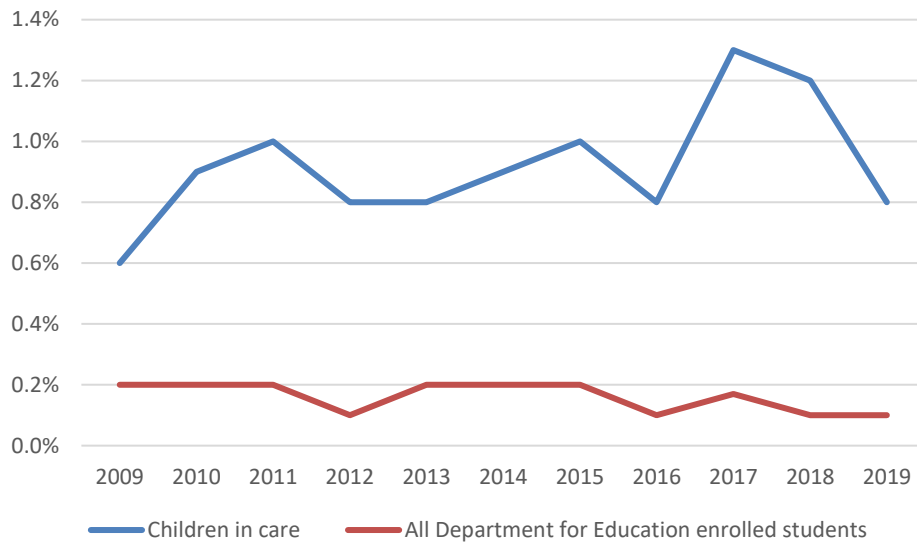


Chart 11 shows the rate of exclusions of children and young people in care compared with the government school student cohort. In 2019, the comparative exclusion rate of 0.8 to 0.1 per cent means that children in care were 8 times more likely to be excluded. In 2018, the comparison rate was 1.2 and 0.1 which meant that they were 12 times more likely to be excluded.

CHART 11 - Rate of exclusions, children and young people in care compared with Department for Education school population, 2009-2019 (Term 2)



5 Absence and attendance

Children and young people in care enrolled in government schools in Semester 1 2019 demonstrated a higher rate of absence than the overall government school population (13.8 and 9.8 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 children in care with a disability is almost the same as those with a disability in the broader government school population (14.8 and 14.5 per cent respectively).
- The absence rate for Aboriginal children in care is 16.1 per cent, compared to 21.0 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 9.7 per cent, compared to that of students from non-English speaking backgrounds who are not in care, who have an absence rate of 7.5 per cent. This demonstrates that students in care from non-English speaking backgrounds are *less* likely to be attending school than students from non-English speaking backgrounds who are not in care.
- The absence rate for children and young people in care is higher for secondary students (19.4 per cent) than for those in primary school (10.6 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 and young people in care and all Department for Education students, Semester 1 2019

Cohort	Number children in care	Absence rate % children in care	State absence rate
Males	1,083	15.2%	10.0%
Females	1,140	12.3%	9.7%
From non-English speaking backgrounds	39	9.7%	7.5%
Disability	918	14.8%	14.5%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	797	16.1%	21.0%
Country schools*	865	14.4%	11.3%
Metro schools*	1,358	13.4%	9.2%
Primary schools	1,418	10.6%	8.7%
Secondary schools	805	19.4%	12.0%
Total	2,223	13.8%	9.8%

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

Students in care from non-English speaking backgrounds

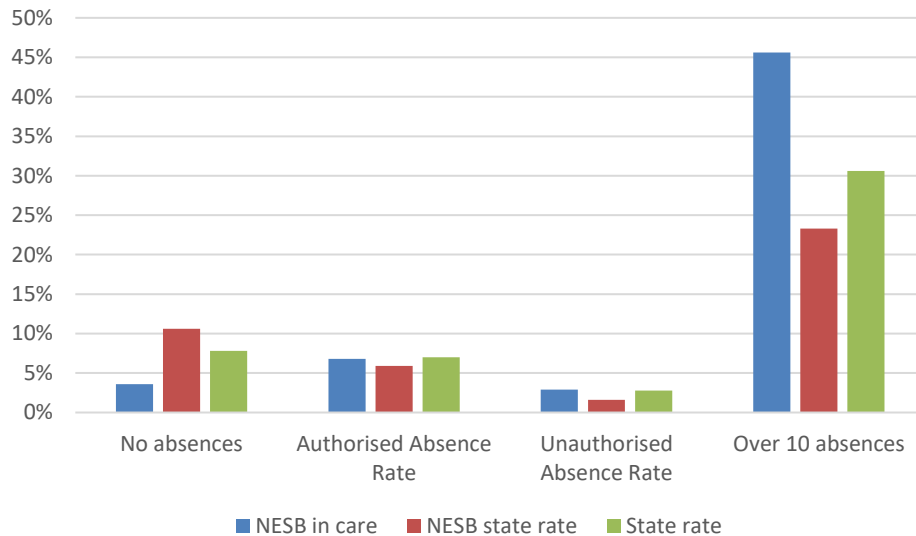
The chart below demonstrates the contrast between rates of absences in government schools for three populations: children and young people in care from non-English speaking backgrounds, all children and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and the whole student population.

It shows that those in care have one-third of the rate of 'no absences' when compared to other students in government schools from non-English speaking backgrounds, and less than half the rate of 'no absences' of the broader school cohort.

Those in care from non-English speaking backgrounds have similar rates of 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' absences when compared to the state rate and to those other students in government schools from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The largest disparity occurs when recording those students with over 10 absences. Almost half of students in care from non-English speaking backgrounds had over 10 absences.

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 2019



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 (see Chart 15a).

The National Minimum Standard (NMS) 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

As a result of the NAPLAN tests, students gain a standardised score which is assigned to a proficiency band in each of the tested areas. The proficiency bands range from 1 at the lowest to 10 at the highest.

Chart 14a below illustrates the bands for each NAPLAN year level.

CHART 14a - National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy National Assessment Scale

Band 10				
Band 9				Above NMS
Band 8			Above NMS	
Band 7		Above NMS		
Band 6	Above NMS			At NMS
Band 5			At NMS	Below NMS
Band 4			At NMS	Below NMS
Band 3			Below NMS	
Band 2	At NMS			
Band 1	Below NMS			
	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9

⁷ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2019, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2019*, ACARA, Sydney p v. The full report can be found [here](#).

The NAPLAN data draws attention to the consistently lower test results achieved by those in care attending government schools, when compared to the entire government school cohort.

For the purpose of this analysis, calculations of percentage across the proficiency bands include those students who were exempted from the test. Small numbers of children and young people in care leads to high variability in percentage figures which should be interpreted with caution.

CHART 14b - Proportion of Year 3 students in care attending government schools who were in the bottom three proficiency bands (1-3) compared with government school students, 2019

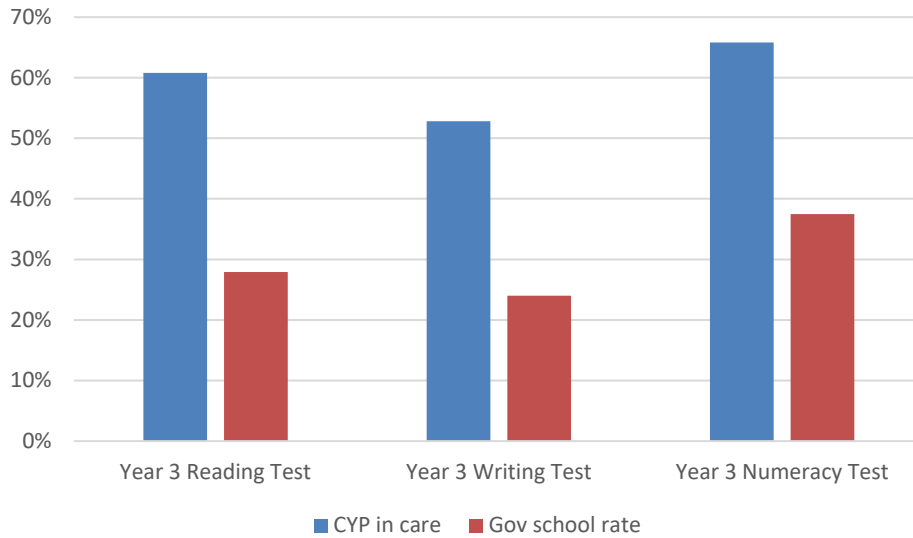


CHART 14c - Proportion of Year 5 students in care attending government schools who were in the bottom three proficiency bands (3-5) compared with government school students, 2019

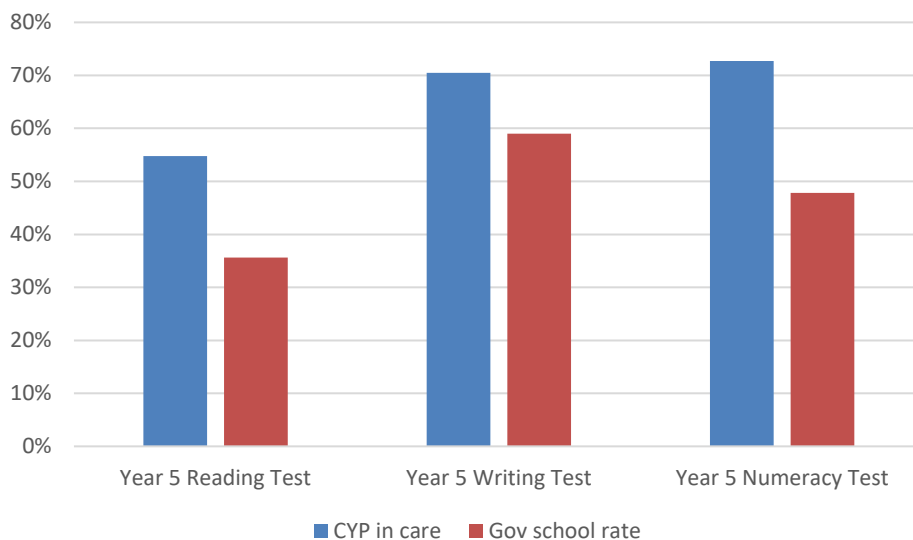


CHART 14e - Proportion of Year 7 students in care attending government schools who were in the bottom three proficiency bands (4-6) compared with government school students, 2019

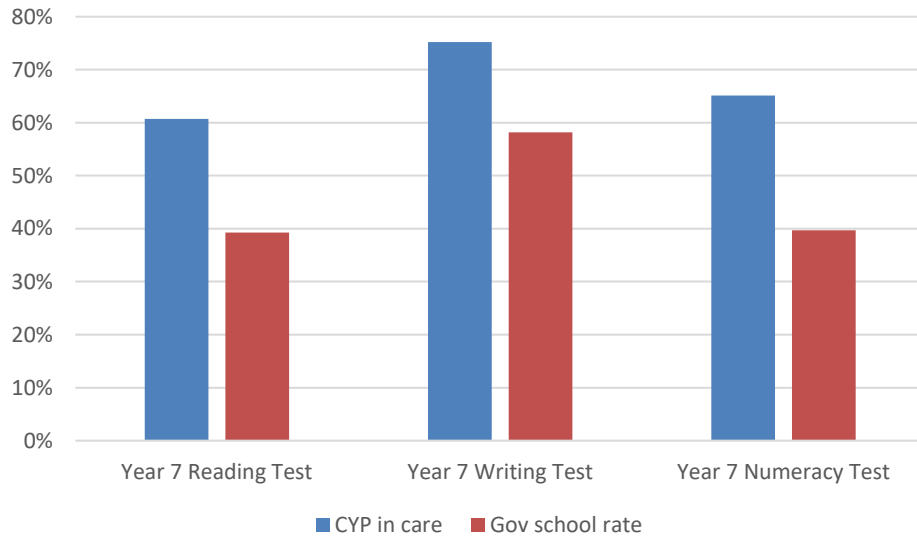


CHART 14f - Proportion of Year 9 students in care attending government schools who were in the bottom three proficiency bands (5-7) compared with government school students, 2019

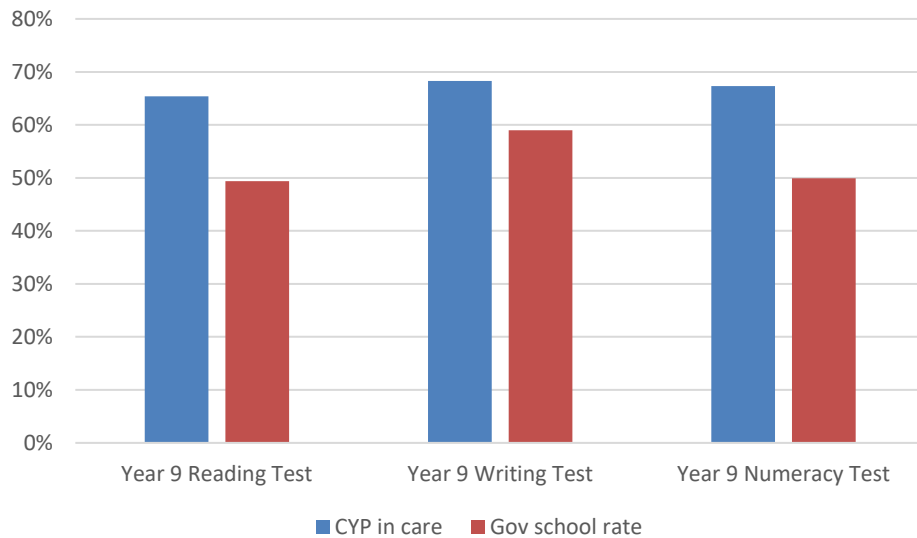


Chart 15a below compares the results of children and young people in care in government schools with the overall SA student population in relation to the achievement of national minimum standards for reading, writing and numeracy. It demonstrates that if children and young people in care are to achieve their potential, significant and sustained intervention is required.

Note that this chart does not include data from students in care who are exempt. For ACARA 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

CHART 15a – Percentage of results at or above the National Minimum Standard for students in care attending government schools compared with SA school population, 2019⁹

2019	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	87.9	94.0	88.1	95.0	82.4	93.8
Year 5	83.6	92.4	63.2	88.8	77.0	92.9
Year 7	82.9	93.2	72.5	89.0	77.8	93.1
Year 9	65.9	89.0	53.8	81.6	93.7	94.9

⁸Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2019, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2019*, ACARA, Sydney p v. The full report can be found [here](#).

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

Charts 15b – 15d demonstrate the percentages of children and young people in care (in government schools) at or above the National Minimum Standard across each year level in reading, writing, and numeracy from 2016 – 2019.

CHART 15b - Percentage of children and young people in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Reading 2016 - 2019

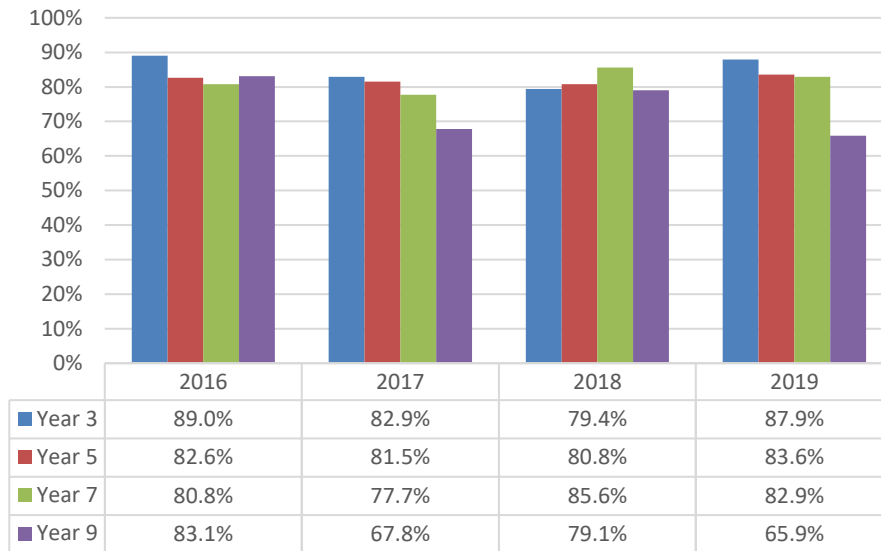


CHART 15c - Percentage of children and young people in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Writing 2016 - 2019

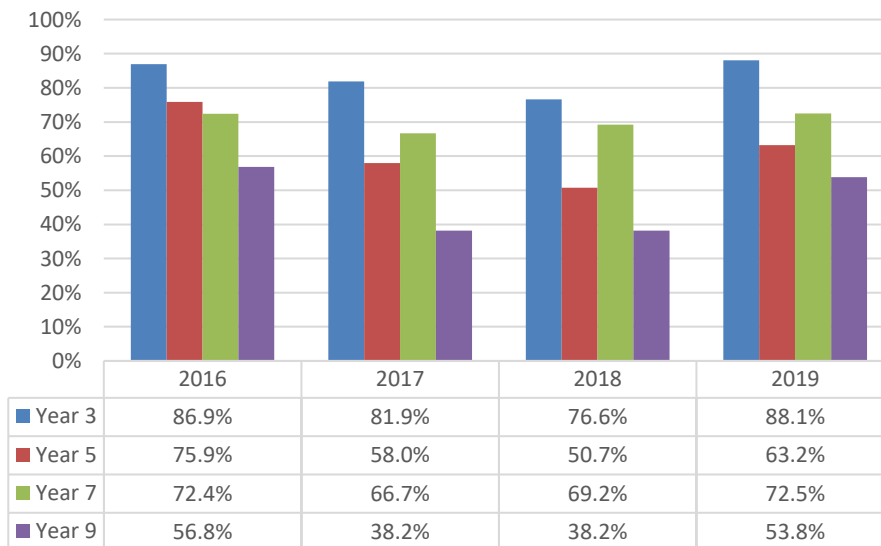
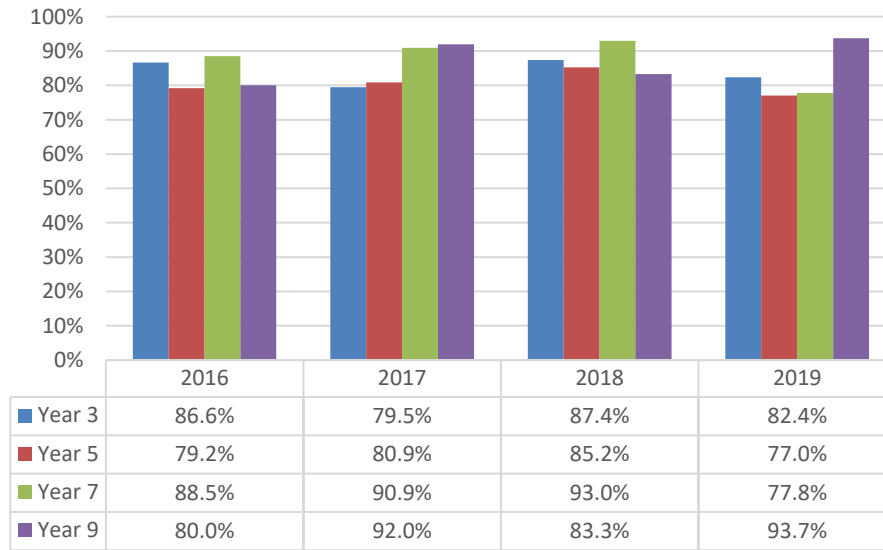


CHART 15d - Percentage of children and young people in care at or above the National Minimum Standards, Numeracy 2016 – 2019



2019 participation and non-participation rates

Seven hundred and nine (709) children and young people in care were eligible for NAPLAN testing (i.e. enrolled in year levels 3, 5, 7 and 9) in government schools in 2019. This number comprised 161 Year 3 students, 220 Year 5 students, 171 Year 7 students, and 157 Year 9 students. Of those, a concerning low proportion actually sat the tests, compared to the overall SA student population.

Children and young people in care continue to have very high non-participation rates in NAPLAN testing, across all categories. 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

In this context, we must note the caution sounded in the NAPLAN 'commentary on participation' publication –

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

For those children and young people who do participate, however, achievement levels consistently show performance rates below other government school students in all categories as demonstrated in Charts 14b-f and Chart 15a, above.

And for those who do not participate, we simply do not know their level of proficiency and what assistance they may need.

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.¹²

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.¹³

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.¹⁴

¹⁰ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2019, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2019*, ACARA, Sydney p v. The full report can be found [here](#).

¹¹ Ibid p 325.

¹² Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2019, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2019*, ACARA, Sydney p vii. The full report can be found [here](#).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

As exemption rates are so high in children and young people in care, the NAPLAN definition of 'participation' (assessed = present + exempt)¹⁵ 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 enrolled in year levels that attract NAPLAN testing is so small, the numbers of exempted students represent a significant proportion.

It should be noted that, for the purposes of this report, the NAPLAN data used to compare participation and non-participation rates has been extracted from the National Report, which draws upon data from all South Australian schools, not just SA government schools. This means that, while attendance data relating to children and young people in care is derived from those attending government schools, it is being compared to similar data for all children and young people 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.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Chart 16 shows the number of children and young people in care in each year group who were enrolled in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in government schools in 2019. It then shows the number of students who were absent, exempt, or withdrawn from testing, which then indicates a final participation rate per year level and category. Unlike the ACARA practice, in order to reflect the *true* participation of children and young people in care in NAPLAN testing, we have not included exempted students in the calculation of students who participated, for these purposes.

CHART 16 - NAPLAN participation rate of children and young people in care in Department for Education schools by year level and discipline category, 2019

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	161	3	25	9	124	77.0%
Year 3 writing	161	10	22	11	118	73.2%
Year 3 numeracy	161	6	24	6	125	77.6%
Year 5 reading	220	8	30	17	165	75.0%
Year 5 writing	220	10	30	17	163	74.0%
Year 5 numeracy	220	11	29	15	165	75.0%
Year 7 reading	171	8	26	10	127	74.2%
Year 7 writing	171	4	26	10	131	76.6%
Year 7 numeracy	171	9	26	10	126	73.6%
Year 9 reading	157	37	25	13	82	52.2%
Year 9 writing	157	41	24	12	80	50.9%
Year 9 numeracy	157	40	25	13	79	50.3%

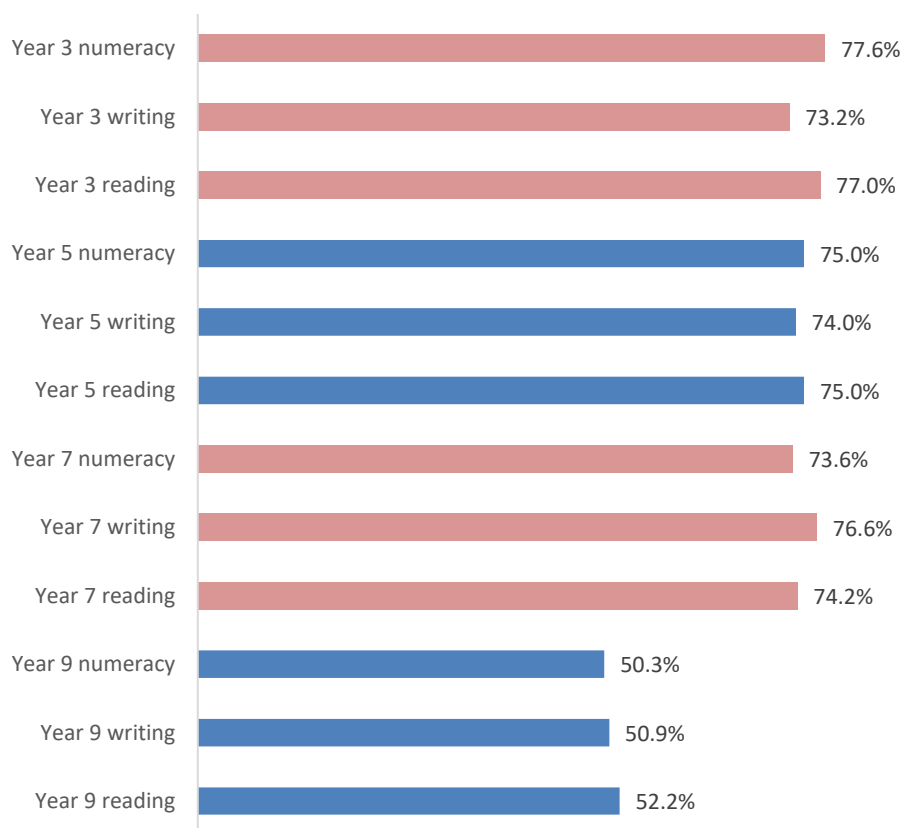
Many students have valid reasons for not participating in the testing however the disparity between participation rates of children and young people in care, compared to the participation rates of the broader government school student cohort, is concerning and means that tracking NAPLAN performance for students in care who attend government school is difficult.

This is illustrated by considering the year 9 numeracy test results for 2019, as shown in Chart 15a. This is a point at which the outcome for young people in care and those in the general SA school population is closest, with only a 1.2 per cent difference in achievement. Of the young people in care who sat the test, 93.7 per cent achieved at or above the National Minimum Standard for numeracy, compared to 94.9 per cent of the SA school population. However, this result must be read in light of the fact that only 50.3 per cent of children in care enrolled in government schools at year 9 level actually participated in this test. What do we know of the other 49.7 per cent and their proficiency in numeracy? Among other possible scenarios, this raises the concern that only those young people who are reasonably proficient at numeracy actually participated in the test.

Much more concerted efforts are required to understand why these NAPLAN participation rates are so low.

Chart 17 demonstrates the percentage of 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, and approximately one-quarter of Years 3, 5, and 7 students in care enrolled in government schools in 2019.

CHART 17 – Rate of participation in NAPLAN testing, percentage of children and young people in care (of those enrolled in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9) in Department for Education schools, 2019



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.

Chart 18a - Percentage of absences in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2019

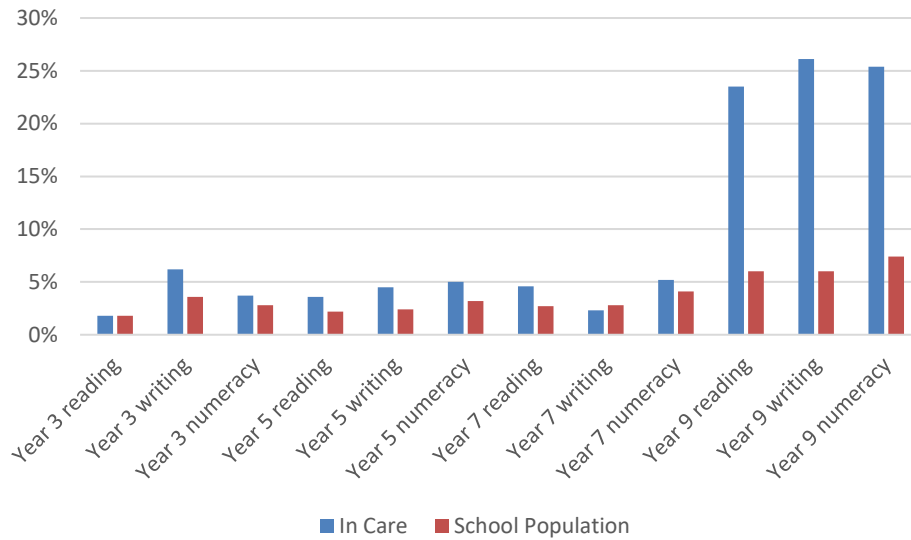
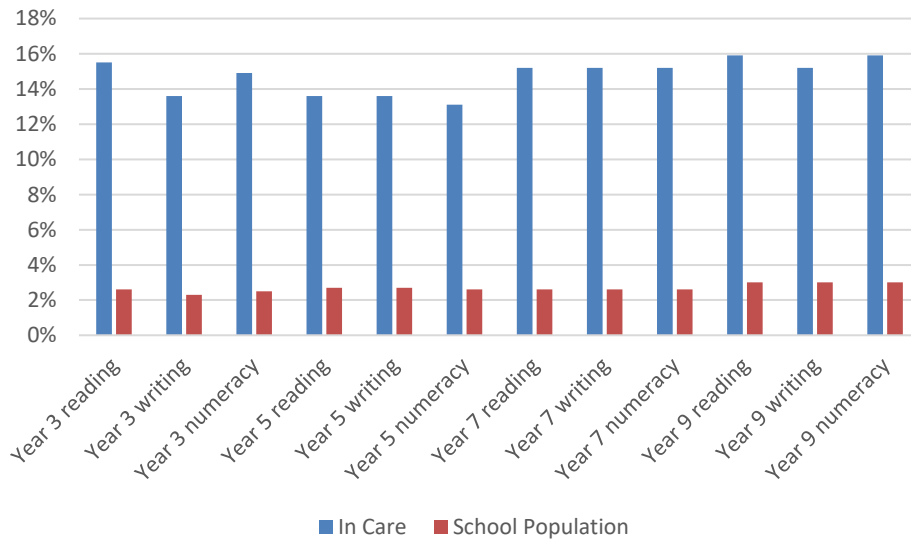
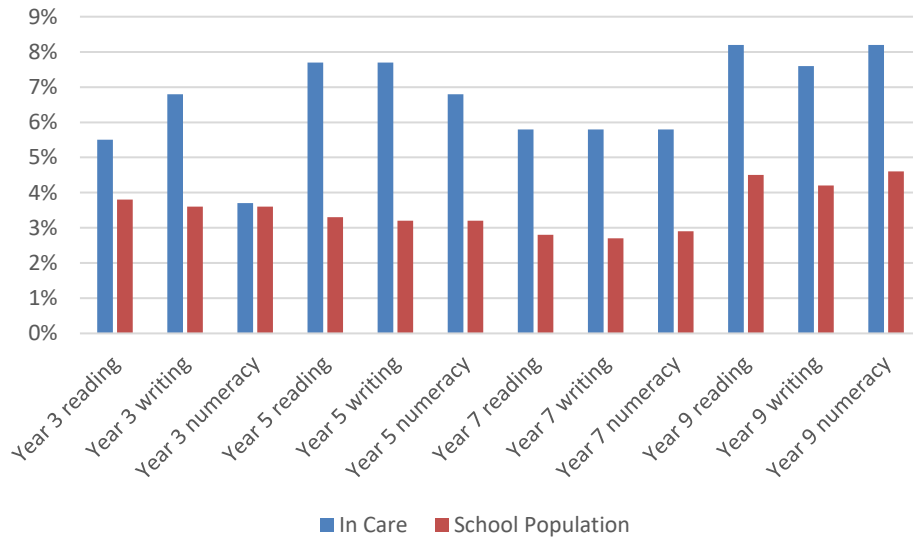


CHART 18b - Percentage of exemptions in NAPLAN testing, students in care enrolled at Department for Education schools, compared with SA school population, 2019



Given the higher proportion of children and young people in care with a disability, compared to the broader government school population (41.3 per cent and 11 per cent respectively), 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, 2019



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. This phenomenon requires consideration and better understanding of the justification for the withdrawals for this particular cohort of children and young people.