

The state's high-achieving NAPLAN schools for 2024 revealed

By [Christopher Harris](#) and [Lucy Carroll](#)

December 4, 2024 – 5.00am

When Fairfield West Public School principal Genelle Goldfinch walks around the playground on the first day of term, she asks her students how they spent their holidays. Their responses typically do not include visits to the beach or other Sydney landmarks.

More than 90 percent of Fairfield West Public students have a language background other than English, while about a third of those enrolled are refugees.



Year 5 students at Fairfield West Public achieved well-above average results when compared with students of a similar socio-educational background. Until this year, some of her students had never seen the ocean, despite the fact it's only an hour's drive away. "Even the children who were born in Australia have not always been to the beach," she said.

While trips to the coast might seem unrelated to reading and writing skills, Goldfinch said those experiences were critical for developing background knowledge – a core factor in comprehension.

The primary school, where two-thirds of students are in the lowest socio-educational quartile, rolled out a “building background knowledge” program this year. This involves students taking once-a-term excursions to different parts of Sydney, including to beaches, the Art Gallery of NSW and the zoo.

“How can students infer what the sand might feel like if the sun’s been on it all day, when they’ve never even touched the sand or been to the beach?”

Fairfield West Public is among 53 schools across NSW identified by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority this year as high-achieving in their 2024 NAPLAN results.

NAPLAN 2024: A selection of high-achieving NSW schools

School Name	Location	Government Status	Level
Abbotsleigh	WAHROONGA	Independent	Combined
Al Noori Muslim School	GREENACRE	Independent	Combined
Al-Faisal College	AUBURN	Independent	Combined
Al-Faisal College - Campbelltown	MINTO	Independent	Combined
Aldavilla Public School	YARRAVEL	Government	Primary
Ambarvale High School	ROSEMEADOW	Government	Secondary

Artarmon Public School	ARTARMON	Government	Primary
Auburn North Public School	AUBURN	Government	Primary
Bathurst West Public School	BATHURST	Government	Primary
Bomaderry Public School	BOMADERRY	Government	Primary
Burwood Public School	BURWOOD	Government	Primary
Canley Vale High School	CANLEY VALE	Government	Secondary
Carlingford West Public School	CARLINGFORD	Government	Primary
Coffs Harbour Christian Community School	BONVILLE	Independent	Combined
Corrimal High School	CORRIMAL	Government	Secondary
Cranebrook High School	CRANEBROOK	Government	Secondary
Epping West Public School	EPPING	Government	Primary
Fairfield Heights Public School	FAIRFIELD	Government	Primary
Fairfield West Public School	FAIRFIELD WEST	Government	Primary

Gloucester Public School	GLOUCESTER	Government	Primary
Gunnedah South Public School	GUNNEDAH	Government	Primary
Holy Trinity West Wagga	ASHMONT	Catholic	Primary
Holy Trinity West Wagga	ASHMONT	Catholic	Primary
Hunter Sports High School	GATESHEAD	Government	Secondary
John Colet School	BELROSE	Independent	Primary
John the Baptist Catholic Primary School	BONNYRIGG HEIGHTS	Catholic	Primary
Kellyville Public School	KELLYVILLE	Government	Primary
Matthew Pearce Public School	BAULKHAM HILLS	Government	Primary
Meriden School	STRATHFIELD	Independent	Combined
Metella Road Public School	TOONGABBIE	Government	Primary
Montgrove College	ORCHARD HILLS	Independent	Combined
Murray Farm Public School	CARLINGFORD	Government	Primary

Narranga Public School	COFFS HARBOUR	Government	Primary
Northcross Christian School	RYDE	Independent	Primary
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School	WATERLOO	Catholic	Primary
Our Lady of Mt Carmel Catholic Primary School Mount Pritchard	BONNYRIGG	Catholic	Primary
Parkes Public School	PARKES	Government	Primary
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Cabramatta	CABRAMATTA	Catholic	Primary
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Matraville	MATRAVILLE	Catholic	Primary
Singleton High School	SINGLETON	Government	Secondary
St Catherine's School	WAVERLEY	Independent	Combined
St Georges Basin Public School	BASIN VIEW	Government	Primary
St Ives North Public School	ST IVES	Government	Primary
St Mary's Primary School	YOUNG	Catholic	Primary

St Narsai Assyrian Christian College	HORSLEY PARK	Independent	Secondary
St Raphael's Catholic Primary School	SOUTH HURSTVILLE	Catholic	Primary
Summerland Christian College	GOONELLABAH	Independent	Combined
Sutherland Public School	SUTHERLAND	Government	Primary
Sydney Grammar School	DARLINGHURST	Independent	Combined
Warilla Public School	WARILLA	Government	Primary
Wellington Public School	WELLINGTON	Government	Primary
Westdale Public School	WESTDALE	Government	Primary
Wyoming Public School	WYOMING	Government	Primary

The selected schools have above-average scores in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy – across every year group tested – when compared with students of similar socio-educational backgrounds.

This year's NAPLAN results will be released on the [MySchool website](#) on Wednesday, along with individual school attendance and enrolment figures.

[‘Australia’s long-term slide’ in reading, maths and science, PISA results show](#)

National and statewide NAPLAN results, released in August, showed [one in three students in NSW performed below expectations in the literacy and numeracy exams](#).

At Fairfield West, Goldfinch lists myriad factors behind the school's success, including explicit teaching of reading and maths and ensuring teachers constantly evaluate their own performance.

“I say ‘if you all agree with me, well, I may as well be in the room by myself’. I encourage rigorous debate and discussion and the teachers and leaders work extremely hard,” she said. “That’s why we get the results, because of their moral purpose, they’re driven to make that difference for the children.”

The school, which achieved well-above average scores in all domains tested, provides breakfast five days a week and treats behaviour management as a classroom priority. “The students are comfortable. They want to be here,” she said.

“We’re not this or that. We are one as Fairfield West public school to do the best. We try and get the kids to move forward. And we’re proud of being here.”

Teacher knowledge underpins progress

A similar approach of explicit teaching and deepening teachers' knowledge of the syllabus has underpinned John the Baptist Catholic Primary School's NAPLAN clean sweep, according to its principal, with well-above average scores for years 3 and 5.

The Bonnyrigg Heights school improved scores in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy from 2023.

“It’s been three years of intensive improvement,” says principal Brendan O’Connor. “We use high-quality formative assessment and have daily review practices, which is a fast-paced 10-minute recap of the previous day’s content at the start of each lesson.”



Year 5 students at John The Baptist Catholic Primary School in Bonnyrigg Heights on Tuesday.

“We are assessing students in real time,” explains O’Connor, who said the release of new English syllabuses several years ago sparked a major review of the school’s approach to teaching and learning.

“We have targeted intervention, and no child is left behind,” he says. The more than 40 teachers at the school moderate tests and assessments collectively, so “they know what is happening across the school and are more aligned”.



John The Baptist Catholic Primary School invites parents into the classroom about five times a year.

All students take drama and public speaking lessons that are woven into the timetable to support the English syllabus. Parents are invited into the classroom about five times a year to see classroom teaching, but next year a program of “parent learning” will delve deeper into explaining how subjects are taught.

“Every day we are on the phone to parents, we invite them in, talk to them. It is so important that parents clearly understand what’s happening in their child’s classroom.”

‘Gold for maths’

A daily 10-minute review before every primary school maths lesson at St Catherine’s School is among the recent changes made to teaching practices at the all-girls private school.

“The daily review has been gold for maths,” said junior school head Elizabeth Worsley. “We started it last year. The students spend that time at the start of the class to make sure they’ve remembered what they’ve learnt in previous

lessons.” The mini-revision sessions help with building fluency in maths, she says.

The high-fee school achieved well above average results for all domains, improving results in spelling in years 3 and 5 significantly. Year 3 maths scores also improved to be well-above average, compared to close-to-average in 2023.



St Catherine’s improved results in spelling in years 3 and 5 in 2024. Three years ago, the school embedded an explicit, direct instruction approach.

“It’s been a systematic approach and calculated in the way we’ve changed our approach over the last three years,” said Worsley. “All the teachers are doing things similarly, which creates consistency.”

Years 5 and 6 have an hour-long maths lesson as the first period of each day, while kindergarten to year 4 students have English lessons at the start the day, says Worsley. “This is when they are most alert and excited to learn.”

The school has embedded an explicit and direct instruction approach across all years, while also introducing InitialLit, an evidence-based literacy program, and Spelling Mastery, a six-stage structured program to teach spelling skills.

For maths, Worsley said the school concentrates on identifying where students were more likely to slip behind in the move from year 6 to year 7. “When you start high school, learning maths can be like learning a new language,” she said. “Once students gain confidence, that breeds success.”

Nicole Jones, the school's year 6 co-ordinator, pinpoints decimals, fractions and percentages as the maths topics the school has zeroed in on to help ease the transition into high school.

“Getting the students into a routine with homework has also been helpful, it's only about 10 to 15 minutes each day for maths, but it always recaps what they've learnt in class,” said Jones.

The Morning Edition newsletter is our guide to the day's most important and interesting stories, analysis and insights. [Sign up here.](#)