



Transitions

Transitioning from primary school to secondary school

As a parent or caregiver of a child with a disability you can support your child as they adjust to secondary school life or a new secondary school. Adjusting can involve becoming familiar with new travel arrangements, new teachers, a different school setting and new classmates.

Planning the transition

Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Vocational Education and Training (VET), School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT)

Transition plan

Primary and secondary school staff can work together to create a [transition plan](#). A transition plan helps a school prepare for your child.

Teachers from your child's primary and secondary school may form a [Student Support Group \(SSG\)](#) to create a transition plan. The SSG will involve your child's teachers, support staff, your child (if appropriate) and you. The primary teachers in the SSG can share important information about your child with the secondary school. This might include your child's strengths, interests and the strategies that worked well for your child in primary school. It is also possible that a specialist who has been working with your child may join the SSG. You and your child's specialist can help teachers understand your child's disability and suggest the best ways to work with your child.

Communicate with your child's secondary school

There are many ways in which your child's secondary school can partner with you to help your child thrive at school. The [Student Support Group \(SSG\)](#) can advise the secondary school about any adjustments that can be made so that your child can participate fully in all aspects of school life. Tailoring your child's learning support will be an ongoing process. The SSG can help create an [Individual Education Plan \(IEP\)](#) which includes measurable learning goals that are well matched to your child's abilities. An IEP identifies your child's educational strengths and abilities, and sets up strategies to support your child's learning. The SSG should meet on a regular basis to discuss your child's progress. Your child's input to this process (where possible) will be important.

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. Read more about communicating with teachers in our [parent guide to parent-teacher meetings](#). An IEP can be developed by the teacher to specifically target these challenges at school.

Help your child let their new teachers know about their interests and hopes for the future. This can be done in the form of an [about me statement](#) (from page 35) that your child can fill in or respond to using their own words and/or images.

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. You can also request that the information is changed or removed.

Access further information about supporting your child

Read tips from [The Department of Education and Training](#) to help your child prepare for school.

Supporting your 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

In the last term of Year 6, secondary schools usually provide information packs and run orientation programs. During orientation students are shown around the school. Important places like bathrooms, the gymnasium and their classroom(s) are pointed out. New students may also meet with their Year 7 class group and homeroom teacher. Some schools also hold classes to give soon-to-be Year 7 students a taste of their new subjects and a chance to meet some of their other teachers.

If you feel your child needs more time to get to know their new school you can ask the school about extending their orientation.

Help your child be prepared

There are also things you can do as a parent or guardian at home to help your child prepare for starting secondary school. For example, you can help your child get ready for what will happen each day by creating a visual schedule with them.

It is important to practise new travel arrangements with your child before their first day. If they are catching a bus or train to school, practise this journey with them. Make sure they feel confident about getting off at the right stop and crossing roads safely. If you plan to drive your child to school, work out safe drop off and pick-up points.

Arrange some contact such as an outing between your child and other students who will be attending the same secondary school. This may help your child to connect and make new friends.

Many secondary schools aim to welcome students and build friendships early in the first term of Year 7 through activities such as buddy programs and welcome events like Year 7 family nights or barbecues.

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 limit any change in your family's everyday life apart from this transition to maintain a stable and relaxed environment prior to and during the change.

Consider how you communicate with the school community

Discuss with your child if and how they want their disability or developmental challenge discussed with other families, and with specialist teachers (e.g. sports, music and arts teachers) and other students. You may wish to seek advice from health professionals, 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 schools should support you in whatever decision you make.

Read positive stories about secondary school

AllPlay Learn secondary stories can help your child to get ready for secondary school. You can read the stories together or your child might want to read them by themselves. The stories have been designed so that students can get to know about what happens at secondary school. This can help them feel confident and prepared when they begin.

Access AllPlay Learn's story How to be organised on our [secondary stories](#) page.