



Schools: Finding a school

Key Messages

- Take time to choose a school for your child
- All schools must make reasonable adjustments to include children with a disability
- Visit schools and ask questions to help you

There are many things to consider when choosing a school for your child. Finding the right school for your child can be hard and may take time. Family, friends, other parents, and professionals such as your Key Worker, can support you. Here are some tips to help:

What are the options?

Mainstream schools include government, Catholic, and private/independent schools. Most children with a disability in Australia attend a mainstream school. Mainstream schools must make reasonable adjustments to include children with a disability. This is called inclusive education. Inclusive education has benefits for all students including better:

- Academic outcomes^{1 2 3 4}
- Social skills⁵
- Communication skills^v
- Behaviourⁱⁱⁱ

¹ Cole, S., Murphy, H., Frisby, M., Grossi, T., & Bolte, H. (2021). The relationship of special education placement and student academic outcomes. *Journal of Special Education*, 54(4), 217-227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466920925033>

² Szumski, G., Smogorzewska, J., & Karwowski, M. (2017). Academic achievement of students without special educational needs in inclusive classrooms: A meta-analysis. *Educational research review*, 21, 33-54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2017.02.004>

³ Cologon, K. (2019). Towards inclusive education: A necessary process of transformation. Retrieved 18/12/2019, from <https://www.cyda.org.au/>

⁴ Jackson, B. (2008). Inclusion or segregation for children with an intellectual impairment: What does the research say? Retrieved April 9th, 2019, from <https://www.family-advocacy.com/assets/Uploads/Downloadables/11240-Inclusion-or-Segregation-What-does-Research-Say.pdf>

⁵ Foreman, P. (2015). *Social justice principles, the law and research as bases for inclusion: An update*. Retrieved from https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/psdlitreview_Socialjusticeprinciples_thelaw_and_research.pdf



- Sense of belongingⁱⁱⁱ
- Education quality⁶

There are also special schools available that only cater to children with a disability. Home schooling and distance education are also options.

How do I choose a school for my child?

There are many ways you can explore the options for your child including:

- Visit different schools – Most schools have open days, but you can also make an appointment to visit at other times
- Meet with the principal and the teachers
- Look around at the physical environment of the school
- Talk to other parents and professionals
- Read the schools' websites

What should I look for or ask about?

There are many things to consider when exploring the options including:

- Look at the size, space, layout, and accessibility of the school – are there adjustments that could be made?
- Be clear about your child's strengths and needs. Ask the principal and staff how they would meet your child's needs
- Ask how the school has included other children with a disability in all aspects of school life
- Consider the location of the school and how your child would get there

What do I need to do next?

Once you have chosen a school for your child you should:

- Inform your child's preschool teacher and therapists or Key Worker.
- Enrol your child.
- Ask your child's preschool teacher about transition to school. They may need to provide the school with information about your child.
- Ask if you can have transition meeting with the preschool teacher, a teacher from the school, and your child's therapists or Key Worker.
- The school can apply for funding to support the inclusion of your child. The school may need to organise an assessment and need information from you.

⁶ Cologon, K. (2013). *Inclusion in education: Towards equality for students with disability*. Children and Families Research Centre, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, Children with Disability Australia, Retrieved from <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2013-10/apo-nid36129.pdf>



- Attend meetings and share information about your child's strengths and needs.
- Think about what might be helpful for child in transitioning to school. Ideas include:
 - extra visits to the school
 - a visual schedule
 - a social story
 - being in the same class as children they know
 - good communication between you and the teacher
- Get involved in the school community.

To find out information about the schools near you visit
www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au

References