



**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  
2007-2014***

**March 2015**

**Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People**

**GPO Box 2281  
Adelaide SA 5001**

**DX 115**

Ph 08 8226 8570  
Fax 08 8226 8577  
[gcyp@gcyp.sa.gov.au](mailto:gcyp@gcyp.sa.gov.au)  
[www.gcyp.sa.gov.au](http://www.gcyp.sa.gov.au)

# Contents

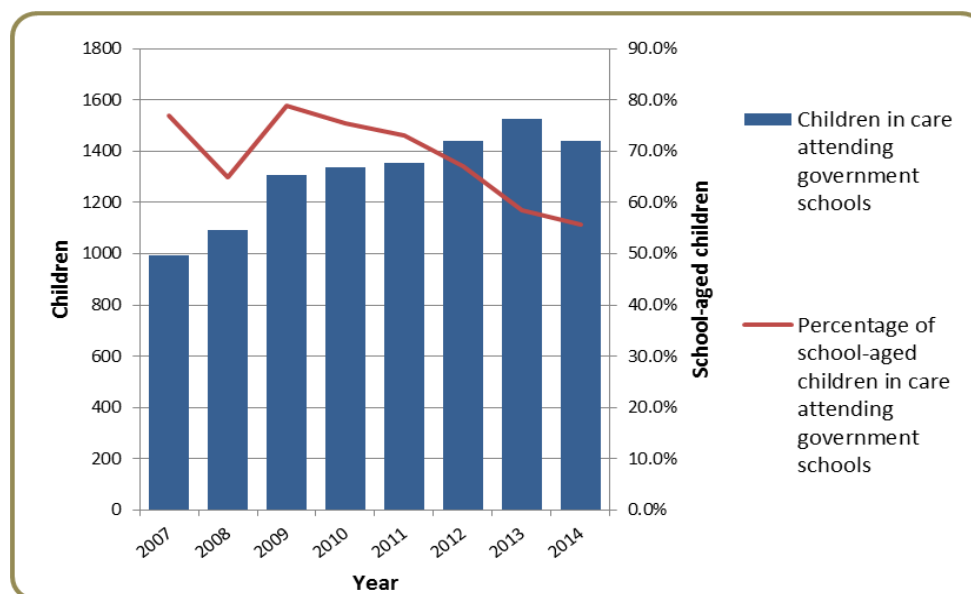
1.	Introduction .....	1
2.	Profile .....	3
3.	Suspensions and exclusions .....	7
4.	Absence .....	9
5.	Literacy and numeracy .....	10
6.	Summary .....	13

# 1 Introduction

This report is about participation and academic results (NAPLAN) for children and young people under the guardianship of the Minister from data provided by the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). Comment focuses on areas of significant difference between, or change in, results for children in [state] care<sup>1</sup> and results for all children in government schools. It was released publicly for the first time in 2014.

At the end of Term 3 2014, there were 1,441 children in care in government schools. After a steady rise in previous years, the *number* of children in care ‘located in and actively attending’<sup>2</sup> a government school in 2014 has fallen six per cent on the previous year. The *proportion* of all school-aged<sup>3</sup> children in care attending government schools continues to decline: from 79.0 per cent in 2009 to 55.8 per cent in 2014 (see *Chart 1*).

**Chart 1: Children in care attending government schools – total number and proportion of all school-aged children in care, 2007-2014**



The proportion of children in care but not identified in government schools includes those who:

- are enrolled in non-government schools;
- students over the age of compulsion who have left school; and
- data quality issues, including the ability to match records due to the use of alias names.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report the terms “in state care” or “in care” refer to those children and young people under guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister for Education and Child Development.

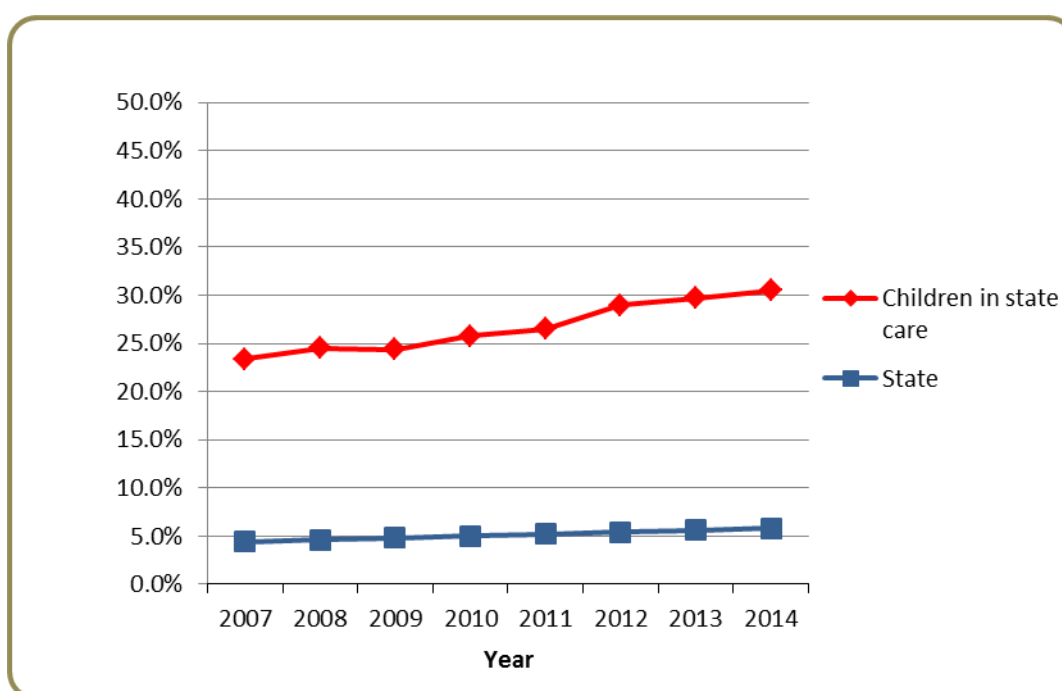
<sup>2</sup> The phrase ‘located in and actively attending’ is used by DECD in their report to the Office of the Guardian.

<sup>3</sup> School-aged is 5 to 17 years.

## 2 Profile

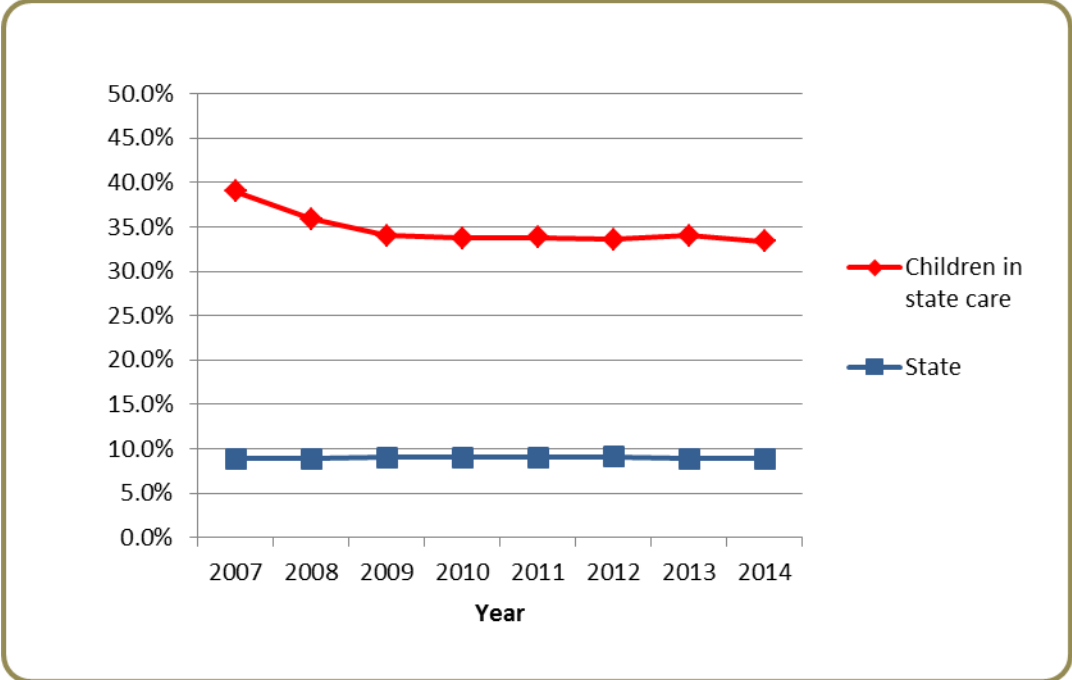
The proportion of children in care in government schools who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is significantly higher than the state average (see *Chart 2* below). The disproportion, though, is consistent with the profile of children and young people in care.

**Chart 2: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in care compared with state school population as a percentage, 2007-2014**



Similarly, the proportion of children in care in government schools who have an identified disability is significantly higher than the state average (see *Chart 3*). The disproportion is similar to the disproportion for children in care as a whole, though the criteria for disability used within education are wider than those used for disability services.

**Chart 3: Children with a disability, children in care compared with state school population as a percentage, 2007-2014**



From 2007 to 2010, the percentage of children in care in government schools with a disability dropped steadily, from 39 per cent in 2007, to 33.7 per cent in 2010. Since then the percentage has remained almost constant.

Table 1 below shows the categories of primary disability. The numbers are too small in most categories to compare children in care with state totals. However, in the categories of Language and Communication<sup>4</sup>, Intellectual Disability, and Speech and/or Language, children in care feature much more remarkably. For example, the proportion of children in care in government schools in 2014 with an intellectual disability is nearly eight times that of the state average.

<sup>4</sup> In 2007 the disability categories were revised and 'Language and Communication' was replaced with 'Autistic/Asperger's Disorder', 'Global Development Delay', and 'Speech and/or Language'. As assessments of children are done, the new categories replace the old.

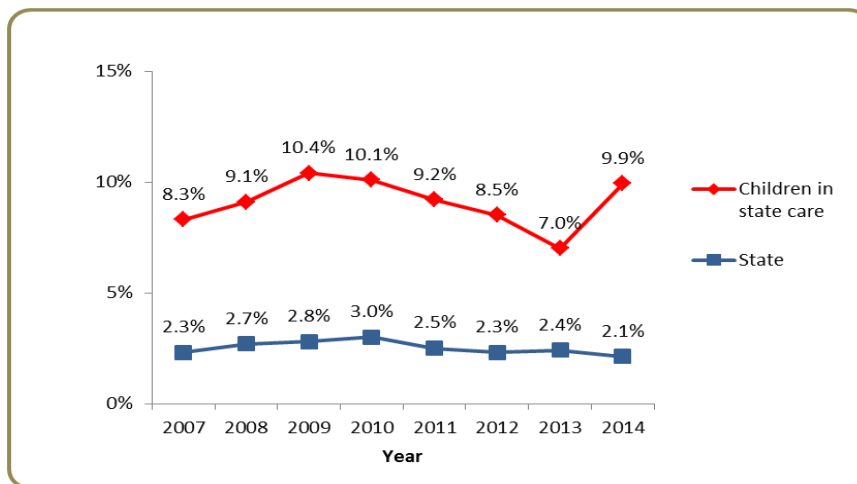
**Table 1: Category of primary disability, children in care compared with school population, 2014**

Primary Disability	Children in Care		State %
	Number	% of Children in Care	
	2014	2014	2014
Language and Communication	68	4.7	1.8
Intellectual Disability	164	11.4	1.5
Speech and/or Language	126	8.7	2.6
Global Developmental Delay	44	3.1	0.4
Autistic / Asperger's Disorder	51	3.5	1.9
Physical Disability	12	0.8	0.3
Sensory Disability (Hearing)	14	1.0	0.4
Sensory Disability (Vision)	3	0.2	0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>9.0</b>

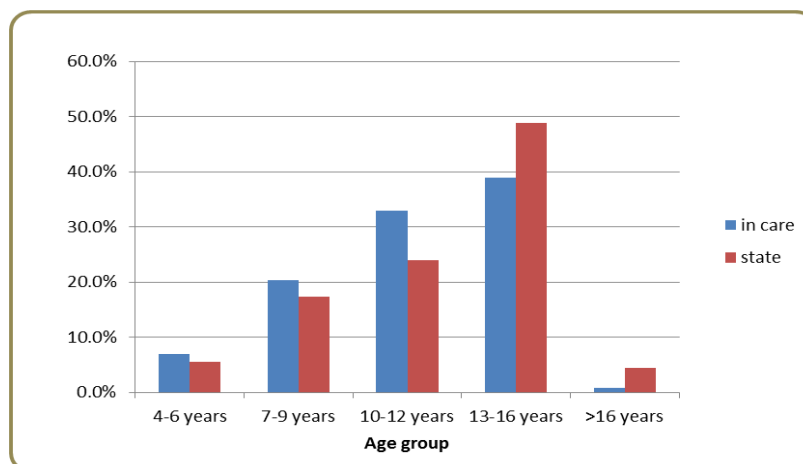
### 3 Suspensions and exclusions

Data from Term 2, 2007 to 2014 show that from 2009 to 2013 suspension of children in care had steadily dropped. In 2014, however, there is a sharp rise, with the rate almost returning to the 2009 rate. Suspensions for the state as a whole have remained relatively constant (see *Chart 5*).<sup>5</sup> Suspensions by age groups shows that children in care are more likely to be suspended when aged 12 or under when compared to the state as a whole. (see *Chart 6*).<sup>6</sup>

**Chart 5: Rate of suspensions, children in care compared with school population, 2007 to 2014, Term 2**



**Chart 6: Suspensions by age group, children in care compared to total school population, 2104 Term 2.**



<sup>5</sup> The figures in *Graph 3* represent individual children suspended in Term 2, 2012, not the number of episodes of suspension.

<sup>6</sup> The student’s age is calculated at the time of the incident, and students with multiple incidents may be reported in two groups if their date of birth falls in Term 2.

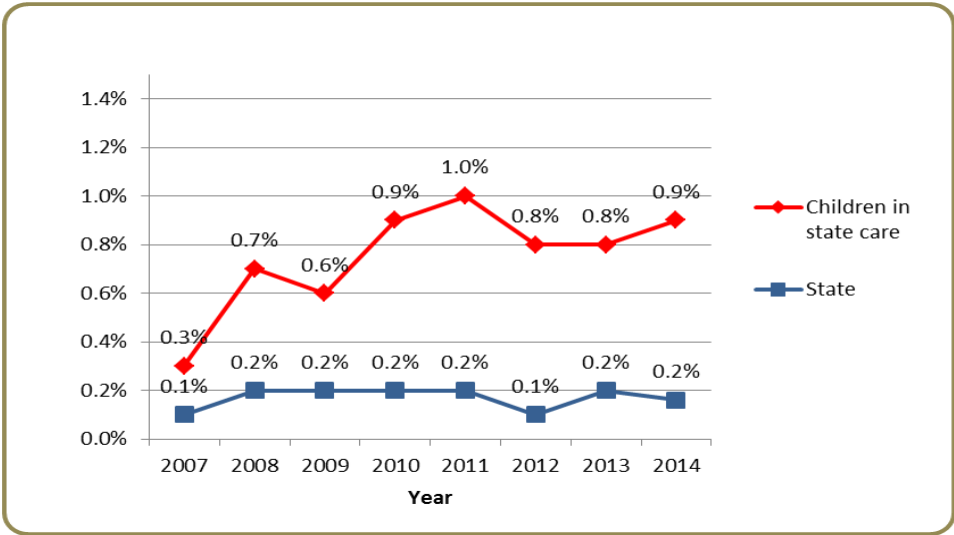


**Table 2: Main reasons for suspension, children in care and school population, 2014**

	Children in care %	State %
Violence – threatened or actual	45.4	37.3
Threatened good order	26.9	29.7
Threatened safety or wellbeing	15.3	15.1
Acted illegally	2.8	3.0
Interfered with rights of others	3.2	5.7
Persistent and wilful inattention	6.5	9.2

Similar to suspensions, children in care in government schools are more likely to be excluded from school. However, little can be concluded from this data as the actual numbers are very low. In Term 2, 2014, for example, there were 14 exclusions involving 14 children in care (see *Chart 7*).

**Chart 7: Rate of exclusions, children in care compared with school population, 2007 to 2014, Term 2**



## 4 Absence

There is little difference in absence rates for children in care in government schools compared with the school population. When comparing absence rates for children who have a disability the absence rate for children in care with a disability is lower, that is, they are more likely to be attending than those who have a disability but are not in care. This is also the case for Aboriginal children who are in care (see *Table 3*). This has been consistent since GCYP commenced monitoring.

**Table 3: Absence rates for children in state care and school population group, Semester 1, 2014**

Cohort	Semester 1, 2014		
	Children in care		State rate %
	Number	Absence rate %	
Total	1429	10.6	9.3
Males	768	11.6	9.3
Females	661	9.4	9.3
NESB	256	9.4	7.3
Disability	479	11.7	12.9
Aboriginal	435	13.9	19.8
Country Schools	570	10.7	10.2
Metro Schools	859	10.5	8.9
Primary Schools	986	9.2	8.0
Secondary Schools	455	13.6	11.7

## 5 Literacy and numeracy

National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing is carried out each year for children in years three, five, seven and nine. In each of these year levels percentages *at or above the National Minimum Standard* demonstrate that the results for children in care continue to rate significantly lower than totals for the state (see *Charts 8-11*).<sup>7</sup>

According to the NAPLAN website the *National Minimum Standard* represents the ‘minimum acceptable standard of knowledge and skills without which a student will have difficulty making sufficient progress at school’<sup>8</sup>. Students who do not reach this minimum standard are ‘likely to need focused intervention and additional support to help them achieve’.<sup>9</sup> In 2014, nearly two-thirds of year nine students in care would have difficulty making sufficient progress in writing without focused intervention. (See *Chart 11*).

Across the board, the percentages of children in care exempted from NAPLAN testing are significantly higher than the state figures and 2014 shows a sharp increase in the disparity (see *Chart 12*).

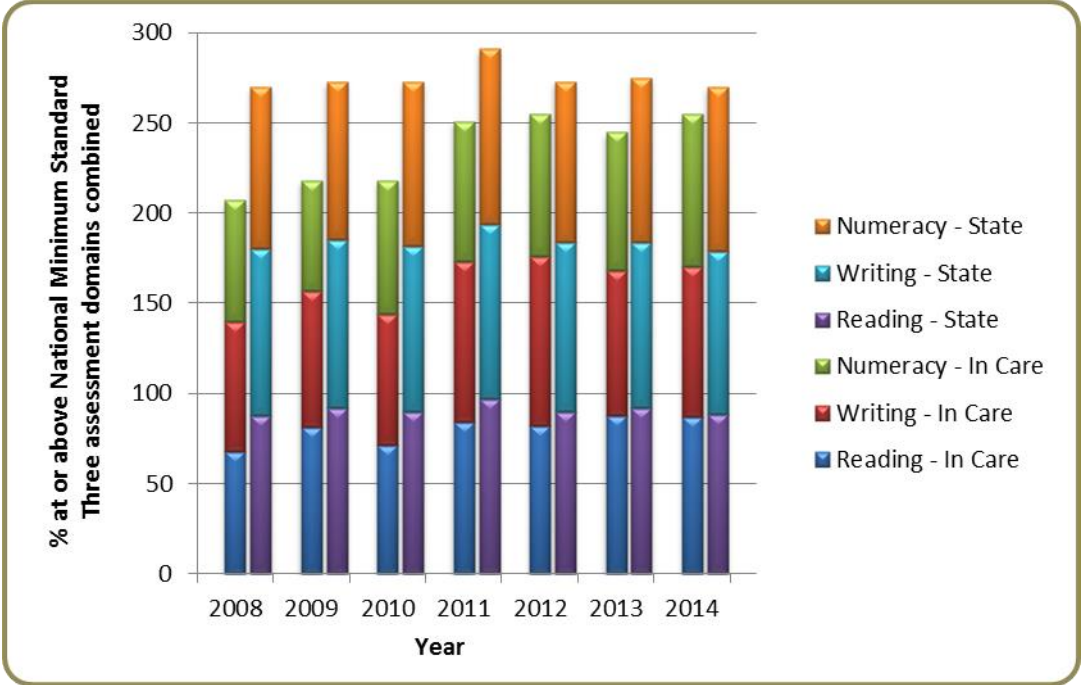
---

<sup>7</sup> Year on year comparisons cannot reliably be made as it is a different group of children sitting the tests each year and, for children in care, the actual numbers are relatively small.

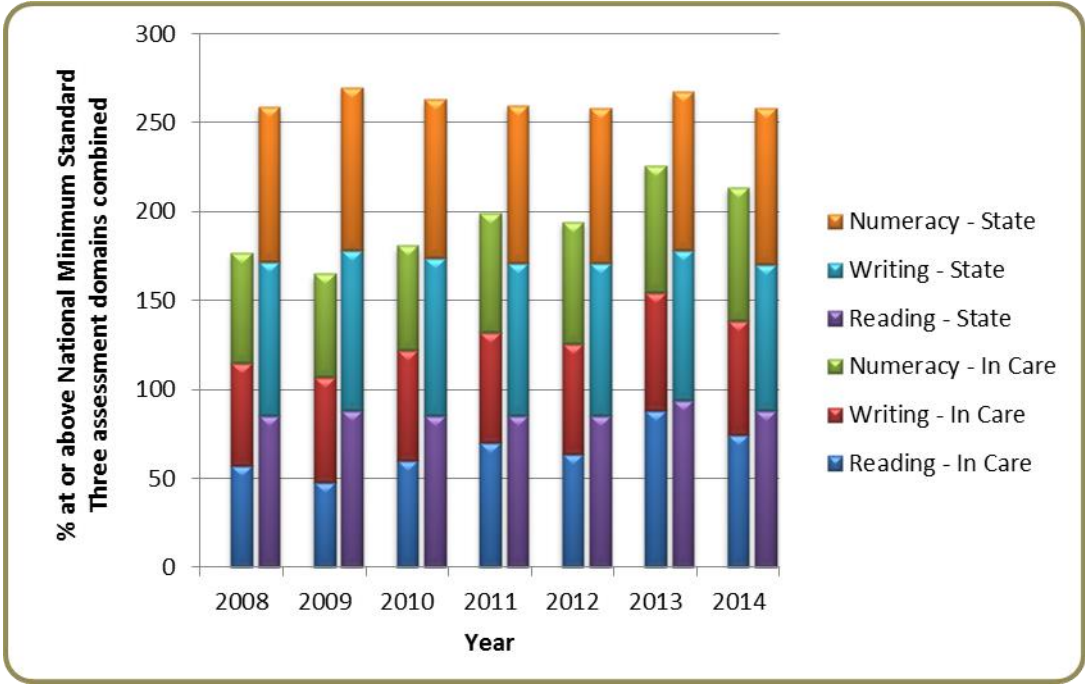
<sup>8</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2013*, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, Sydney, viewed 30 May 2014, <<http://www.nap.edu.au/>>, p. v.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

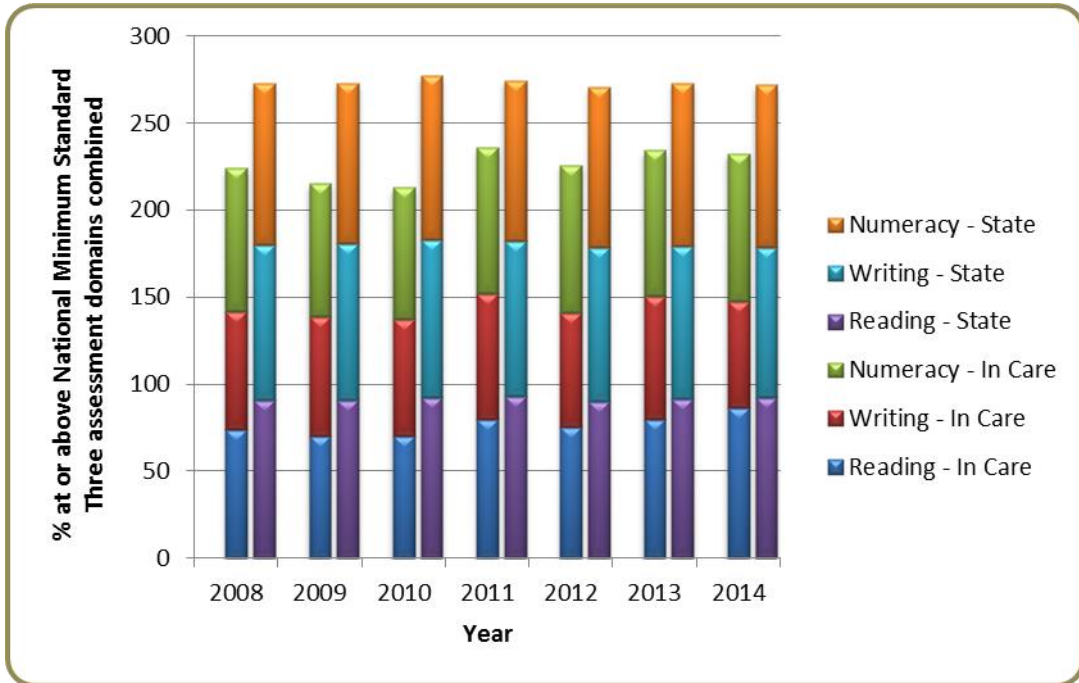
**Chart 8: NAPLAN results for Year 3 - Percentage of children *at or above the National Minimum Standard* comparing state with children in care, 2008 to 2014**



**Chart 9: NAPLAN results for Year 5 - Percentage of children *at or above the National Minimum Standard* comparing state with children in care, 2008 to 2014**



**Chart 10: NAPLAN results for Year 7 - Percentage of children at or above the National Minimum Standard comparing state with children in care, 2008 to 2014**



**Chart 11: NAPLAN results for Year 9 - Percentage of children at or above the National Minimum Standard comparing state with children in care, 2008 to 2014**

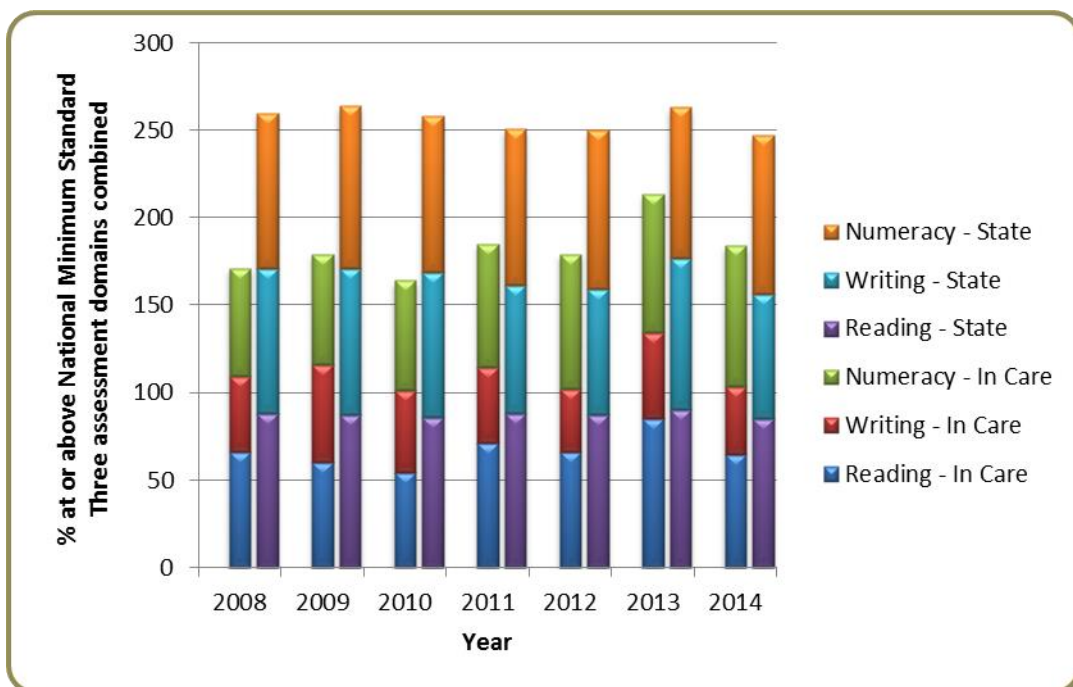
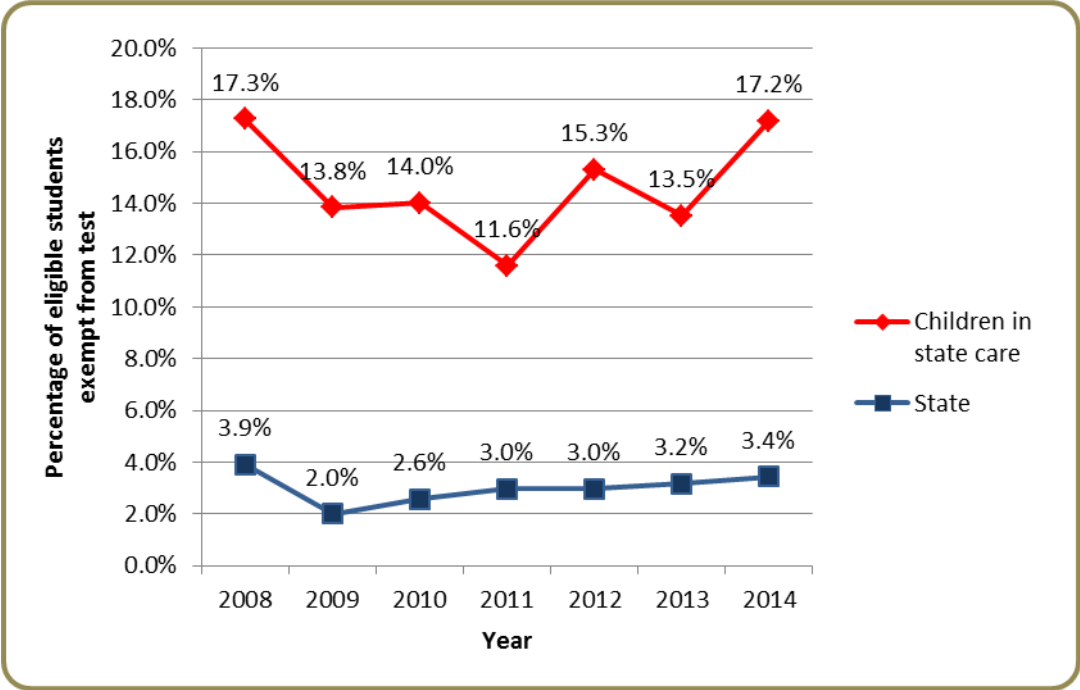


Chart 12: Students exempt from NAPLAN testing, average for all year levels across all domains, 2008 to 2014.



## 5 Summary

The data in this report demonstrates that:

- As at end Term 3 2014, 55.8 per cent of school aged children under guardianship attended a SA state government school, falling from 79 per cent in 2009.
- A greater proportion of students under guardianship have learning disabilities, notably in speech and language skills.
- A higher proportion of this group is suspended from school.
- Nearly two thirds of suspensions in this group were for children aged up to 12 years.
- The absence rate of this group is only slightly higher than the school population as a whole.<sup>10</sup>
- One in six students under guardianship is exempted from sitting the NAPLAN tests.
- There is a persistent significant gap between this group and their peers in achieving sufficient progress in literacy and numeracy.

The 2014 results, combined with previous years' results, suggest that attention must be paid to:

- Speech and language delays of children before, and on entering, school.
- Alternative disciplinary measures to suspension from school – particularly for younger children.
- Monitoring hours of attendance at school so that part-day absences are minimised.
- Investigation of the reasons for the high rates of exemption from NAPLAN tests.
- Narrowing the gap between students in care and their age peers in literacy and numeracy abilities.

---

<sup>10</sup> This does not account for students who are absent for part of the day.