



2023 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

East Preston Islamic College

Contents

East Preston Islamic College Annual Report 2023	3
Chairman's Introduction	4
Our Philosophy	5
Mission Statement	5
Vision	5
College Overview	6
Student Body Characteristics	6
Australian Democratic Principles	6
Declaration of a Faith Based School	7
Principal's Report	8
Acting Head of Secondary Report	10
Head of Primary Report	11
Head of Pastoral Care & Wellbeing Report	12
Naplan Results	16
Senior Student Outcomes	20
Staff	21
Audited Financial Report	22
Income & Expenditure Statement	22
Recurrent Income	23
Recurrent Expenditure	23

East Preston Islamic College Annual Report 2023

Contact Details

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ABN	27 116 376 642
Registered School Number	021972

Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Guy Cassarchis, attest that East Preston Islamic College is compliant with:

- East Preston Islamic College being a not-for-profit school.
- All the requirements for the minimum standards and other requirements for the registration of schools as specified in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic), except where the school has been granted an exemption from any of these requirements by the VRQA.
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2019 school year under the Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth) and the Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth).
- The Child Safe Standards prescribed in Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards, Managing Risk of Child Abuse in School.

Chairman's Introduction

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful, the Mercy-giving. Praise is to Allah whom we ask for help, protection, and forgiveness. We seek the protection of Allah from the sins of ourselves and our deeds. No one can misguide whom He guides and whom He does not guide will never find a guide

Chairman's Annual Report Introduction 2023

Dear Esteemed Members of the East Preston Islamic College Community, as we reflect on the past year, I am pleased to present this annual report detailing our collective achievements, challenges, and the strategic direction of our college. The resilience, dedication and unity displayed by our students, staff and community have been the cornerstone of our progress.

Achievements and Highlights

Academic Excellence: Our students have continued to excel academically, achieving improvements in VCE exams, NAPLAN tests, the Australian Mathematics Competition and Quran and Hifz competitions. These accomplishments, among others, reflect the hard work of our dedicated faculty and the determination of our students.

Community Engagement: We strengthened our ties with the broader community through various initiatives, including meet-and-greet days, parent information sessions, award ceremonies and partnerships with local organisations. These efforts have reinforced our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment, enhancing our collaboration with families and community members.

Extracurricular Success: Our students participated in and won accolades in various extracurricular activities, from sports tournaments to arts festivals, demonstrating their well-rounded development and diverse talents.

Challenges and Responses

2023 was a hectic year, marked by significant challenges, including transitions in management. Despite these and other difficulties, we responded with resilience and strategic adaptation, ensuring continuity and support for our students and staff.

In response to community feedback, we initiated several operational improvements, particularly in financial management and communication. These changes have been instrumental in enhancing our efficiency and responsiveness.

Strategic Direction and Future Goals

Looking ahead, our focus will be on:

Enhancing Educational Quality: We aim to expand our curriculum, integrate new teaching technologies and continue the professional development of our educators to meet the evolving needs of our students. We will also implement new teaching methodologies and offer additional support programs to further enhance academic outcomes.

Strengthening Community Relations: Building stronger ties with our parents and the broader community through enhanced communication and engagement initiatives is a priority. We will host more community events and create additional channels for parent and community involvement.

Sustainability and Growth: We are exploring sustainable practices and expansion opportunities to accommodate our growing student population. This includes developments such as new classrooms and a state-of-the-art secondary building to ensure that our infrastructure and resources keep pace with our aspirations.

Conclusion

In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff, supportive parents, and inspiring students. Together, we navigated a challenging year, and our focus is on the positive strides we are making as we move into 2024. We are committed to improving learning outcomes and strengthening our community. With continued collaboration and commitment, East Preston Islamic College will thrive and build a brighter future.



Edin Dzelalagic
Chairman of the Board

On behalf of the College Board of East Preston Islamic College, it is with great pleasure to introduce to you the College's Annual Report for 2023.



Our Philosophy

East Preston Islamic College (EPIC) has a low fee structure so that it is possible for all interested Muslim families to attend. The College's aims for our students are to achieve excellence in academic performance and to embrace Islamic values so that our graduates will exemplify the College motto: 'Success Here and Hereafter'

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a positive learning environment where staff and students work cooperatively to achieve their best, developing a commitment to continuous learning. The core values of the school are Islamic, learning, achievement, respect, commitment, and fairness.

Vision

The vision of the College is to ensure excellence, in both academic and Islamic development, with continuous progress towards producing a new generation of Muslims who are committed, compassionate and hardworking citizens, and who are ready to contribute positively and productively to the Australian society.



College Overview

East Preston Islamic College is a non-for-profit, independent, co educational school following the Victorian Early Years Learning & Development Framework for our Early Learning Centre and the Victorian Curriculum for Foundation to Year 12. EPIC operates in an Islamic cultural and religious tradition, under the direction of the EPIC School Board. Our staff and students are expected to follow the principles and values of the Islamic faith.

In our documents, in all practice by our students and teachers, in working with the EPIC Board and the community, in all teaching and learning programs, the vision of the college will sit at the centre and there is an expectation that all work aligns with the college vision, and this is how we enact our philosophy.

East Preston Islamic College was established in 1998 as an independent, Islamic school for students from Foundation to Year 12. The Board of Directors who founded the College, built a school where young Muslims could be inspired by the teachings of the Qur'an and follow their academic and cultural interests, believe in their potential, and become lifelong learners.

The College motto, 'Success Here and Hereafter' challenges all members of the EPIC community to search for Truth through prayer and a commitment to study and gain a strong sense of what is Halal and Haram.

Students are encouraged to engage in critical reflection on themselves and on the world as well as developing a love of learning.



Student Body Characteristics

We have 891 students (74 in the E.L.C. 501 in Primary and 316 in Secondary) ranging from Kindergarten to Year 12 with diverse backgrounds who have 24 different languages spoken at home. Many students arrive in our school from overseas without functional English.

Australian Democratic Principles

East Preston Islamic College is committed to the principles and practice of Australian democracy, including a commitment to:

- elected Government.
- the rule of law.
- equal rights for all before the law.
- freedom of religion.
- freedom of speech and association.
- the values of openness and tolerance

Declaration of a Faith Based School

Based on our beliefs, values and traditions, faith – based Schools/Colleges declare and affirm the following:

1. We are a proud part of the Australian educational system and committed to teaching according to the guidelines of government curriculum standards and shared Australian values.
2. We teach the children in our schools to be proud- Australians, model citizens and to participate positively in building a prosperous, harmonious, and safe society in Australia.
3. We teach the children in our schools to respect the rights of others and to understand the different backgrounds and religions of Australia's multicultural society.
4. We teach our children about the rights of their neighbours and the respect, care and protection of people and property.
5. We are committed to perpetuating the integrity of our traditions in teaching the value of life and the dignity of all people.
6. We are committed to teach the pursuit of peace and promotion of understanding.
7. We stand against those who preach violence and hatred.
8. We are committed to participate fully in our democratic system.
9. We believe in mutual respect, co-operation, tolerance, and dialogue.
10. We respect diversity and promote multiculturalism.
11. We welcome cooperation with the wider community.



Principal's Report

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful, the Mercy-giving. Praise is to Allah whom we ask for help, protection, and forgiveness. We seek the protection of Allah from the sins of ourselves and our deeds. No one can misguide whom He guides and whom He does not guide will never find a guide.

The Annual Report celebrates East Preston Islamic College's achievements in the 2023 reporting period and pays tribute to our students, staff, parents and the community who has supported through this academic year. The future of East Preston Islamic College appears positive as we continue to embrace our journey of 'continuous improvement.' We live in a time of unprecedented change, an increasingly complex and varied society, constant development of research and technology and the continued difficulty of attaining equality of opportunity. These are all factors which will continue to significantly shape educational goals.

For educational institutions, particularly schools, there are several consequences. The community is reacting to changed circumstances by expecting more of schooling. There is a growing appreciation of the fact that schools have a responsibility to address the needs of the full range of students. If our College is to be genuine, then it cannot take a neutral position in society. We are committed to both the Islamic view of the world and an education based on academic intentionality with pastoral attentiveness, maintaining values that are positive and liberating.



In considering these challenges, questions that call for answers are:

- How can modern day schooling be of more benefit to all our students?
- What can the College do to prepare students for a world constantly changing in unpredictable ways?
- Where does our College, an independent co-educational faith based Islamic community day school, situate itself amongst these challenges?

More than ever, there is a need to articulate and reaffirm the partnership and connection between our parents and educators. You the parents and we the College are both working towards the same goal: to help your child grow to full maturity. What is needed on both fronts – both home and college – is openness, honesty, goodwill, common sense and as much honest feedback, and dialogue as possible.

As a community, we have adjusted to a changing educational landscape and worked collaboratively to provide a positive and supportive learning experience for our students. East Preston Islamic College should be proud of our collective ability in rebuilding a connection and maintaining a sense of belonging within our Islamic community. Communication has improved, with greater clarity in many cases, between staff, students, and parents. From a teaching and learning perspective, our teachers have been able to pivot and adapt to new circumstances. It has allowed the College to move forward with the fundamentals and deliver an improved education that meets the expectations of most of our families. In addition, we are

far more adaptable in making decisions and creating change compared to many other schools.

The aim of East Preston Islamic College is to be a great educational institution with a positive and identifiable character. The achievement of this aim requires a lively sense of commitment from all members of our College community – students, staff, and parents. Our staff continue to support and mentor our students through the challenges that both college and life brings them. Their focus on learning ensures the College maintains its attention on academic intentionality with pastoral attentiveness, while being proactive in developing a culture of continuous improvement to ensure we mature as an All-Through educational environment.

The College Board maintains its commitment to drive good governance and leadership. Just as the College has experienced a recent change, so too has our Board. Finally, to the student body itself, thank you for your dynamism, your respect for each other, your cooperation and sense of community. During a number of significant changes throughout this year, you demonstrated resilience beyond your years and worked collaboratively with your teachers to ensure a continual learning culture was maintained.

In particular, our Year 12 students led themselves and the College exceptionally well during this difficult year. We are enormously proud of your commitment to learning and your positive approach. By way of conclusion, I would like to thank the East Preston Islamic College Board for their generous support for our endeavours throughout 2023. I gratefully also acknowledge the support and the generosity of so many of our parents who immediately accepted me into the College community as the new College Principal.



Guy Cassarchis
Principal



Acting Head of Secondary Report

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful, the Mercy-giving. Praise is to Allah whom we ask for help, protection, and forgiveness. We seek the protection of Allah from the sins of ourselves and our deeds. No one can misguide whom He guides and whom He does not guide will never find a guide.

Despite the unique challenges we faced in 2023, our school community has shown incredible resilience and unity. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of our teachers, students, and parents, we ensured that our school continued to thrive. I am excited to share with you some of the key achievements and activities.

In terms of behaviour support and student engagement, we implemented effective strategies to encourage and reinforce positive behaviour among students, creating a supportive and respectful learning environment. Additionally, we established awards to recognise high achievers and students demonstrating outstanding work ethics, celebrating their dedication and achievements.

We also expanded extra-curricular opportunities for our students. Our students participated in various inter-school sports events, and we organised a staff-student soccer competition to promote teamwork and school spirit. During lunchtimes, we offered a range of engaging activities to enrich student experiences and foster social interaction, including EPIC's "No Bull" Lunchtime Program, providing a safe and fun space for students. Notably, we organised a successful Quran recitation competition during Ramadan and conducted educational activities related to Hajj, enhancing students' understanding of these significant events.

Student-led initiatives were a highlight of the year. We held inclusive Iftar nights, fostering community spirit and cultural understanding among our students. Our students also led social justice initiatives, such as Islamic Dress Day, donation drives for Gaza, Syria, and flood relief in Pakistan, and Kaffiyah/Hijab Day to raise awareness and show support for Gaza. Additionally, our Year 11 students participated in the "R U OK?" Ambassador Leadership Program, refining their leadership skills and making a lasting impact on our school community.

Our focus on student wellbeing was strengthened through several initiatives. We collaborated with HIMILO Community to establish a strong support system for our students, helping them build resilience. We partnered with Preston Police Station to conduct presentations on the dangers and prevention of cyberbullying, educating students from Year 7 to Year 12. The wellbeing team also conducted workshops on the risks associated with vaping. Moreover, nearly 15 youth workers shared life lessons and personal stories with Year 8 and Year 9 students as part of the NoBull Empowering Students - "I Can and I Will" Project, promoting self-worth among our young learners.

To support our students' diverse needs, we provided dedicated support through our school counsellor and welfare coordinator, addressing their emotional and welfare needs. Our speech pathology services assisted students with communication disorders, enhancing their learning experiences.

Academically, we maintained high teaching quality by providing comprehensive support for Casual Relief Teachers. We successfully administered NAPLAN tests and conducted VCE exams for our Year 12 students, helping them achieve their academic goals. We also completed the General Achievement Test for Unit 3 and 4 students and organised a memorable graduation ceremony for our Year 12 students, celebrating their accomplishments. End-of-year exams and reports were managed smoothly.

In conclusion, despite the hurdles, our school community has emerged stronger and more united. We are proud of the progress and achievements made and look forward to building on this foundation in the coming year. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our students' success.



Azzam Rafei
Acting Head of Secondary School

Head of Primary Report

In 2023, East Preston Islamic College had an extremely challenging year where there were many changes throughout the year with classes and teachers. The students, teachers and community showed their resilience during this time and were able to ensure that the learning and teaching continued.

EPIC focused on the development of literacy and numeracy during 2023 with two staff members developing these areas with staff. The literacy and numeracy coordinators assisted in developing the curriculum for each year level and went into classrooms to assist teachers in delivering the curriculum to the students. We only had a literacy coordinator for half a year and the numeracy coordinator for the whole year. We have seen an improvement in our numeracy skills throughout the primary sector of the school.



Throughout the year all year levels have been involved with many incursions and excursions so that the students can develop a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught within the classroom. We had Backflips to Bullying educate students on the effects of bullying. The Primary Leaders gained an opportunity to attend the Convention and Exhibition building to be a part of leadership conference which the students gained a lot from. The students at EPIC really enjoy participating in Sporting events. This year they have participated in athletics day, District Sports, Islamic Cups, swimming and hoop time. The Year 6 boys came runners up in the Winter District Sports in soccer. We have held many successful events throughout the year such as Pyjama Day, Character Parade, the Yarning

Conference, 100 Days of School and Fundraisers.

Allowing students to connect to their culture as well as their religion is very important at EPIC. During first term the students began fasting due to Ramadan which ended on 21st April. During this time the students decorated their classrooms for Eid. Then around 90 students participated in the annual Quran Competition. The students use Harmony Day as another day to showcase their cultural clothing and the teachers provide opportunities for them to explore different cultures during this time. The students were involved in a Hajj simulation where the students dressed in their Hajj clothes and participated in activities relating to Hajj.

During fourth term we had two successful camps. There were 78 Year 5 & 6 students that went to Allambee Camp from 30th October to 1st November. This was the largest camp that the primary has ever catered for and it was very successful. The Year 3 & 4 camp had 32 students attend for an overnight sleepover and Campaspe Downs. The students were engaged in many activities at both camps.

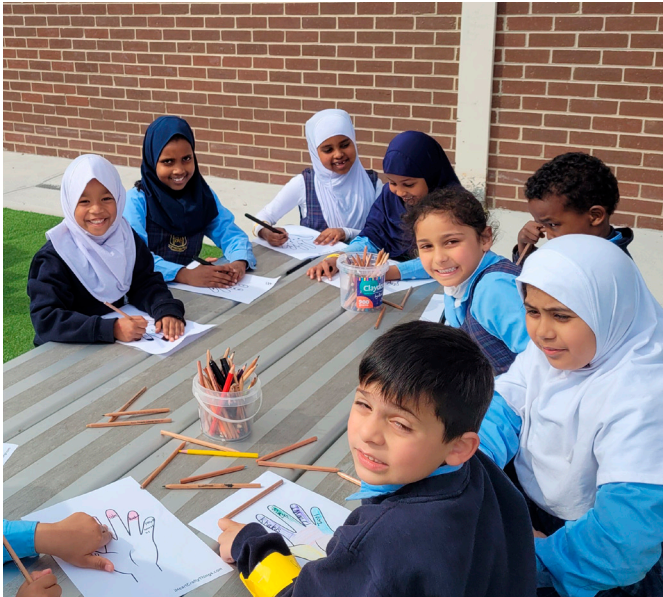
At EPIC we hold different ceremonies throughout the year to acknowledge the successes and achievements of our students. We acknowledge students' achievements at School Assemblies, Award Ceremonies and Graduations.

The wellbeing of students has become a major focus at EPIC. The school nurse program which screens all Foundation students in sight and hearing happened during term 1. We have the dental program which parents can choose to send their children to. Our school has a speech therapist who is able to assist students with the development of speech. Finally, we have counsellors who are able to assist students with emotional issues.



Coryn Bretag
Head of Primary School

Head of Pastoral Care & Wellbeing Report



Wellbeing Clinical AIP Report – 2023 Overview

The clinical counselling team at East Preston Islamic College (EPIC) demonstrated their resilience and adaptability in 2023, playing a crucial role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students. The team successfully managed 46 students handed over by the previous acting Principal, providing vital counselling services during a particularly challenging period. The team's innovative approach included the development of referral processes, policies, case management systems and programs, all aimed at enhancing students' social, emotional and psychological needs.

Team Composition in 2023

- **Full-Time Counsellor:** One senior counsellor who leads the clinical team.
- **Part-Time Counsellor:** Assists the senior counsellor in case management and counselling.
- **Counselling Placement Students:** Senior Counsellor supervises three Masters of Counselling students from Victoria University and 2 social work students from Federation University contributing to the counselling services and support programs at EPIC.

Records, Storage, Referral, Counselling and Case Management Structure

To ensure the delivery of high-quality counselling services and maintain consistency in the support provided to students, EPIC's clinical counselling team devised a comprehensive set of processes and procedures. These guidelines outline the steps in managing referrals, conducting counselling sessions, and evaluating student progress. All confidential counselling notes, information, and parental and external agencies are to be stored on COMPASS Level 3, ensuring confidentiality and privacy. The clinicians also update brief information of students on case management trackers for internal use to triage and case management within the clinical team and supervised by the senior counsellor.

Referral Process

1. Referral Sources

- **Teachers:** Classroom teachers identify students who may benefit from counselling and refer them to the clinical team.
- **Self-Referral:** Students can self-refer by approaching the counselling team directly or through a designated self-referral form.
- **Parents/Guardians:** Parents or guardians can refer their children by contacting the school counsellor.
- **Peers:** Students can refer their peers by notifying a teacher or the counselling team.

2. Initial Assessment

- **Referral Form Completion:** Detailed information about the student's needs is collected through a referral form.
- **Initial Meeting:** The counsellor meets with the student to conduct a preliminary assessment and understand their concerns.
- **Consent:** Obtain consent from parents or guardians if the student is a minor.

Counselling Sessions

1. Scheduling and Frequency

- Initial Appointment: Schedule the first counselling session within a week of receiving the referral.
- Regular Sessions: Determine the frequency of sessions based on the student's needs, typically from weekly to bi-weekly.

2. Session Structure

- Confidentiality Agreement: Explain confidentiality policies and limits to the student at the beginning of the first session.
- Goal Setting: Collaborate with the student to set clear, achievable goals for the counselling process.
- Therapeutic Interventions: Utilize appropriate therapeutic techniques and interventions tailored to the student's needs.
- Progress Monitoring: Regularly review the student's progress towards their goals and adjust the counselling plan as needed.
- All clinicians are required to create a Wellbeing Profile for students they have been working with for more than eight sessions. These profiles provide classroom teachers with insights into therapeutic interventions and support provided to their students. Additionally, they equip teachers with strategies to continue this support in the classroom environment.



Collaboration and Support

1. Team Collaboration

- Case Management Meetings: Regular meetings between the senior counsellor, part-time counsellor, and counselling placement students to discuss cases and share insights.
- Supervision: Senior counsellor provides supervision and guidance to part-time counsellors and placement students.

2. External Partnerships

- Community Organisations: Collaborate with organizations like NoBull and Himilio to provide additional support and resources.
- Parental Involvement: Engage with parents or guardians to keep them informed and involved in the counselling process, as appropriate.

Programs and Workshops

Overview

EPIC's clinical counselling team has developed a variety of programs and workshops aimed at supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students. These initiatives are designed to address a range of issues including social skills, resilience building, bullying prevention, and mental health management.

Whole College Mental Health Initiative - R U OK? Day Celebration 2023

EPIC celebrated R U OK? Day with a series of activities and events aimed at raising awareness about mental health, encouraging conversations, and fostering a supportive community. The day was dedicated to promoting the importance of checking in on each other and offering support to those struggling.

Community Partnership Workshops

EPIC collaborated with several community organizations to enhance the support provided to students:

1. **NoBull:**

- Conducted leadership programs and the “I Can & I Will” project, empowering students with leadership skills and positive self-belief.

2. **Himilio:**

- Conducted the Support Advocacy Group (SAG) workshops for Year 8 students, focusing on providing additional support and advocacy for this age group.

By offering a diverse range of clinical programs and workshops, EPIC’s clinical counselling team ensures that students receive comprehensive support tailored to their individual needs, fostering a healthy and supportive school environment.

In 2023, EPIC’s clinical counselling team achieved most of its outlined outcomes, significantly impacting student wellbeing and mental health. The successful implementation of programs and workshops, effective case management, strong community partnerships, and positive feedback from the school community underscore the team’s accomplishments. Moving forward, the team aims to build on this success by expanding services and continually improving the support provided to students.

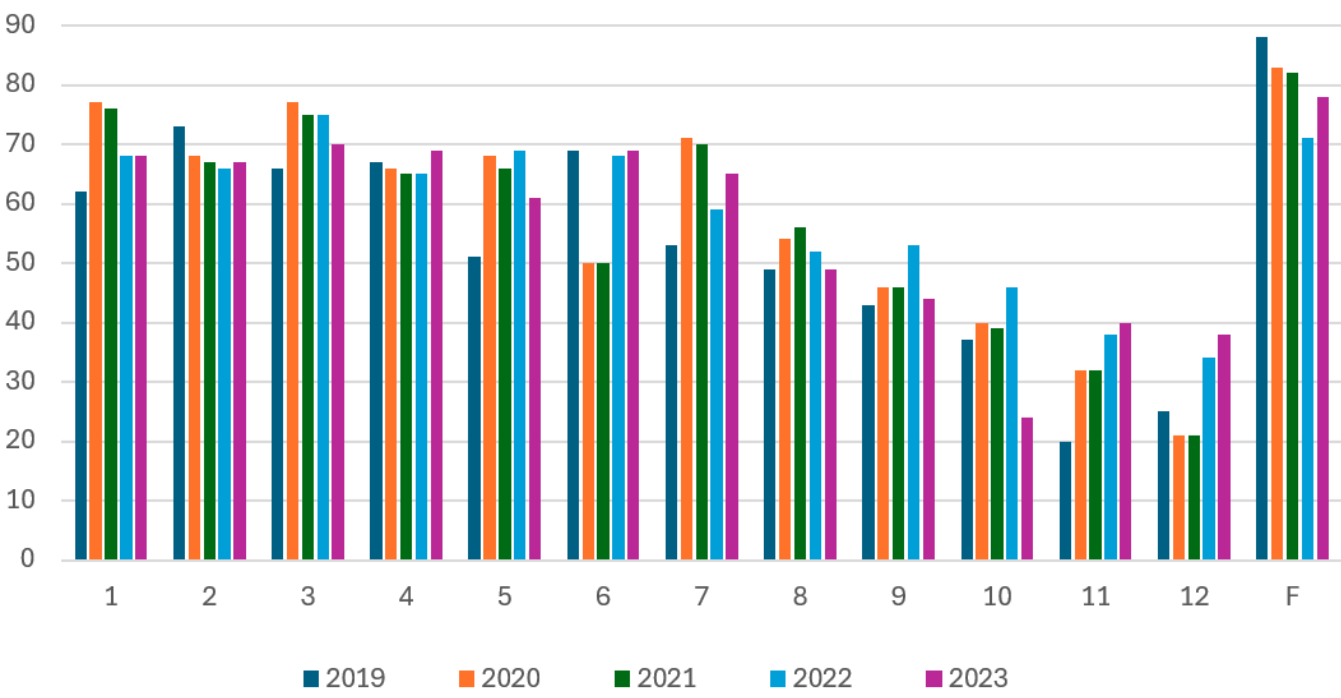


Natasha De Cruze
Head of Pastoral Care & Wellbeing



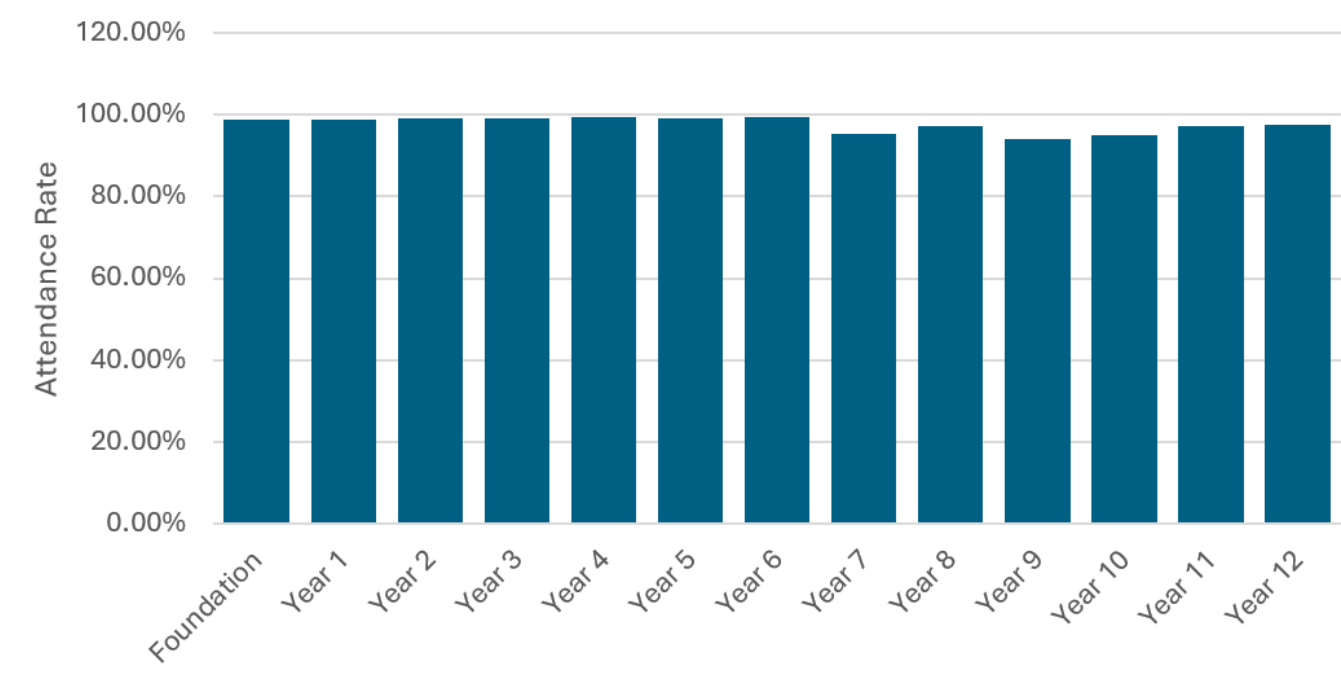
Student Enrolment

Student Enrolment 2023



Student Attendance

'Attendance Rate' by 'Year Level'

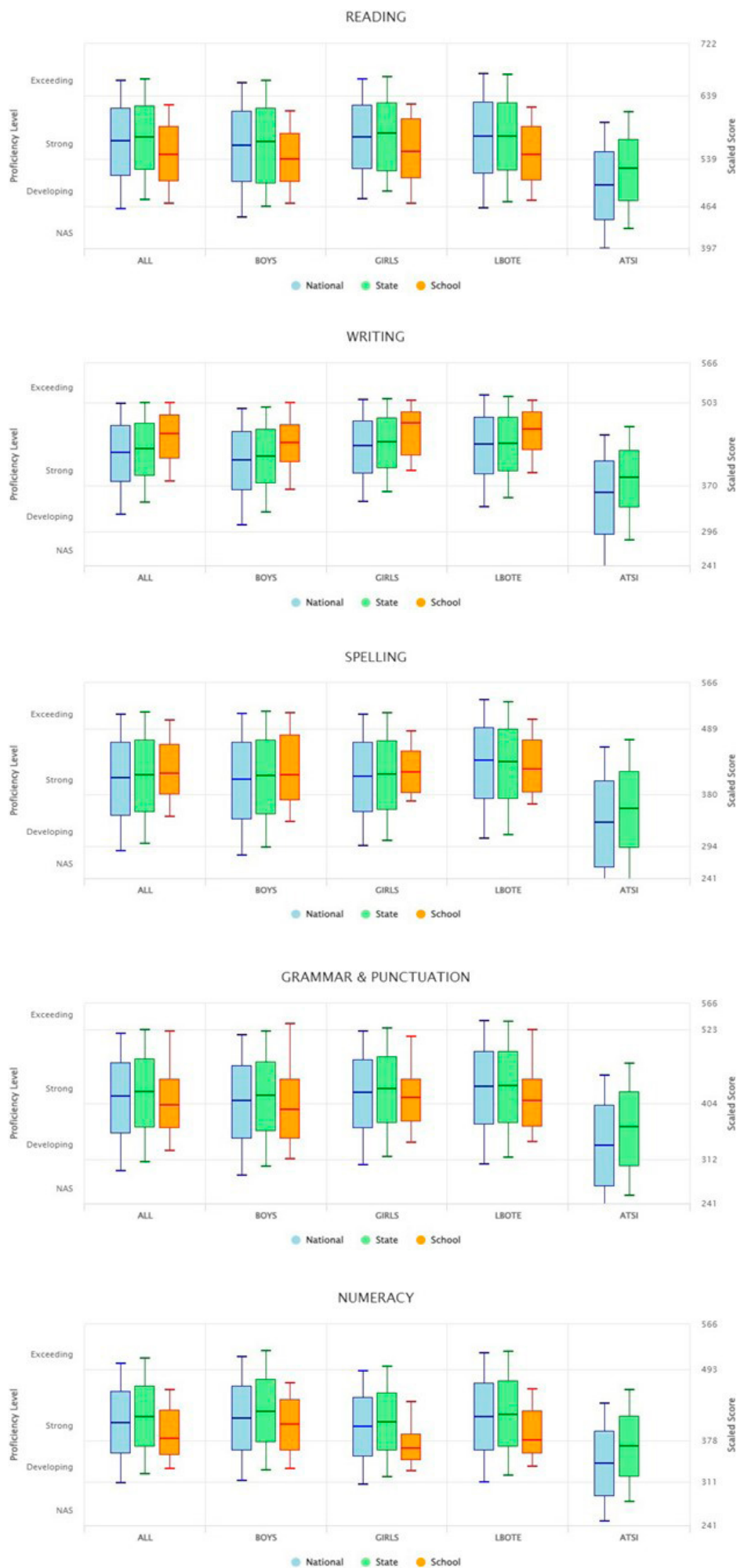


Student attendance is collected at the beginning of each period throughout the school day both in Primary and Secondary Classes. The attendance is recorded electronically with the use of either: computer, iPad, or Mobile Phone. When a child is marked absent during

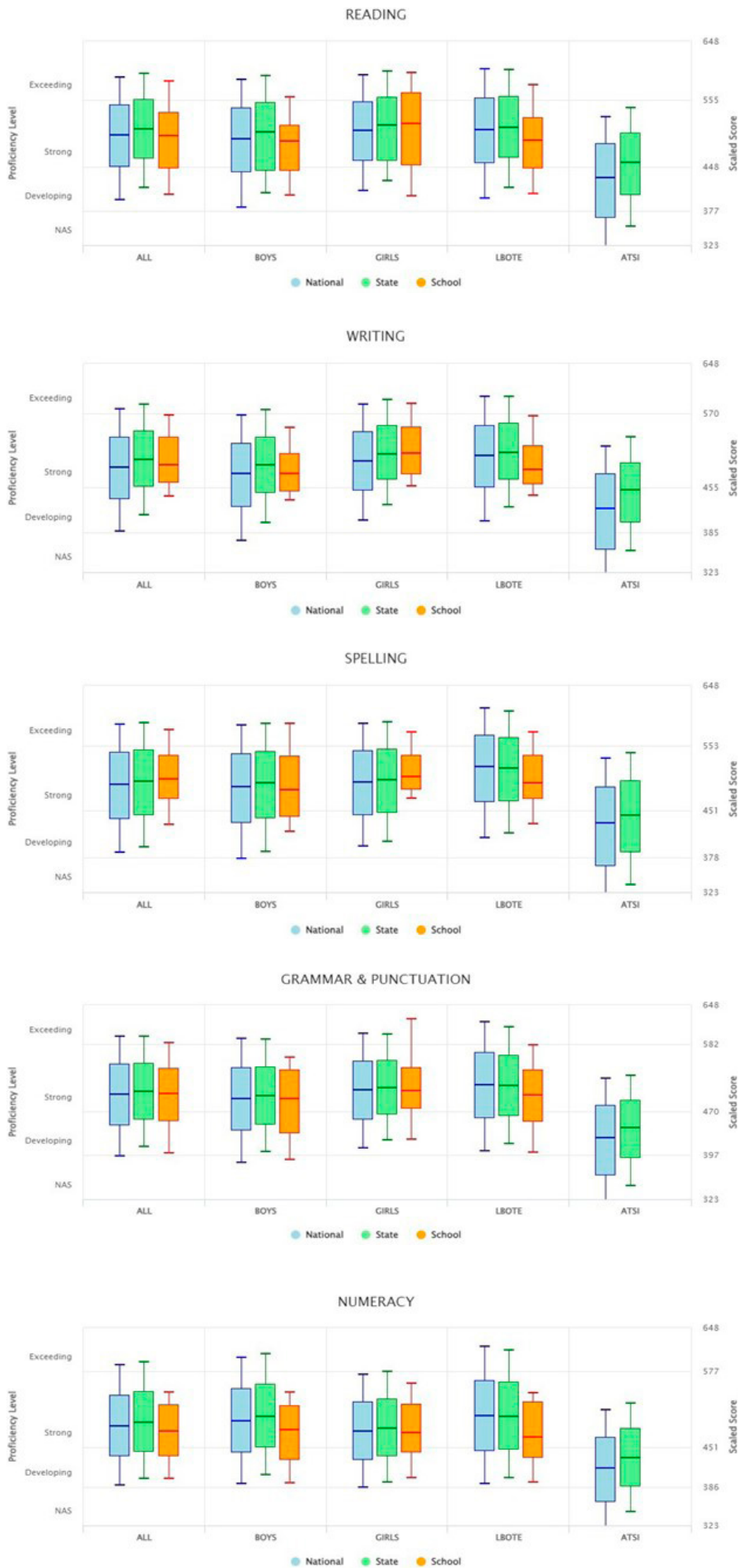
morning or afternoon homeroom an SMS is generated and sent to the parents to obtain the reason of the students' absence, if a reply is not received from the parent, the homeroom teachers will contact the parents

Naplan Results

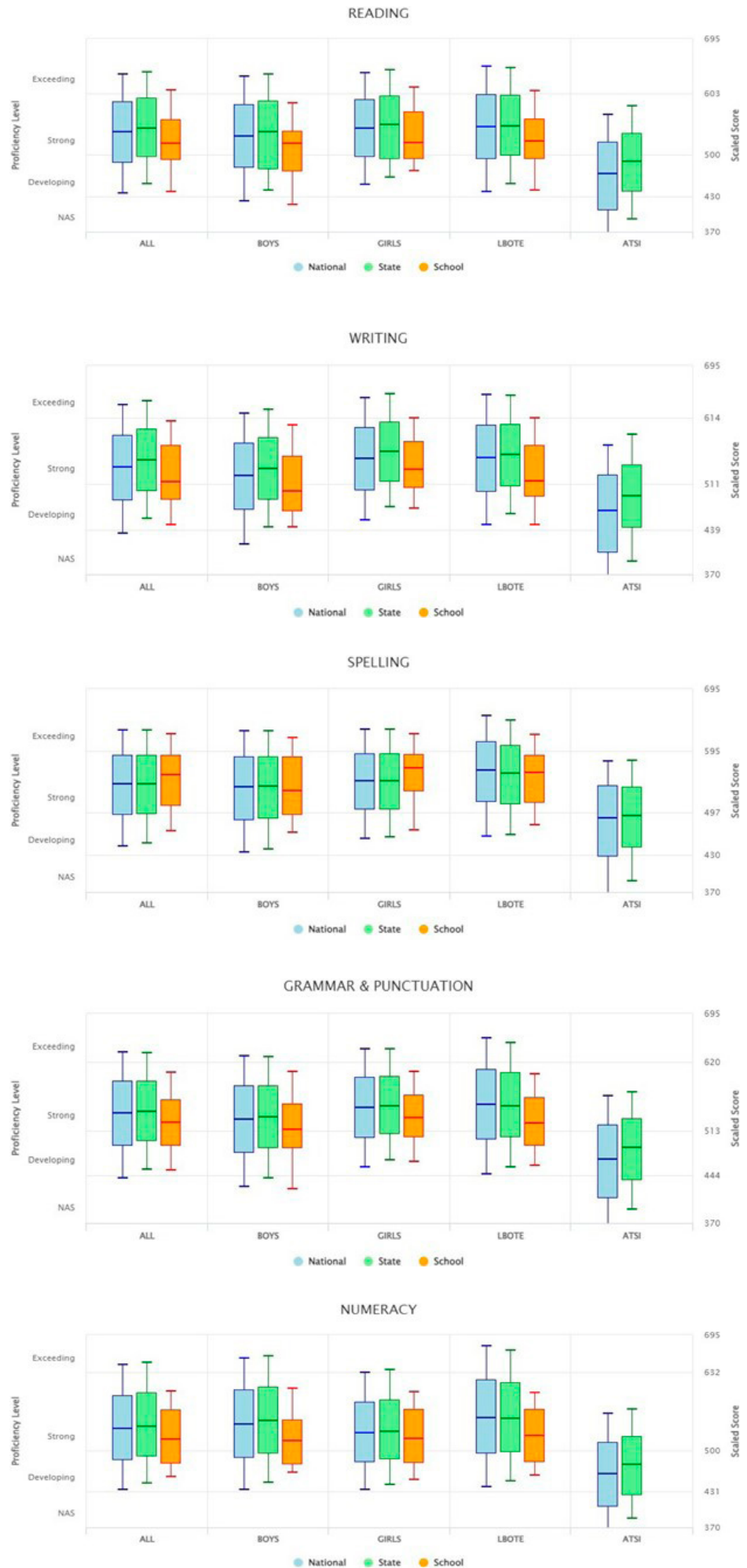
Year 3 Naplan Results



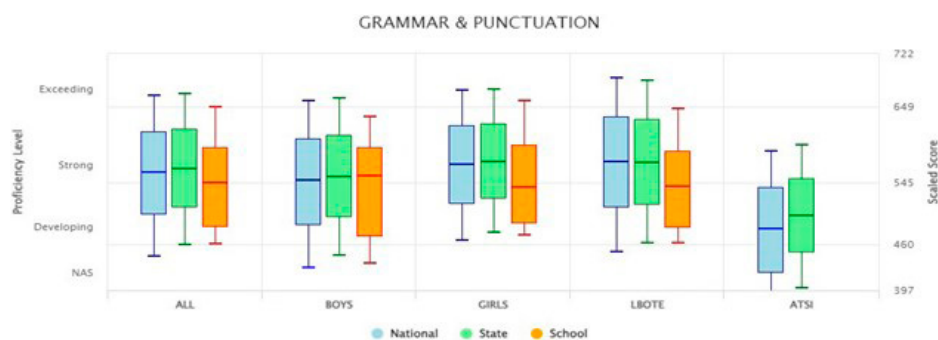
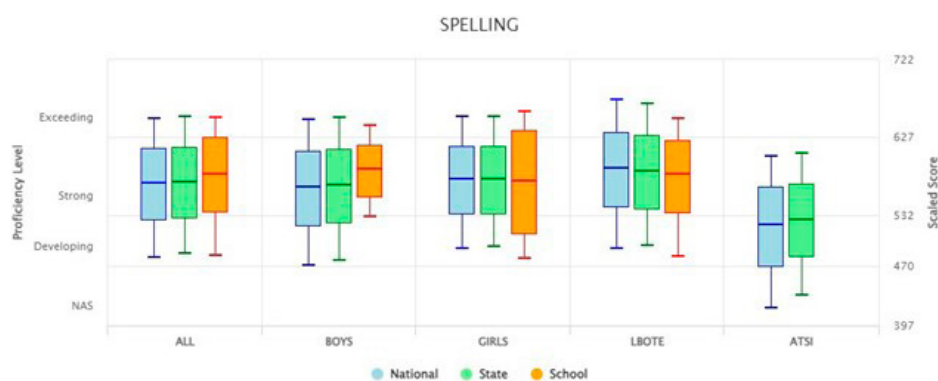
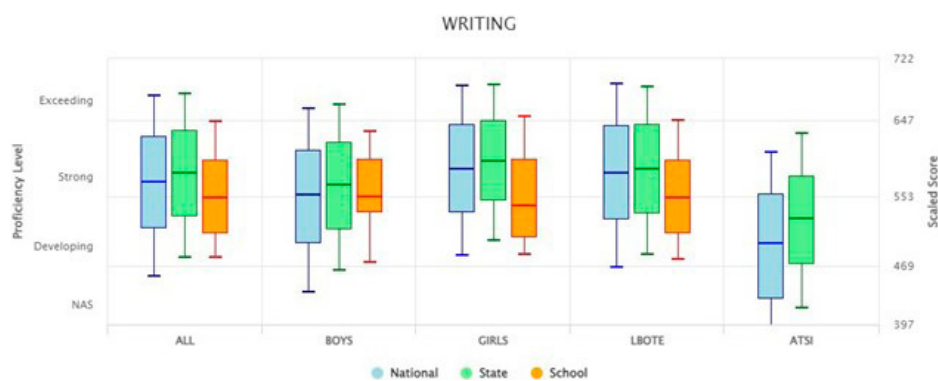
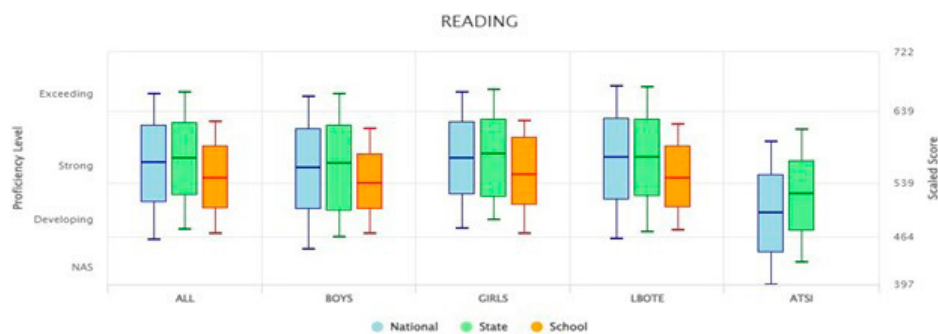
Year 5 Naplan Results



Year 7 Naplan Results

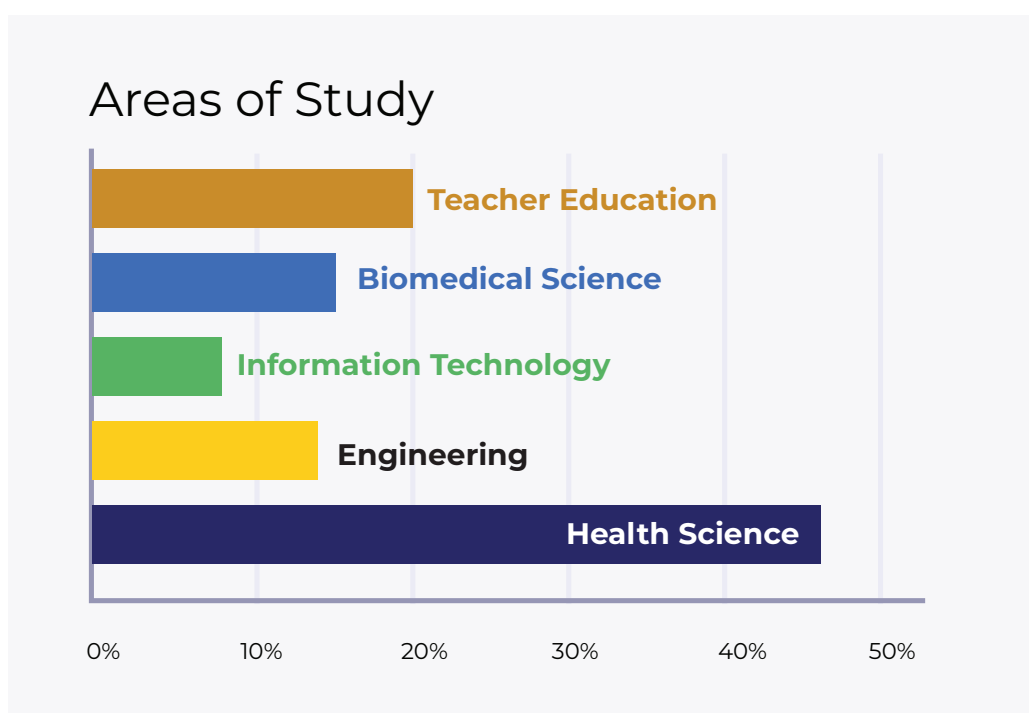
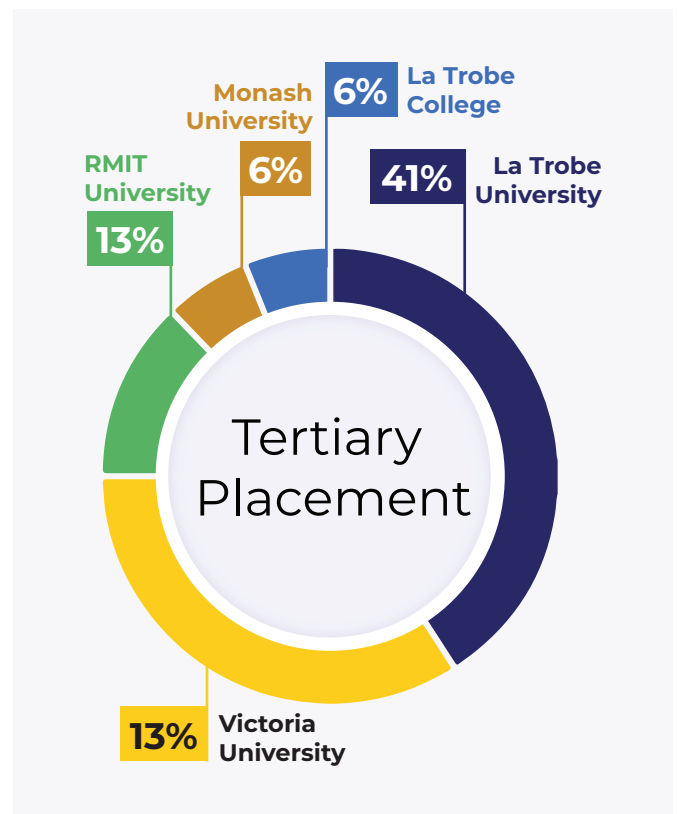
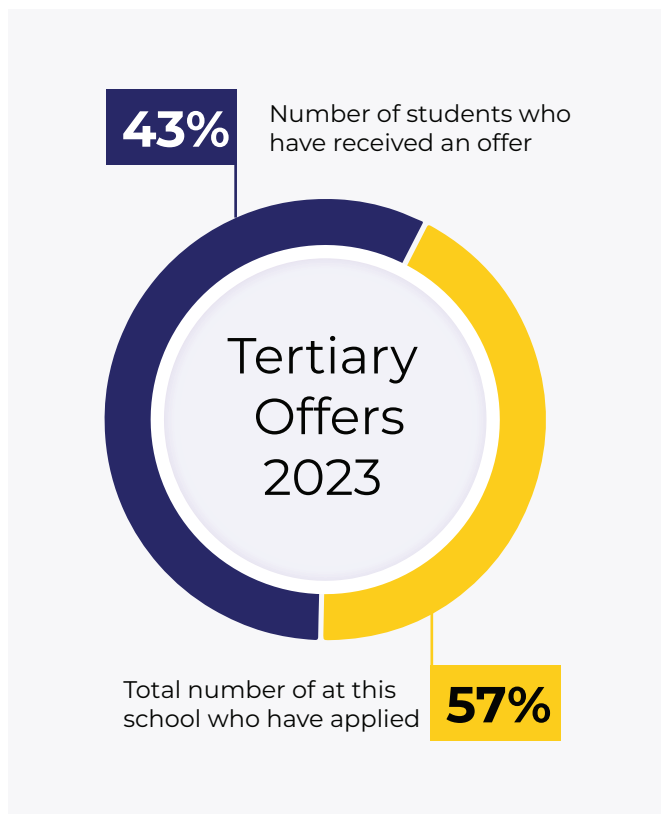


Year 9 Naplan Results



Senior Student Outcomes

In 2023, 33 students were enrolled in VCE. All VCE graduates of 2023 completed their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). Our year 12 students received over various, offers to Bachelor degrees in a diverse range of interest areas from Biomedicine, Teaching, Engineering-Aeronautical, Civil Engineering, Information Technology and Health Science at universities such as RMIT, La Trobe University, Victoria University, La Trobe College Australia and Monash University. 95% of our year 12 students applied for a tertiary placement and 72% of our year 12 students received a first-round offer.



Staff



**Teaching Staff
Attendance
Rate 93.18%**



**Teaching Staff
Retention Rate
93.18%**

Teacher Qualifications

All teachers at East Preston Islamic College are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (V.I.T.) and all non-teachers are registered with a Working with Children Check (WWCC). The College conducts a monthly audit of V.I.T. registrations and WWCCs.

Workforce Composition

The workforce increased to 154 with the assistance of the Tutor Initiative Program. Our workforce composition consists of employees from diverse backgrounds to cater for the needs of our students from many different ethnic backgrounds.

Male Teaching Staff:	17
Female Teaching Staff:	53
Male Non-Teaching Staff:	36
Female Non-Teaching Staff:	48
Total Staff:	154

Professional Development

Professional Development at East Preston Islamic College is in accordance with V.I.T. registration requirements and is a priority for all teaching staff in terms of maintaining and improving their teaching and learning.

Whole School Community Satisfaction

During the 2023 academic school year East Preston Islamic College went through a number of leadership changes and a college Board change. As this all occurred between late January 2023 and late July 2023, the College management did not feel that their annual community satisfaction survey would provide them with the usual accurate data for college improvement. An annual survey will be conducted in the 2024 College year using the Compass Insights module on:

- ☐ Student Satisfaction Survey.
- ☐ Parent Satisfaction Survey
- ☐ Staff Satisfaction Survey

Audited Financial Report

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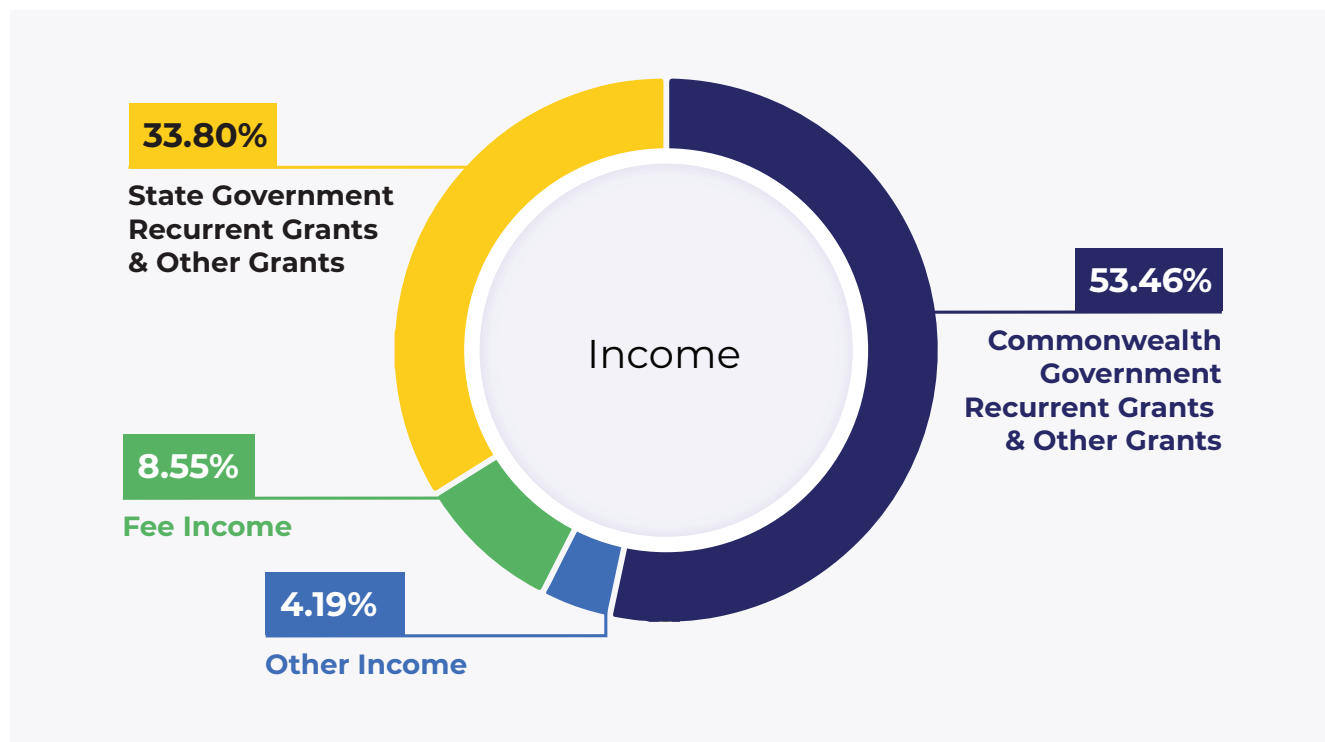


Rania Soufi
Senior Finance
Officer

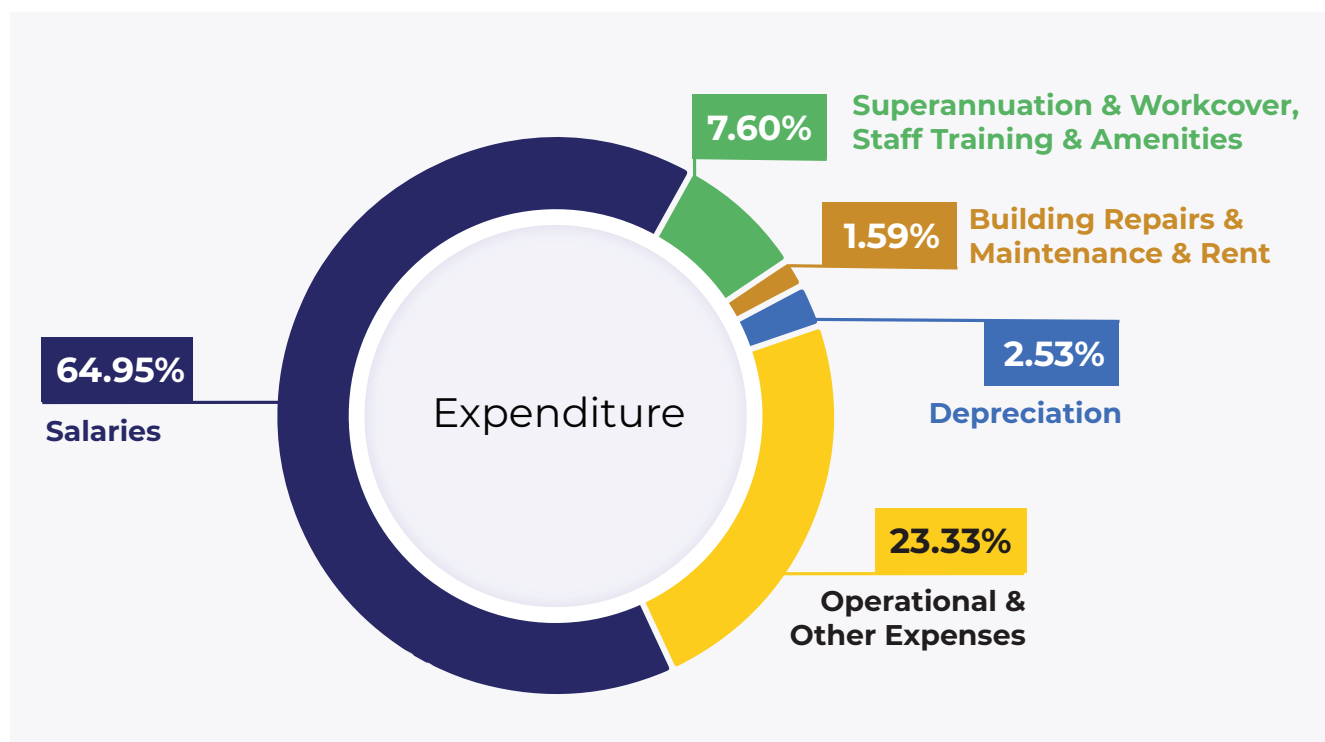
Income & Expenditure Statement

	\$	2023	%
RECURRENT INCOME			
Fee Income	\$	1,555,949	8.55%
State Government Recurrent Grants & Other Grants	\$	6,153,886	33.80%
Commonwealth Government Recurrent Grants & Other Grants	\$	9,733,108	53.46%
Other Income	\$	762,362	4.19%
Total Recurrent Income	\$	18,205,305	100.0%
RECURRENT EXPENDITURE			
Salaries	\$	10,799,649	64.95%
Superannuation & Workcover, Staff Training & Amenities	\$	1,264,279	7.60%
Building Repairs & Maintenance & Rent	\$	264,904	1.59%
Depreciation	\$	421,058	2.53%
Operational & Other Expenses	\$	3,879,348	23.33%
Total Recurrent Expenditure	\$	16,629,238	100.0%
NET SURPLUS	\$	1,576,068	

Recurrent Income



Recurrent Expenditure





admin@epic.vic.edu.au www.epic.vic.edu.au