



Transitions

Starting primary school

Starting school is a significant milestone for children and their families. Transitions from one setting to another can be unsettling for a child, as they adjust to new routines, new faces, or new approaches to learning. Preparation beforehand can help your child make a positive transition.

Planning the transition

Plan for a positive start to school

Start investigating, planning and getting organised around 10 months before your child starts school. Learn about primary school options, visit your preferred choices and seek advice. If your child finds changes to routine or environment challenging, consider whether a Prep-12 school may be a positive option for your child.

Transition Learning and Development Statement

Early childhood educators write a [Transition Learning and Development Statement \(TLDS\)](#) for all children attending school in the following year. This statement talks about your child's strengths and identifies any supports that will help your child transition. Your early childhood educator will talk about this statement with you and ask you for input.

If your child is spending a lot of time in an early intervention program or with a support worker, your early childhood educator might ask you to nominate who you think should coordinate the statement. The statement includes a section (1.2) which aims to help schools support a child with a disability or developmental delay. Your early childhood educator may include input from other professionals who are supporting your child with your permission.

If you need your child to attend an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) service, consider sharing the transition learning and development statement (TLDS) with the OSHC service. This will help the service tailor their program to your child's strengths, interests and needs.

Student support group

The school will organise the support your child will need for their development and learning. A [Student Support Group \(SSG\)](#) is usually set up for this purpose. The group will work together on an ongoing basis to identify adjustments the school needs to make so your child can participate in all aspects of school life. As the child's parent or carer you will be a key member of this group. Other members of the SSG will include your child's teachers, support staff (where available), the principal or nominee and your child (if appropriate). Where appropriate, schools will organise applications for additional funding, and they will work with you to do this.

Access further information about supporting your child

Read tips from The Department of Education and Training [to help your child prepare for school](#). You can also find [tips for parents](#) that will help you support your child both at school and outside of school hours (e.g. during school holidays). The [Positive Educational Planning](#) resource provides detailed information about supporting a child with a disability at school.

Individual education plan

The SSG may develop an [Individual Education Plan \(IEP\)](#) for your child. An IEP sets out specific learning strategies for your child that utilise their strength and abilities. If your child has not been diagnosed with a disability or you have not disclosed that they have been diagnosed, and they experience learning or social challenges at school, you can discuss these with their teacher. An IEP can be developed by the teacher to specifically target these challenges at school. Consider ways in which you can help your child's new teachers get to know your child's interests and strengths. Read more about communicating with teachers in our [parent guide to parent-teacher meetings](#). Information you provide to the school is only passed on to the school staff and teachers who work directly with your child. You may ask to see the personal information that the school holds about your child at any time and request that the information is changed or removed. The more the teachers know about your child the more they can support them at school.

Supporting a child with the transition

A child with a disability or developmental challenge may feel anxious about the upcoming changes. These are a few strategies that may help your child with the transition:

Attend an orientation program

Many primary schools offer an orientation program. This usually means that you and your child will have opportunities to visit the school for shorter periods of time before the beginning of the school year.

If this is not available, consider asking the school if you can visit the school at different times so that your child can explore some of the classrooms, specialist areas (e.g. performance arts centre and gym) and the playgrounds.

Help your child be prepared

Think about the skills your child might need to practise before starting school. Depending on your child's disability or developmental challenge, this can include locking and unlocking the toilet door, trialling lunchboxes and practising opening them, trying on the school uniform and carrying the school bag. Consider preparing a before and after school schedule for your child if relevant. You can access AllPlay Learn's home schedule on our [parent resources](#) page.

Consider having a count-down calendar (if appropriate) and asking the school for permission to visit the school before the school bell rings during the year prior to your child beginning school so that your child and you can become familiar (or think of suitable ideas) with the morning drop-off crowds and pace.

Consider how you communicate with your child

Parents often feel apprehensive and have mixed feelings about this transition. Reach out to your friends, family and health professionals for advice and support. It is important that you remain enthusiastic and positive when you speak to your child about school. Your positivity will increase your child's confidence.

You may also want to aim to have little change in your family's everyday life apart from this transition to practise a calm and relaxed environment.

Consider how you communicate with the school community

You may want to think about how and if you will discuss your child's disability or developmental challenge with other families and most importantly with your child's specialist teachers (e.g. sports, music and arts teachers) and other students. You may wish to seek advice from health professionals, your family, your Student Support Group and/or from families who have already had experience doing this. Some ideas to discuss with the school may include:

- Inviting one of your child's health professionals to come to your child's classroom to talk about the disability or developmental challenge
- Availability of training or professional development opportunities for teachers about your child's disability or developmental challenge
- Preparing an information package for the specialist teachers about your child
- Writing a short letter for families about your child

You may prefer not to disclose your child's diagnosis – there is no right way and teachers should support you in whatever decision you make.

You and your child can also fill in AllPlay Learn's communication checklist before starting primary school. Find this on our [parent resources](#) page.

Support a child with separation anxiety

Children with separation anxiety become upset when separated from family members, such as at morning school drop off. Separation anxiety can be more severe in children with developmental challenges or disabilities. If your child has previously had challenges with separation, early planning for how to manage separation when they start school can help.

Talk with your child's teachers to come up with suitable solutions for your child. They could consider evidence-based strategies from our teacher's page about [anxiety](#).

Read positive stories about school

Read AllPlay Learn's [primary stories](#) with your child. These stories show your child what happens at school. This helps them feel confident about new situations they may encounter.