

# SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS WITH DISABILITY IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

A GUIDE BY PARENTS FOR PARENTS  
3RD EDITION



COUNCIL OF  
**CATHOLIC  
SCHOOL  
PARENTS**  
NSW

LEADERSHIP | ADVOCACY | SUPPORT

# FOREWORD

Dear Parents,

I have learnt over my years as a priest that the most important gift parents and carers can offer is that of a loving home.

By taking up this guide, you are showing your love for your children. May I congratulate the Council of Catholic School Parents, and especially Cheryl Murphy, for putting together this third edition? It is so practical and accessible – and by making it so user friendly, they show their own love and concern for others.


In the guide, you will find all manner of suggestions that will help your child get the most out of their school experience. There are useful tips on how to best prepare; how to best communicate with teachers; how to undertake assessment; and plenty of explanation of different legislation and how funding works. The more you know, the better you will be able to engage collaboratively with others to pursue the most rounded education and development for your child.

So, please take time to read through this guide which has been prepared by many parents who know from experience how best to support their children.

Also, read through it prayerfully. God loves us all and has created the Universe in all its glory and diversity. Each of us is unique and we all have our own gifts and needs and our own way of relating to the world. Thanks be to God.

As I mentioned, by taking this guide and reading it, you are showing your love. You are taking time to learn how to best support your child. May I encourage you to love, love and keep loving. In the end, this is what matters most.

Bishop Danny Meagher  
Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, who long before us lived, loved, educated and raised their children on this Country.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and we recognise the young people who are our future.

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in our communities.

We respect their deep physical and spiritual connections to Country through their stories, traditions and living cultures.



Loving God.

We thank you for the gift of learning and for the diverse ways that we each engage in the world.

Open our hearts and minds to understand and appreciate each other's unique strengths and challenges.

Guide us to be patient and supportive, and to create a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive.

We ask for your wisdom to help us learn from one another and grow together in knowledge and understanding.

Amen.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to Cheryl Murphy, who initiated this project when Chair of the Diverse Learning Working Party. We thank Cheryl for her passion, commitment and dedication to the parents and carers of children in Catholic schools in NSW.

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# INTRODUCTION

*'Learning is a partnership with parents, carers and others in the community, all of whom have a role to play in nurturing the love of learning needed for success at school and in life.'*

- Mparntwe (Alice Springs) Declaration 2019

The support of students with disability or additional needs in schools is achieved through a range of inclusive and personalised approaches which encompass all facets of a student's development - pastoral, spiritual, intellectual, physical, cultural and social.

Central to these approaches are collaborative, supportive and engaging educational environments, where every student is welcomed and empowered to thrive and reach his or her full potential. Such environments not only facilitate academic growth but also uphold the inherent dignity of each student.

For students with disability or additional needs, Catholic schools engage in comprehensive planning to address the unique needs of each student, in partnership with families. Planning incorporates student and parent/carer input and features well-structured frameworks for the setting of goals and the implementation of reasonable adjustments. Collaborative planning extends to the monitoring and reviewing of the adjustments. It is a team-based approach involving all stakeholders across an annual cycle.

*'The role of parents in education is of such importance that it's almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.'*

- Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis*

## ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS NSW

The parent volunteers on the Council of Catholic School Parents (CCSP) provide leadership, advocacy and support to all parents and carers of students in Catholic schools in dioceses in NSW and represent their interests at state and national level.

The Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles of the Council of Catholic School Parents NSW highlight the importance of parents and partners and our work in upholding and promoting principles of human dignity and the common good.

Catholic social teaching calls us to focus on key values that are grounded in our strong

desire to protect and promote the dignity of every person. As communities, we are called to walk in unity and do what is needed to support our brothers and sisters.

As part of our support work, CCSP publishes resources for diocesan and school parent groups, families and schools, including this one, *Supporting Diverse Learners with Disability in Catholic Schools: A Guide by Parents for Parents*.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was written by experienced parents especially for other parents of children with disability who are preparing for or navigating school with all its challenges and



achievements. The first edition, published in 2020, was originally proposed by Cheryl Murphy, the Chair of CCSP's Diverse Learning Working Party, and based on her experiences with her son Stephen, who has autism and ADHD, and his school journey. The resource was two and a half years in the making, including work with focus groups in schools, writing and a professional review process. A second edition with additional information for parents of secondary students and the NDIS was published in 2024.

Cheryl wanted to share her knowledge and advice to families and educators, with the hope that parents of children with disability or additional needs would find this resource supportive as they navigate the school system.

The CCSP Diverse Learning Working Party has reviewed this guide with the assistance of parents and diocesan educators to create this

third edition. We are deeply grateful to the many voices who shared their experiences, asked friends and family to contribute and helped to shape this guide so it is an even more useful and relevant document.

This guide is organised into primary school and secondary school sections so that parents can skip to where they need to, and it's full of tips for preparing your child for the school and the school for your child.

We hope it helps you effectively advocate for your child with disability or additional learning needs at school by focusing on open communication, collaboration and building positive relationships with teachers and school staff.

CCSP wishes you and your family well as you travel along the school pathways. Our thoughts and prayers are with our families as we support you on your journey.

*'Students with a learning disability have as much right to a quality education as anyone else. I want people to have this guide so they don't make the mistakes I did, and so they don't get disheartened. All students, just like Stephen, should be able to have a quality Catholic education just like any other child if this is the desire of their parents and carers.'*

*- Cheryl Murphy, Chair, CCSP Diverse Learning Working Party*

## WORDS AND TERMS USED IN THIS GUIDE

Please note that we use the term 'parent' throughout this guide for simplicity. We acknowledge and respect that you may be a parent, carer, guardian, kin or other family member or mentor of a child. Likewise, we use the term 'child', in place of 'son' or 'daughter', interchangeably within this guide.

Following are words, terms, government agencies and programs relating to students with disability which are either used in this guide or which you may hear when you're talking to teachers.

**Adjustment:** Refers to modifications made to teaching, learning programs, assessments or the school environment to help students with disability access education on the same basis as their peers. See also **reasonable adjustment**.

**Catholic Schools NSW:** Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) acts as the primary representative body for Catholic education in NSW. Catholic Schools NSW supports students with disability through providing diverse settings, inclusive planning and professional development for teachers.

**Classroom support teacher (CST):** See LSA.

**Curriculum:** All subjects making up a course of study in a school or college. Curriculum outlines what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and subject area. It also helps ensure that all children receive a high-quality and consistent education.

**Disability (in education):** *The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* (the DDA) and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* provide the definitions of disability used in

educational settings – see NCCD. Examples of disability include:

- ▶ difficulties learning and developing literacy skills
- ▶ difficulties learning and developing numeracy skills
- ▶ learning difficulties or disabilities such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia
- ▶ intellectual disabilities
- ▶ mental illness
- ▶ emotional and behavioural disturbances
- ▶ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ▶ sensory impairment
- ▶ physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy
- ▶ speech and language disorders
- ▶ chronic illness such as chronic fatigue syndrome.

### **Disability Advocacy Futures Program**

**(DAFP):** A program delivered by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice that provides funding to advocacy services to support individuals and families with a person with disability to navigate and access NSW Government services. The Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP) is available to all students with disability in NSW. The program provides independent support for families to navigate the education and other service systems, and to advocate for their child's needs. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/disability-advocacy-futures-program>

**Disability Discrimination Act 1992:** *The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*, or the DDA, is a Commonwealth law in Australia that makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability in areas such as employment, education, housing and the provision of goods, services and facilities. It promotes equal opportunity and prohibits treating a person less favorably because of their disability, which also includes

discrimination against an associate of a person with a disability.

### **Disability Standards for Education (DSE)**

**2005:** *The Disability Standards for Education 2005* (The Standards) seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/information-resources-students-disability-and-their-caregivers>

**Key learning areas (KLA):** Broad subject areas of learning such as English, Mathematics, History.

**Learning support assistant (LSA):** The LSA supports teachers by assisting students with additional learning needs to help them achieve academic and spiritual growth. Their role includes providing one-on-one or small group support in the classroom, helping with individual learning plans, assisting with school routines, and collaborating with teachers to implement adjustments for students. They are also responsible for monitoring student progress, preparing resources and contributing to the overall positive and faith-based environment of the school.

### **Learning support coordinator (LSC):**

Generally the lead teacher of a team of LSTs.

**Learning support teacher (LST):** Supports students with diverse learning needs by collaborating with teachers to modify programs, create individual education plans (IEPs), and provide targeted interventions. They also assist in identifying students with special needs, provide professional development to staff, and support the school's overall inclusive and Catholic ethos.

### **National Catholic Safeguarding**

**Standards:** All Catholic entities, ministries and organisations across Australia have implemented the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS). The 10 standards constitute a framework to drive cultural and behavioral change and promote accountability and transparency regarding the actions of the Catholic Church, its leaders, ministries and entities. More information can be found at: <https://www.acsltd.org.au/national-catholic-safeguarding-standards/>

### **Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (the NCCD):**

This data is used to determine levels of targeted government funding for students with disability enrolled in schools. The NCCD reports on the number of students with disability across four broad categories which align with the definitions in the DDA:

- ▶ physical
- ▶ cognitive
- ▶ sensory
- ▶ social/emotional

**National Disability Coordination Officer Program (NDCO):** This program was funded by the Department of Education to drive change so that people with disability had equitable opportunity to access, participate and achieve their goals in tertiary education and subsequent employment. The NDCO program ceased on the 1 July 2023. NDCOs were involved in a broad range of projects at a national, state and local level, and worked strategically with stakeholders to address the systemic barriers experienced by people with disability engaging in tertiary education and subsequent employment.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS):** Some children and young people may access funding through the NDIS for services and support to assist them reach their goals. If your child is in receipt of NDIS funding, it will be important to have conversations with the school to discuss the role of allied health professionals and their possible provision of support and services during school time and any policies and protocols that are in place that may impact delivery of these services and supports.

**NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA):** NESA is the NSW government body responsible for developing curriculum, accrediting initial teacher education, registering schools, and setting standards for school education in NSW. NESA has a role in disability education by setting policies for inclusive practices and providing HSC disability provisions. NESA's role involves ensuring students with a disability can access the curriculum on the same basis as their peers through reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning, and assessment, based on the functional impact of their disability, not just the diagnosis.

**Reasonable adjustments:** Supports a student with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students; takes into account the student's learning needs; balances the interests, including safety, of all parties, such as the student with disability, staff members and other students

**Stages:** The NSW Curriculum is structured in Primary and Secondary stages. Students move through the stages of learning:

Primary school stages  
Early stage 1: Kindergarten  
Stage 1: Year 1 and Year 2  
Stage 2: Year 3 and Year 4  
Stage 3: Year 5 and Year 6

Secondary school stages  
Stage 4: Year 7 and Year 8  
Stage 5: Year 9 and Year 10  
Stage 6: Year 11 and Year 12

**Syllabus:** The program of study for a particular course.

**Thriving Kids:** In 2025, the Australian Government announced that it will be designing a program called Thriving Kids in collaboration with the disability community and participant. Thriving Kids will provide support for children 0-8 with mild to moderate developmental delay or autism to help them thrive rather than the NDIS. Children already enrolled in the NDIS will remain on the scheme. The Thriving Kids program will aim to support parents better and will start to be rolled out in 2026 with an expansion of existing services. Find out more here: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/thriving-kids-fact-sheet?language=en>

The program will be relevant for parents of children entering Kindergarten to Year 2.

# GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS WITH DISABILITY

Supporting students with disability or additional needs in NSW Catholic schools is grounded in a strong framework of legislation, funding and dedicated support systems that ensure every student can access a high-quality, inclusive education. This framework reflects both schools' legal responsibilities and Catholic commitment to uphold the dignity of every child. Federal and state laws, national initiatives and tailored school-based supports work together to guide how schools identify student needs, provide adjustments and partner with families.

## YOUR CHILD'S RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION

### AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Students with disability have a range of abilities and needs. *The Disability Standards for Education (DSE) 2005* describe the legislative requirements of schools to support students with disability.

The Standards set out how education is to be made accessible to students with disability through the provision of reasonable adjustments so that they can access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers. Schools are required to ensure all students have an equitable education.

The Standards provide a framework to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students, covering enrolment and parent choice; access and

participation; curriculum development, accreditation and delivery; student support services; and elimination of harassment and victimisation.

### FIND OUT MORE

The Standards can be accessed here: <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>

*Your Right to an Education: A guide for educators and people with disability booklet* (developed by the National Disability Coordination Officer Program) and other resources can be accessed here: <https://www.adcet.edu.au/ndco/>

Information resources for students with disability and their caregivers created by the Department of Education, Australian Government can be found here: <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/information-resources-students-disability-and-their-caregivers>

## NSW GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

The *NSW Education Act 1990* provides for education for school-aged children in New South Wales in schools including the right for children with a disability to enrol in their local school.

Students with disability broadly have three options for education in a school setting:

- ▶ Schooling in a mainstream classroom with appropriate support and adjustments to meet their learning needs.
- ▶ Schooling in a support class for students with a disability, within a mainstream school. Some schooling may occur outside the support unit.
- ▶ Special schools which only enrol students with disability. Special schools will variously focus on meeting differing sets of needs of students with disability.

## FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about support for students with disability and their families here:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/parents-and-carers/inclusive-learning-support/resources/support-students-disability-families-navigate-system>

## FUNDING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

Australian Government recurrent school funding is provided as a lump sum to school authorities including state and territory governments, which can then distribute the funding to their member schools according to their own needs-based arrangements.

The NSW Government and the Australian Government both fund Catholic schools, with funding levels based on the Schooling Resource Standard (the SRS). The SRS is an estimate of how much total public

funding a school needs to meet its students' educational needs.

Students with disability identified as requiring the three highest levels of support in the NCCD (see below) attract a disability loading under the SRS in addition to the base amount.

In addition to the support provided via the mechanism of the SRS, the NSW Government provides support to Catholic schools through the Special Needs Support funding program, the School Drive Subsidy and the Assisted School Travel Program.

The Catholic sector incorporates a number of different programs to support students with disabilities in Catholic schools, including:

- ▶ Personalised Planning Tool, which is a collaborative planning process to address the needs of each student and help them reach their full potential.
- ▶ The OLT Australia Online Training professional learning courses to support teachers of students with disability (see the section below).
- ▶ Specialist support classes with smaller student-teacher ratios and purpose-built facilities.

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

### NATIONALLY CONSISTENT COLLECTION OF DATA (NCCD)

The NCCD takes place every year. The NCCD is a collection that counts the number of school students receiving an 'adjustment', or additional help, at school due to disability. The NCCD uses the definition of disability in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.



Students are counted in the NCCD if they receive ongoing adjustments at school due to disability. This 'help' allows them to access education on the same basis as a child without disability.

The four levels of adjustment are:

- ▶ **Extensive adjustments:** Provided to students with very high support needs. These are highly individualised, comprehensive, ongoing, and often intensive measures of support and assistance.
- ▶ **Substantial adjustments:** Provided to students with more substantial support needs, involving essential adjustments and considerable adult assistance.
- ▶ **Supplementary adjustments:** Provided in addition to the strategies and resources available for all students within the school.
- ▶ **Support provided within quality differentiated teaching practice:** This is the baseline level of support, provided within the classroom as part of standard teaching for diverse learners, and is not counted as one of the top three levels attracting specific funding.

Students counted in the top three levels (extensive, substantial, and supplementary) attract additional Australian Government funding through the students with disability loading.

#### WHAT INFORMATION IS COLLECTED?

A student is counted in the NCCD if they receive reasonable adjustments at school

due to disability. Each year, schools collect the following information about the student, including:

- ▶ Their year of schooling
- ▶ The level of adjustment received
- ▶ The broad type of disability.

#### HOW IS THIS DATA USED?

The NCCD data informs funding and work by schools and sectors. It ensures that support for students with disability becomes routine in the day-to-day practice of schools. The NCCD also supports students in the following ways.

- ▶ Helps schools better understand their legislative obligations and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.
- ▶ Schools focus on the individual adjustments that support students with disability. This encourages them to reflect on students' needs and to better support students.
- ▶ Facilitates a collaborative and coordinated approach to supporting students with disability.
- ▶ Improves communication about students' needs between schools, parents, guardians, carers and the community.

#### FIND OUT MORE

*NCCD Fact Sheet for Parents, Guardians and Carers*. More information can be found on the NCCD website <https://www.nccd.edu.au>

## **NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a national system of providing support to individuals with disability, their families and carers. The NDIS helps people with disability achieve their goals, which may include greater independence, community involvement, employment and improved wellbeing. The NDIS also provides Australians under the age of 65 who have a permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary supports they need to enjoy an ordinary life.

From 2026, the Australian Government will implement its Thriving Kids program, which will work alongside the NDIS by providing early support for children aged 8 and under with mild to moderate developmental delays or autism (see below).

## **CAN NDIS-FUNDED SERVICES BE DELIVERED IN THE SCHOOL?**

The National Disability Insurance Agency recommends that therapy services funded through a child's NDIS support plan are best delivered outside of school time. This allows the school to focus on teaching your child and all other students and ensures your child does not miss out on important learning. In some cases, however, it may be more suitable for these services to be provided at school.

If this is the case, the school principal will manage these services in a way that does not affect your child's opportunity to take part in class. It is important that your child does not miss out on important learning and school programs because they are receiving therapy services. The principal will also make sure that the school is able to operate to

benefit all students without undue disruption to learning.

## **FIND OUT MORE**

*NDIS Information Sheet for Parents / Carers.* More information can be found on the NDIS website <https://www.ndis.gov.au/>

## **THRIVING KIDS**

The Thriving Kids program aims to ease pressure on the NDIS by identifying developmental concerns earlier and building a national system of supports through existing community services like schools and healthcare, so children who don't have permanent and significant disabilities can receive help without needing the NDIS. Children with permanent and significant disabilities will continue to be supported by the NDIS.

- ▶ The program is for children aged 0-8 with mild to moderate developmental delays, whereas the NDIS is for individuals with permanent and significant disabilities.
- ▶ Thriving Kids will be delivered through mainstream and community services such as schools, GPs, and maternal and child health services. The NDIS provides individual plans and a choice of providers.
- ▶ The initiative is designed to create foundational supports outside the NDIS, allowing the scheme to focus on its core purpose of supporting those with the most significant needs.

## **FIND OUT MORE**

Download fact sheets and visit the Australian Government website: <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/thriving-kids?language=en>

# A SCHOOL'S OBLIGATIONS

All students have the right to a quality learning experience at school. Students with disability must be able to take part in education without discrimination and on the same basis as other students. To ensure this, schools must make reasonable adjustments, if needed, for students with disability.

It is in students' best interests that educators, students, parents, guardians, carers and others (e.g. health professionals) work collaboratively to ensure students with disability can participate fully in education. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* describe schools' responsibilities in ensuring student outcomes are supported.

## SCHOOLS MUST DELIVER INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

All schools in NSW deliver curriculum for all students through the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

Schools have obligations under the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) to ensure that all students (regardless of disability) are able to access and engage in these learning activities on the same basis as their peers. This is achieved through implementing reasonable adjustments that have been collaboratively determined and consulted with parents.

Parents can access information about the K-12 curriculum and its particular requirements through the NESA website (<https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/>) and also through their school's learning support coordinator.

Schools must follow NESA advice on curriculum pathways and options for students with disability, helping teachers plan a suitable curriculum that includes parents and carers in determining options and adjustments.

NESA requires schools to 'maintain and implement policies and procedures for identifying and providing support for students with disability and learning needs'.

Find out more here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/diversity-of-learners/special-education/students-disability>

## SCHOOLS MUST MAKE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

A reasonable adjustment is an action taken to help a student with disability take part in education on the same basis as other students. Adjustments can be made in classrooms (e.g. adapting teaching methods),

in the playground (e.g. giving extra time for transitions to and from the playground), to excursions and camps (e.g. planning excursions to accessible locations), and to the premises (e.g. ramps into school buildings). They can also be for individual student need (e.g. providing personal care support). The school assesses the needs of each student with disability and consults with the student and/or their parents, guardians and carers. Schools must make reasonable adjustments if needed. The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* define 'reasonable adjustment' as an adjustment that balances the interests of all parties affected.

Reasonable adjustments for students with disability in NSW Catholic schools are made in consultation with parents and students and can include curriculum modifications, classroom changes, and the use of technology or support staff. These adjustments are required to ensure students can participate in education on the same basis as their peers and are detailed in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). The specific adjustments vary based on the student's needs, and the school will work with families to determine the right approach.

#### TYPES OF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

##### ► **Curriculum and assessment:**

- o Differentiation: Adapting lesson content or the time allocated for completing work.
- o Alternative formats: Providing materials in formats like large print or Braille.
- o Teaching strategies: Using more visual supports, scaffolding or demonstrations.

##### ► **Classroom and environment:**

- o Seating and layout: Adjusting seating or providing a less cluttered workspace.

- o Technology: Permitting the use of personal devices, audio recorders or specific software.

- o Support: Providing extra help from a learning support assistant or peers.

##### ► **Support services:**

- o Specialist support: Accessing speech or occupational therapy, which can sometimes be funded through school grants.

- o Specialist classes: Some students with high support needs may benefit from a specialist support class located within a mainstream school.

##### ► **Assessment modifications:**

- o Extended time: Allowing more time for tests and assessments.

- o Quiet space: Providing a separate, quiet room for testing.

#### HOW ADJUSTMENTS ARE DETERMINED AND IMPLEMENTED

- Collaborative process: The school, parents and student work together to decide on the appropriate adjustments.

- Individual Education Plan (IEP): Adjustments are documented in the student's IEP.

- Based on need: Adjustments are based on the functional impact of a student's disability on their learning, not a diagnosis alone.

- Levels of support: The level of adjustment can range from supplementary (for specific activities) to substantial or extensive (for students with higher support needs).

## LEARNING SUPPORT TRAINING FOR TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF

School teacher degrees are offered through undergraduate and postgraduate courses at university. Regular professional development is mandated for all accredited teachers in New South Wales schools and NESA requires all New South Wales teaching degrees to include mandatory studies in disability education to equip graduates with 'a foundational understanding' of how to address the learning needs of students with disability.

Qualified teachers can retrain in inclusive or disability education through a masters degree, a masters with a specialisation in the area of deaf and hard of hearing or blind and low vision, or a graduate diploma.

Ongoing professional development training and support is available to teachers and support staff in Catholic schools.

The Catholic school system offers its educators professional learning such as the OLT Australia Online training courses, designed to support educators to better meet the additional needs of students with disability:

Each course provides an understanding of a specific disability, includes case studies, a range of practical assessment approaches and intervention strategies and adjustments which can be put into practice immediately. The course content is written, and updated regularly, by specialists and educational psychologists.

There are multiple options available for school staff to access Disability Standards Education training on the national portal for the NCCD: <https://www.nccd.edu.au/resources-and-tools/professional-learning>

CSNSW has also developed a 1-hour online Disability Standards for Education refresher module. There is a module available for teaching staff along with a module for support staff.

## PROVISION OF NON-TEACHING POSITIONS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

As well as classroom teachers, schools offer a range of supports to assist students with disability and the teachers who work with these students. In Catholic schools, non-teaching staff who assist students with disabilities in NSW Catholic schools include learning support assistants, guidance counsellors and other specialist support staff and allied health professionals like occupational therapists and speech pathologists. These individuals work with teachers to support students' learning, social development and wellbeing through various adjustments, programs and direct assistance.

Non-teaching staff assist with:

- ▶ In-class support: Many non-teaching staff work directly with students in the classroom to help them participate in learning activities.
- ▶ Program development: They help develop, implement and evaluate plans and programs to meet individual student needs.
- ▶ Specialist advice: They provide expert advice and support to teachers, parents and other staff on how to best assist students with disability.
- ▶ Reasonable adjustments: They help implement reasonable adjustments to a student's teaching, learning and assessment activities to ensure they can access and participate in education, as required by law.

# PREPARING THE SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILD

*'Parents are under a grave obligation to see to the religious and moral education of their children, as well as to their physical and civic training, as far as they can.'*

– Code of Canon Law, c.1113)

As a parent of a child with disability or additional needs, you are the primary educator of your child and you know your child best. You will want to prepare the school to support your child by attending planning meetings and setting up communication channels.

Make early contact with your local school at least 12-24 months before you are looking to enrol your child and ask for an appointment with the principal and learning support coordinator or teacher to begin planning your child's transition to school. This is important so you know what information and/or reports you are required to have ready for the enrolment application. The school will work with you in planning to ensure they are able to meet your child's needs.

It is important for families to share as much information as possible regarding their child's areas of strength, interests and support needs at this early stage for a smooth, happy and comfortable transition to primary or secondary school. In addition, research the school's website and talk with other parents who belong to the school community and gain as much information about the school as you can. Talk to your healthcare professionals – make sure this is the right setting for your child.

## STARTING THE PLANNING PROCESS EARLY

Early planning for starting school or transitioning to secondary school has many benefits and can ensure that:

- ▶ there are no surprises for you or your child when school begins.
- ▶ the school has all the information they need to support your child's learning.
- ▶ interruptions to your child's learning are minimised.
- ▶ the school is able to access the appropriate level of funding support for your child's needs.
- ▶ Your child's starting-school or transition to Year 7 experience is as positive as it can be.

If you are getting your child ready to start primary school you will need to talk to your child's preschool teacher, early childhood educator or any health professionals you are

working with. Make an appointment with the school and discuss your child's needs with them too. Together, they will be able to help assess your child's developmental needs. Those people working with you and your child will also be able to provide reports in preparation for school.

You may talk about 'school readiness' with teachers at preschool and school. This includes recognition and observation of skills and behaviours, including emotional maturity, social skills, language and cognitive skills, their level of independence as well as physical health and coordination.

For a smooth transition to Year 7, it's good to start thinking about secondary schools when your child is in Year 5. Many schools hold open days, information evenings and tours in each year. Going along to school information evenings or open days will give you a general feel for schools and an idea of their facilities. These are also good opportunities to meet the principal,

year coordinator and learning support coordinator.

The school you choose should meet the needs of your child and your family and be committed to educating children with disability, ADHD or other additional needs.

Check out the following Raising Children web page for some ideas on what to look for when choosing a secondary school for your child with disability: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/disability/school-play-work/school/choosing-secondary-schools-for-children-with-disability>

## PLANNING MEETINGS AT THE SCHOOL

These meetings bring together you and staff at the school to plan for your child's transition to school and for ongoing progress updates. (Different dioceses may use specific names or terms to describe these meetings.)

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Talk to your child's health professionals and discuss ways to ensure their reports reflect your child's needs and the necessary adjustments that are required to be considered by the school.

Speak to your health professionals to determine if they can visit the school and attend the planning meeting with the school's learning support teachers (LSTs) and/or classroom teacher and/or principal.

### WHO ATTENDS THE PLANNING MEETING

Contact the school prior to the meeting to identify who will be attending the meeting. The meeting will usually include:

- ▶ You and other family members or your support personnel/advocate if you choose to have one with you; make sure you let the school know who will be coming with you
- ▶ School leadership e.g. principal or assistant principal
- ▶ Learning support teacher (LST)
- ▶ Your child's new classroom teacher, if known
- ▶ School or system appointed developmental disabilities officer
- ▶ Allied health professionals (such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists) who are involved with the child.

### WHAT IS DISCUSSED IN THE PLANNING MEETING

- ▶ The school's orientation program and the possibility of arranging extra visits if they are required.
- ▶ Reasonable adjustments or resources the school may need for your child to school.
- ▶ External supports that help to connect your family, health and education professionals.
- ▶ Reports or recommendations from your child's early childhood educator or any other education professionals that are appropriate.
- ▶ Reports or recommendations from medical professionals or any specialised services such as an occupational therapist, speech therapist etc.
- ▶ Your child's abilities, strengths and needs and any achievable goals that are deemed appropriate.
- ▶ Any other programs or strategies that have helped your child.
- ▶ Identifying staff members who will coordinate the transition process for your child.
- ▶ The development of a plan detailing who will take responsibility for which action and when they need to complete it. This can be useful to keep track of tasks.
- ▶ A specialist teacher in schools who supports the needs of children with diverse learning needs as well as staff who teach them.

- ▶ What policies and protocols are in place for allied health professionals working with children within the school. This is important to ensure appropriate space and supervision is available. Parents should also discuss seeking exemption to have children attend therapies outside of school but during school times.

## DEVELOPING A PERSONALISED LEARNING PLAN (PLP)

After the planning meeting, and the additional learning needs of your child have been identified by your school and you, adjustments can be made to their learning. The personalised learning plan is a key part of the Catholic education program for students who require ongoing adjustments to learning.

The personalised planning process ensures collaboration between parents, teachers, specialist support teachers and other support personnel in setting individual goals for students for the school year and are developed directly with the school for your child. Set milestones and goals and are reviewed throughout the year and allow parents to better engage with their child's learning.

Personalised plans are developed following a disability diagnosis or may be developed following a period of ten weeks of adjustments made and recorded by the school to support a student's learning.

Things to consider in the development of the plan are:

### PLANNING AND PERSONAL SUPPORT

This covers your child's special learning needs/disability, records evidence and assessment of individual needs of the child, and sets out specific learning goals.

### CURRICULUM

This is for adjustments to curriculum that your child needs to meet the curriculum requirements, and where there is a functional impact on the child's ability to learn that requires changes to the curriculum and teaching practices to enable the child to

achieve the learning outcomes as described in the syllabus documents on the same basis as their peers.

### COMMUNICATION

This covers the functional impact on the child's ability to receive and understand information being conveyed by others (repetitive language), and the child's ability to convey a message to others (expressive language).

### ENVIRONMENT

This area is useful for students who require adjustments to their environment to support their learning and wellbeing. The adjustments are designed to increase the student's independence throughout the school day and can be implemented in the classroom, playground, library, sporting fields and during excursions.

### MOVEMENT SUPPORT

This covers your child's needs in regard to mobility and positioning, and to their ability to use the hand motor skills required to participate in learning activities.

### PERSONAL CARE

This covers your child's ability to independently and appropriately carry out essential hygiene routines which require intensive individual management to support participation (hygiene), eating/drinking/dietary needs which require individual management (eating and dietary), and the procedures specified in an individual health care plan which require specialised support (health care procedures).

### SAFETY

This covers your child's ability to independently and appropriately engage in the management strategies required to ensure they safely reason causes and effect in situations of personal safety and wellbeing and/or the safety of others.

### SOCIAL SKILLS

This covers your child's ability to engage in successful basic and complex interactions with people and participate effectively in the full school program in a contextual and socially appropriate manner (social competence).

## TOP TIPS FROM PARENTS FOR SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD WITH THE SCHOOL

You should share any information with the school about your child that you think is important. The teachers will be keen to learn as much as they can about your child from you and may ask some questions that help them get to know you and your child better. Together, you may want to talk about:

- ▶ Your child's interests, strengths or any hobbies they have.
- ▶ Any fears or anxieties about starting school or any general fears such as loud noises etc.
- ▶ What the school needs to be aware of in a health emergency – does your child have a medical action plan prepared by their health professional? If so, make sure the school is supplied with the most current plan and you continue to provide the most updated plan if it is changed by your health professionals.
- ▶ How you feel your child's disability affects their learning.
- ▶ How you feel their disability may impact them taking part in school activities.
- ▶ If there are any strategies you feel will assist them transition into school.
- ▶ The details of any programs that may have been used in the past year and were beneficial for your child.
- ▶ Any tips to assist your child manage their daily self-care.
- ▶ Any strategies that may assist your child increase their independence and ability to manage their self-care.
- ▶ Your planned travel arrangements for school drop-off and collection and any special requirements, including if the child will attend before and/or after school care. Ensure you notify the school and your child of any changes to this routine.
- ▶ Share any information regarding your child's ability to manage toilet breaks independently. To support your child's independence there may be a need to adjust or modify your child's school uniform e.g. Velcro added to pants instead of a zipper, Velcro fastened shoes etc.
- ▶ Does your child need any additional assistance during lunch breaks? Can they manage a lunchbox? Do they need a quiet space to eat lunch/recess? Make sure you advise the school of any dietary issues, allergies or food sensitivities your child may have.
- ▶ Does your child have any special requirements that can assist them to fully participate in school sports? In secondary school, will they need assistance changing into the PE uniform?
- ▶ If your child is anxious or heightened, your child may need behavioral adjustments. Talk to the school about a possible 'cool down' space and how your child can access this space. As your child ages, the school may implement a system that allows your child to use a pass or card to access this space. For this to be successful, all staff need to be aware of the plan to support the child.
- ▶ The best ways to settle your child and

help them calm down or respond to instructions

- ▶ Does your child use sensory equipment - fidget spinners or squeeze balls are good ways to help children who need something to settle their fidgeting and assist them to concentrate in class.

Make a list of what you think the needs

and possible behaviours of your child are before you see your health professional and school. Try to list them in sections or groups e.g. in the classroom, in the playground, bathroom, recess and lunch, changing for PE, sport activities and assemblies. You can use the template below for some suggestions about what information to pass on.

### INFORMATION ABOUT MY CHILD THIS IS HOW I THINK MY CHILD WILL RESPOND WHEN ...

My child arrives at school

---

My child's class is lining up, getting ready to go into their classroom, or moving between classrooms

---

There is a different teacher

---

The normal routine or timetable changes

---

It is raining, very hot or very windy

---

My child is sitting at a desk

---

My child is sitting on the floor

---

My child needs to use the bathroom

---

My child needs to eat recess or lunch

---

My child is in the playground

---

My child's class is going to assembly or church

---

It is time for PE or sport

---

My child's class is going on an excursion

---

My child is interacting with other children

---

## COMMUNICATION AND CONTACTS

During the early planning and transition stages, it is very important to ensure you have established a clear communication pathway and are aware of appropriate email addresses, phone numbers and the best times to contact staff.

Share all your concerns with the school staff. It is important you are honest to make sure the needs of your child can be discussed

and the best possible setting for your child is identified.

Ensure you have a list of staff to be able to contact should the contact staff member be unavailable or away from school.

If you find the pathway is not working well, ensure you contact the school and speak with the principal.

You can use the following template to list your key contacts.

### MY CHILD'S TEAM

SUPPORT PERSON	NAME	PHONE NO.	EMAIL ADDRESS
	Classroom Teacher		
	Learning Support Coordinator (LSC)		
	Learning Support Teacher (LST)		
	Learning Support Assistant (LSA)		
	Principal		
	Leader of Learning		
	Leader of Wellbeing (Year Coordinator)		
	School Counsellor/ Psychologist		
	Tutor Group Teacher		
	Speech Therapist		
	Psychologist		
	Other(s)		

## TOP TIPS FROM PARENTS FOR NURTURING A POSITIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Following are some words of advice from parents and carers who have 'been there and done that' in the hope it offers you some useful information and ideas to think about as you begin the school journey, whether it's going into Kindergarten or transitioning to Year 7.

Nurturing a positive relationship with the school where mutual support and respect is fostered is critical to ensure any issues that arise can be dealt with effectively and efficiently. It is very important that you have a good working relationship with your child's school. The school will balance the needs of your child's requirements with their additional learning needs and the learning needs of the other children in the class to create a positive learning environment for all children.

- ▶ Research the school's website and talk with other parents who belong to the school community and gain as much information about the school as you can. Talk to your healthcare professionals - make sure this is the right setting for your child.
- ▶ Make early contact with your local school at least 12 months before they are attending and ask for an appointment with the principal and Learning Support Teacher (LST) so you know what report(s) and information you are required to have ready for them. This can have an impact on your NDIS planning and funding needs for reports.
- ▶ Attend the school's P&F or parent body/ forum meetings. This is where you will get to meet staff at the school, learn about the way the school functions, have an opportunity to listen to the principal share current news and meet members of the school community. Write down any questions you'd like to ask during the meeting beforehand.
- ▶ Make sure you read all the school's information before attending the meeting. Most schools have parent handbooks that contain all relevant information and school policies for you to read through.
- ▶ Prepare for meetings with the school just like you would your health professional. Be mindful of the time they are allocating you and ask if they would like to talk to your child's health professionals.
- ▶ Make a list of things you want to bring up at the meeting in order of importance - consider sharing your questions with the school beforehand. Discuss the goals you have for your child.
- ▶ If you have concerns about your child's progress, make sure you know who to contact and what the best times and methods of contacting are.
- ▶ Make sure you have all current medical reports the school needs.
- ▶ It is important for parents and carers and/or their support personnel to fully understand their child's disabilities and the correct medical terminology.
- ▶ Develop a plan for the first day of primary school with your teacher, e.g. is it possible to arrive at school early, so your child is settled before everyone else starts attending? For secondary school, work with the tutor group teacher or year coordinator to ensure your young person knows who to speak with and what to do on the first day.
- ▶ Ask for transition visits; these can be very important to ensure a smooth transition for child and parent.
- ▶ Enquire about a peer 'buddy' or mentor for your child.

# POSITIVE EXPERIENCES AT PRIMARY SCHOOL: KINDERGARTEN TO YEAR 6

As the parent or carer, your attitudes about school and the importance of an education 'set the tone' for your child. You can do this by speaking positively about the new school and the experience.

Here is a chance to build some resilience and show your confidence in your child and their ability to work through this change. It may require acknowledgment that some days will go smoothly but others will be tough; however, you have confidence they will settle.

## THE FIRST DAY

The first day at any new school, for children or young people of any age, can be an exciting time. It can also be a time of fear and anxiety that can be heightened by the unfamiliarity of the school setting. This can be particularly challenging for children and young people who are living with diverse learning needs.

Families also can be fearful and anxious for their child, seeking a smooth transition, to settle in quickly, adapt to the new environment and routines, and make friends and develop connections within the school community.

What can families do to support their child's transition into a new school?

- ▶ Talk to your child about what to expect on the first day and when you will pick them up.
- ▶ Follow the school's instructions about what to bring (e.g. sun hat, spare clothes).
- ▶ Prepare the night before, lay out clothing and help them to pack their bag.

- ▶ Encourage your child to follow your morning routine and remind them of next steps.
- ▶ Discuss with the teacher the best approach to settle your child on the first day.
- ▶ If you are having trouble separating from your child, ask the teacher or educators to help you.
- ▶ Make sure you say goodbye - disappearing quietly can cause greater distress and mistrust.
- ▶ Ensure you or their carer is on time at the end of the school day to pick up your child.
- ▶ Be enthusiastic and positive.

At the end of the day talk to your child about what happened during the day. Ask general questions such as 'what did you enjoy doing?' or 'what made you smile?' Try not to 'drill' them too much - they are likely to be tired and drained.

## TOP TIPS FROM PARENTS FOR A SMOOTH START TO SCHOOL

- ▶ Read over the family information the school provided to ensure everything is prepared.
- ▶ Try to avoid non-essential disruptions in the morning as you are getting ready for the day. Changes to your routine may unsettle your child.
- ▶ Plan and organise the night before. Make sure uniforms are ready, shoes and socks nearby, lunches packed, any notes signed and prepared, bag packed with a raincoat.
- ▶ Make sure ALL belongings, even each sock, both shoes and lunchboxes and drink bottles are labelled.
- ▶ Use countdown and time checks during the morning – using a kitchen timer can help.
- ▶ Have recess and lunch at the same time as the school in the holidays to prepare before school starts.
- ▶ Prepare your child's recess and lunch and offer it to them in their lunchbox so they can practise opening, closing and unwrapping their food for each break.
- ▶ Package recess separately to lunch to avoid them eating it all in the first break.
- ▶ If possible, make sure that your child can go to and use the toilet themselves and wash their hands. Speak to your child's teacher if they need assistance.
- ▶ Practise taking shoes and socks off and putting them on. Purchase shoes they can manage such as those with Velcro fastenings – check with the school uniform policy or staff to ensure appropriate footwear is purchased.
- ▶ Speak to the principal if your child needs to have a variation to the uniform such as a cotton jumper rather than a woollen jumper because of sensory needs.
- ▶ Create a social story for your child prior to starting school and try to find out roughly what will happen during the school day, the school may be able to help you with this.
- ▶ Make sure that all your health professionals are on board regarding the start of the school year – talk to them about their role in preparing your child and talking about going to school.
- ▶ Consider using a visuals board (see below) with your child to create a visual timetable to help your child know what they need to do to prepare for school or any other activity.
- ▶ Practise putting uniform items on and taking them off and modify (within school allowances) any items which create sensory or access issues. Use Velcro fastenings and larger buttons, and consider fabric type such as wool and check if there is an acceptable alternative etc. Make sure you leave enough time to modify school uniforms if necessary.
- ▶ Practise morning and afternoon routines.
- ▶ Be positive – talk to your child about the exciting and fun experiences they will have at their new school.
- ▶ Reassure them it's OK if they feel a little unsure or overwhelmed and remind them there are lots of people who want to care for and look after them at school.
- ▶ For children commencing Kindergarten, look for books about Kindergarten and school to read together. Your local library may be able to help you out here.
- ▶ Encourage your child to dress themselves so they can practise tasks like taking their jumper on and off.
- ▶ Visit the Kindergarten classroom or travel past it on your route home. Talk about the experiences they will have at school that you know will interest them such as art, sports, music, number work etc.
- ▶ Talk to your child and establish a goodbye routine together.
- ▶ Organise holiday play dates (if possible) with friends who have children at the school and who may have a child starting Kindergarten.
- ▶ Create a routine around sleep – at this age, children need 10 to 12 hours sleep each night. Practise sticking to bedtime and wake up times.

## A GOOD START TO THE DAY: THE MORNING ROUTINE

Make sure your morning routine sets your child up for a great day. Your child's morning can dictate how the rest of the day progresses.

The most important approach to starting your child's day is to remain calm and supportive. You could use a chart with pictures (visuals) like the one below, outlining the different steps for getting ready.

Use visuals and schedule planners to maintain routines and prompt your child to complete the tasks they need to do before heading off to school.

Give age-appropriate responsibilities. Your child may be able to empty the kitchen rubbish or compost, feed pets or wash their breakfast dishes.

Use fridge planners or charts to list the schedule of tasks to complete. Help them to organise their school bag using a packing list.

Prepare for school the night before by polishing shoes (this might be a nightly task on a job list), organising uniform pieces, pack lunches, sign any notes and return them to their bag, make sure any library books are returned in their library bag, set aside any items that might be needed for after school activities such as dance gear, sports equipment, water bottles etc.

### MORNING TASKS VISUALS BOARD

Create a table similar to the one below and print and use the visuals over the page to make a schedule for your child to help get ready in the morning or prepare for bed in the evening.

You can use a permanent marker to write in the name of the routine such as 'In the morning'.

You can laminate the board and visuals and apply Velcro dots or use Blu-tack to keep them in place.

For older children, you might like to take photos of your child completing these actions to make the board more personal.

## IN THE MORNING

	
<i>Get out of bed</i>	<i>Go to the toilet</i>
	
<i>Have a bath or shower</i>	<i>Get dressed in uniform</i>
	
<i>Brush hair</i>	<i>Have breakfast</i>
	
<i>Brush teeth</i>	<i>Pack lunchbox and drink</i>
	
<i>Check timetable and pack school bag</i>	<i>Get in the car/catch bus/ walk to school</i>
	
<i>Go to school!</i>	<i>Say hello to your friends and teacher</i>

## BACKPACKS AND PACKING

Choose a bag or backpack that your child can easily identify, or add tags or labels so they can easily pick it out of a crowd of other bags. Try not to overload it or make it too big, to prevent neck, shoulder and back strain. Select one with padded shoulder straps and adjust the fit so it sits snugly against the back. Pack heavier items, like water bottles and books closest to the spine and keep the rest organised to avoid shifting. Regularly clean out the bag with your child to avoid carrying unnecessary weight.

You might like to include a change of clothes, continence products if necessary, and communication aids. You could also pack items your child needs to manage sensory needs: a cuddly toy, headphones or fidget toys, as well as any preferred snacks or feeding supplies.

## BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Out of school hours (OOSH) services find that families are really good at telling the school but often forget to tell OOSH, assuming that the school will pass on the information. It is important that OOSH has the same information and can provide a consistent environment for your child.

It's important to keep in mind that OOSH and school are two different settings. OOSH is a social environment where play and leisure are the basis for learning and development. It is usually not as structured as school and can provide unique opportunities for children to thrive.

Here are some tips for smoothing the way for your child to attend OOSH:

### INFORMATION ABOUT MY CHILD FOR BEFORE OR AFTER SCHOOL CARE OR ACTIVITIES THIS IS HOW I THINK MY CHILD WILL RESPOND WHEN ...

My child arrives at the activity

---

My child's group or team is getting ready to start activities

---

There is a different leader, coach or teacher.

---

The normal activity routine changes

---

It is raining, very hot or very windy

---

My child is sitting on the floor

---

My child needs to use the bathroom

---

My child needs to eat

---

My child feels sick or unwell

---

They are anxious or overwhelmed

---

My child arrives at the activity

---

My child's group or team is getting ready to start activities

---

There is a different leader, coach or teacher.

---

- ▶ Make early contact with the service that your child will be attending.
- ▶ Be prepared to share the same information that you have shared with the school.
- ▶ Ask questions about funding mechanisms for Inclusion Support. It can be difficult for OOSH services to access funding as they sit outside of the school setting. It may be the first time a service has applied or accessed funding and they may need your help. OOSH services may have an Inclusion Support Team you can work with. These teams build capacity and capability with educators and services and help address participation barriers.
- ▶ Address all the same issues you would with school. For example, what adjustments need to be made and what supports are required.
- ▶ Consider how travel to and from OOSH as well as transition to and from school will impact your child. For example, does a handover need to occur? Is your child confident to travel on a bus? Is there a communication system in place between the school and OOSH?
- ▶ If a planning meeting occurs with the school, consider inviting a representative from OOSH to attend also.
- ▶ Remember that information sharing and communication between family, health professionals and the school and OOSH is vital. Consistency will help your child to succeed.

You may find the following template useful for when you meet with the OOSH or before and after school activities leader.

## CANTEEN USE

Talk to your school contact about canteen use and the process your child will need to follow to order lunch or purchase snacks during lunch and recess.

Talk with your child about accessing the canteen and develop a method with your school's contact person for your child to attend the canteen and purchase snacks.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Ask your teacher for a copy of the class weekly schedule each term and keep it on the fridge or on a noticeboard. Each evening, encourage your child to check the schedule with you to see what day is it, e.g. if it's sports day, so you can pack their schoolbag together.

You might want to create a visual schedule with pictures or symbols, then talk to your child each morning about what will happen during the day. Work with the school to stay on top of any changes to routine that are coming up so you can talk through these with your child.

Ensure your child is offered adjustments for physical comfort, such as different seating options or the ability to stand periodically. Regular breaks can also be beneficial.

## COMMUNICATING WITH THE SCHOOL

Try to always read the school newsletter, any electronic communications and the school website and deal with any notes that come home in your child's bag. If you are not able to access the communications using technology, contact the school and ask for a copy to be sent home so you can link in with the school and parish community.

If you are feeling anxious about your child at school, talk to the principal. Share your concerns and suggest ways they may be able to assist you to feel reassured.

Consider talking to your child's teacher and school about awareness education for other students.

It is very important that you work with your school and health professionals to determine the best way for your child to have input into planning meetings.

## CONVERSATION STARTERS TO DISCUSS CHALLENGING ISSUES WITH TEACHERS

**Issue:** Your child says, 'The teachers hate me.'

**Conversation starter:** 'Hello (Teacher's name), I wanted to thank you for the work you do to support my child and let you know that I am concerned that (child's name) has come home and told me they feel that you dislike them. I know that would not be true. Can you please help me reassure them?'

## TOP TIPS FROM PARENTS FOR STAYING CONNECTED WITH THE SCHOOL

- ▶ Maintain positive relationships with teachers – ensure you only conduct appropriate conversations around your child.
- ▶ Keep channels of communication functional – how does the school want you to communicate?
- ▶ Remember – if it bothers you, it likely bothers your teacher.
- ▶ Communicate with the school if you notice lunch is (regularly) not eaten, your child's demeanour changes or they begin to develop school refusal behaviour. The school counsellor may assist here.
- ▶ Make sure you are aware of the school's policy on mobile phone use and support it.
- ▶ Be aware of the school's daily timetable – is your child avoiding anything particularly such as sport? If this is the case, contact your child's teacher.
- ▶ Share with the school any areas of strength, interest or expertise to be used as a way to connect with the child e.g. a football team.
- ▶ Set up regular sessions for communication and feedback about your child's transition and progress with the school staff involved.
- ▶ Communication between you and the school about your child's progress is important and enables you to engage with your child's learning and progress, see examples of work and develop a positive relationship with your child's teachers. There are formal and informal occasions for this, both face-to-face and in writing.
- ▶ Share all your concerns with the school staff. It is important you are honest to make sure the needs of your child can be discussed and the best possible setting for your child is identified.
- ▶ Use technology to make connections if you can't meet at the school. Ask if it is possible to set up virtual meetings to help develop rapport and connections.
- ▶ See if you can set up a meet and greet with other parents and classmates prior to starting school – the parish may be able to help with this.
- ▶ Find out if the school has a 'Parent Buddy' program that allows you to make contact with a parent from the same class grade as your child, so you are able to learn about routines and general information about the school and wider community.

**Issue:** Your child says, 'I never get picked to go first or be a helper.'

**Conversation starter:** 'I understand it must be difficult to remember who has been selected to be a helper in the classroom, and I was wondering if there is a system in place for all children to have a go at being first (or leaders of the line etc.) (Child's name) is feeling they are being overlooked and I want to reassure them.'

**Issue:** Your child says, 'I always finish my work last and never get to have a turn using the computer.'

**Conversation starter:** 'I love your reward system for the children when they finish their work first. Is there any way (child's name) could be given access to computer time?'

**Issue:** Your child says, 'The teacher never listens to me and just sends me out of class.'

**Conversation starter:** '(Child's name) has said they are being sent out of class a lot at the moment. Could you advise me what is happening so together we can address the cause? Can you also share with me the best way for (child's name) to advise you of the circumstances that caused them to behave in this way?'

**Issue:** Your child says, 'The teacher always listens to other students and takes their word against mine.'

**Conversation starter:** 'Could you please help me understand the process when there is a situation involving another student and my child and they both have different ideas of what has happened, so we can work together with (child's name) to better understand the process.'

**Issue:** Your child says, 'I am always picked last by the other students.'

**Conversation starter:** '(Child's name) is feeling they are always picked last by students, and this is making them feel sad. Is there any help or suggestion you can share with me to reassure my child?'

**Issue:** Your child says, 'I am never selected to be involved in the liturgy.'

**Conversation starter:** 'Could you please advise me what my child and I can work on so that they may be considered for a role in an upcoming liturgy?'

## DISABILITY PROVISIONS FOR NAPLAN

Adjustments help students with disability take part in NAPLAN fairly while keeping the tests valid. These supports should match what the student normally uses at school, as shown in their personalised learning and support plan or NCCD evidence. Students can use more than one adjustment, but the support must not change what the test is assessing.

Available adjustments include assistive technology, alternative formats, colour themes, scribes, NAPLAN support persons, extra time and rest breaks. Students using technology should practise beforehand to ensure compatibility with the NAPLAN platform. The online system also offers keyboard navigation, audio and visual alternatives, and optional colour settings. If online supports aren't suitable, schools can request special print formats such as large-print, black-and-white or braille, or in some cases, approved PDF versions for students who use specific technology.

Scribes may help in the writing test, and NAPLAN support persons may help in other tests, but strict rules apply. Extra time or rest breaks can be used if they reflect the student's usual classroom adjustments.

Most adjustments can be approved by the school, but some require an application to NESA: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/naplan/naplan-adjustments>

## EXCURSIONS AND CAMPS

Plan and prepare your child well for any school excursions (i.e. changes to routine) - practise using a toiletry bag, dirty washing bag, think about medication use and talk to your child's teacher about their requirements for packaging and documentation with instructions for administration. Talk to your child about what will happen on the day, e.g. the bus trip, what they will see, who will look after them and so on.

When preparing for camp, start by communicating with the school early to arrange support and reasonable adjustments. You should also practice key skills like independence and hygiene, use visual aids like social stories and schedules, and pack smartly with pre-organised outfits and necessary medications for administering by staff. Familiarising your child with the camp environment through visits, pictures and videos can also help reduce anxiety (both yours and your child's!). Be honest with the school about your child's needs.

Talk to your child's teacher and support staff and develop a plan together about your child's specific needs at camp.

Do 'camp at home' practice. Practise camp-related activities like changing clothes, personal hygiene and sleeping in a different environment - a practice sleepover at a friend's or relative's house can help your child get comfortable with being away from home.

Talk to your child about what will happen at camp. Encourage them to try the activities at camp and teach them to speak to an adult if they are experiencing big feelings they can't cope with.

Make sure you label all belongings; it can be helpful to put outfits in separate bags for each day. Include a comfort item for bedtime. Talk to your child's teacher about the best

way to pack medications and any special, safe foods.

Before camp, talk to your child about dealing with homesickness and any worries they may have.

## HOMEWORK

Primary school is a good time to set up good homework habits for after school. If you establish a consistent routine in primary school, by the time they get to secondary school they'll be familiar with the routine of sitting down to do some schoolwork at home each afternoon or evening.

First of all, make sure your child has some time out after school and a break to rest or do a fun activity so they can wind down.

Work with your child's teacher to understand the expectations for homework length and purpose. Ask for modified assignments if needed.

Create a dedicated space for doing homework that is quiet, with a comfortable chair and desk, free from distractions like televisions or phones.

Find the right time to do homework for your child - you'll soon work out if they're best to do it in the afternoon or after dinner in the evening.

Offer help but encourage independence. Let your child try tasks first and guide them to the right answer rather than giving it to them.

You might like to set a timer together for each task so that they get experience in time management.

Make sure you celebrate the wins! Try a reward system for completing homework and stay positive: maintain a positive and patient attitude.

## SELF-ADVOCACY

You can help your child develop self-advocacy skills at school by encouraging them to understand their needs, express their views and ask for support with confidence.

When children are encouraged to speak up about what helps them learn, they build independence, resilience and positive relationships with teachers and peers. This helps ensure appropriate adjustments are in place so your child can participate fully in learning and school life.

Encourage your child to ask their teacher for help when needed.

Include your child in planning meetings where appropriate so you can set goals together.

Help build your child's confidence in sharing ideas and concerns by asking them about ways they learn and acknowledging and acting on their views.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

To work with your child's school on making friends and social skills, communicate with the teacher to get their perspective and ask them to implement strategies like strategic pairing and classroom rules that foster inclusion. You can also support your child by reinforcing social skills at home through role-playing, encouraging participation in extracurricular activities, and modelling positive behaviours like empathy and conflict resolution.

Ask about support systems like buddy programs that pair students, or clubs that offer activities at lunchtime.

## TRAVEL TO AND FROM SCHOOL

In the school holidays, practise taking the bus or train or walking to school so they are familiar with the process. As much as possible, try to do this at the times your child will be using this transport.

If your child is eligible for funded assisted transport, ensure this is discussed with the principal of the school and be aware of the parking space for pickup and drop-offs.

Enquire at the school to determine if there is the possibility of a 'travel buddy' - a student who also uses that transport service - being appointed to support your child while in transit.

Consider role-playing travel plan changes so your child is able to problem solve and manage a change in routine or unexpected outcomes e.g. if the bus or transport fails to arrive, if they get off at the wrong bus stop, etc.

Share your child's travel schedule with their teacher so they are aware of the arrangements. You could also create a visual reminder that can be attached to the child's bag.

## UNIFORMS

Practise wearing new uniforms in the holidays before school starts and make any modifications needed like washing to soften material, cutting off tags and adding pockets if needed.

If your child doesn't like wearing the uniform, try making the experience positive by using a timer, playing games or giving praise while they wear it.

If there are options like polo shirts or PE-style clothing, consider if those would be more comfortable.

Let your child wear something comfortable underneath the uniform, like a soft-fabric T-shirt or compression wear that offers deep touch pressure, which can help make the uniform feel more tolerable.

Make sure all items of clothing are labelled clearly and pack spare clothing for them to take in their backpack every day or keep at the school.

# SUCCESS AT SECONDARY SCHOOL: YEARS 7-10

The daily routine in secondary school is very different to primary school. Your son or daughter may need support to develop good organisational skills and use schedules and timetables effectively to ensure assessment tasks are completed and submitted.

Ask the principal if there is a time before school starts that you are able to access the school outside of busy school hours to walk around the school with your young person and identify the rooms they will need to access for their classes as well as common spaces such as the library, toilets, canteen and administration block.

## THE FIRST DAY

Preparation is the key to ensuring the first day at high school runs as smoothly as possible. Ask for your young person's timetable so they are aware of exactly what is going to happen.

Review the school's website regularly and ensure that you are receiving the school's newsletter to stay up to date with activities and events at school.

Check with your young person's school to determine the routine for the first few days of a new school year and talk to your young person about any variation in the timetable.

Talk to your young person's learning support coordinator (LSC) to ensure they are supported to manage this variation in the timetable if it is required.

Ask the LSC whether it is possible to appoint a 'buddy' to accompany your young person through the day if needed.

Ensure your young person knows where to go and who to ask to speak with if they are feeling overwhelmed.

They should have already met their tutor group/roll call/pastoral care teacher. Determine if this is the person who can be asked to check in with your young person through the day.

Your young person may experience additional stress as they become more responsible for their own learning and are seen by other students as role models - increasing expectations for the student.

Talk to your young person about the increased expectations regarding uniform, behaviour and study.

Ask for a timetable of any excursions or extra visits at the start of the year.

## A GOOD MORNING ROUTINE

A good routine is critical. It can be even more important than during the primary school years as you will be aiming to develop greater independence in your young person.

Try practising the morning routine through the holidays in the lead-up to school, to embed and reinforce the routine in your young person's morning.

Work with your young person to encourage them to use their timetable to pack their school bag the night before with the books and equipment they will need.

Ensure your young person has the correct uniform prepared for each day depending on the timetable. Be aware that many schools run a two-week timetable or A & B weeks.

A whiteboard or noticeboard in the bedroom is a great tool in high school as you can have the school timetable and the morning routine displayed on it. You may also need to set up a timetable of assessment tasks.

Together, set a daily alarm for the same time for them to wake them and begin their day.

## AFTER-SCHOOL REST AND RECREATION

Make sure your young person has time to 'cool down' and process their day, de-stress and unwind after school.

Set up good routines for the afternoons. Consider setting up a timetable that provides for free time, after-school activities and homework.

Prepare any items needed for after-school activities the night before together.

Be careful not to over-schedule your young person - they need time to just 'be'.

Talk to your young person's after-school activity coach, leader, teacher and offer them guidance on the best way to engage with your young person.

Be mindful that as they grow and develop, they may experience increasing tiredness. Talk to your healthcare professional about changes in your young person's routine or patterns of behaviour as you become aware of these and if they concern you.

## BACKPACKS AND PACKING

Add a copy of the timetable to a whiteboard in their bedroom, on a noticeboard or on the fridge, and encourage your young person to pack their bag the evening before.

Ensure your young person checks off the books/resources they will need for the lessons the following day and that these are packed into their bag.

Ask your young person to help you make their lunch and put their water bottle in the fridge the night before.

In the morning, use a checklist they can use to ensure all their items are in their bag, such as their bus pass, phone (if allowed), lunch, water and so on.

## CANTEEN USE

Ask the school for a copy of the canteen menu and talk through the options with your young person. You can role play how they can order items and pay for them at the canteen.

Talk to your school contact about canteen use and the process your young person will need to follow to order lunch or purchase snacks during lunch and recess.

Talk with your young person about accessing the canteen and develop a method with your schools contact person for your young person to attend the canteen and purchase snacks.

## CHOOSING SUBJECTS

Parents and students are advised to talk to the learning support coordinator (LSC) regarding subject selections in Years 9-10 as early as possible. This is important to ensure parents and students are aware of and understand the processes involved in course selection as they move through high school.

The requirements of courses as stipulated by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) require careful planning and consideration, so early planning is essential.

NESA also provides advice to schools regarding curriculum options for students with disability. Parents can access this information through the NESA website and also through their school's learning support coordinator. Find out more on the NESA

website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/diversity-of-learners/special-education/accessing-curriculum>


Students with disabilities in Catholic secondary schools, particularly those with an intellectual disability, can take Life Skills courses, which are designed to help them develop vocational and independent living skills. Decisions about a student's curriculum are made on an individual basis, involving parents, teachers and school staff to create a personalised plan.

### WHAT IS THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM?

- ▶ Courses based on Life Skills outcomes and content are an option for students who cannot access the standard outcomes of the regular curriculum.
- ▶ These courses are available from Years 7-12 and are part of both the Record of School Achievement (RoSA) and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) credentials.
- ▶ The focus is on building practical abilities for daily living, social interaction and employment, such as managing money, using transportation and improving social and emotional skills.

A student who starts a Life Skills course in Stage 5 must continue with a Life Skills course in Stage 6.

For other students, curriculum options may include standard syllabuses with adjustments to teaching, learning and



assessment. For example, providing explicit teaching, using visual cues, creating a language-rich environment, or offering different ways for students to express themselves.

## COMMUNICATION AND CONTACTS

Ask the school to identify the best person to contact and the best way to do this (including times of the day) if you have concerns.

Ask for regular meetings to check on your young person's progress.

It is very important that you work with your school and health professionals to determine the best way for your young person to have a voice in planning discussions at high school. Secondary students should be able to attend and contribute to these meetings as they are comfortable and able to. This helps them develop self-advocacy skills that will be needed post-school. Building on their skills each year can help students to have greater independence and confidence in ensuring they are able to have their needs heard and met.

Make sure that you give up-to-date reports to the school for their records.

Make sure that you have discussed a timeout strategy with the school and this is clearly understood by your young person when they begin Year 7.

Be aware of the school's daily timetable

- is your young person avoiding anything in particular, such as sport? If this is the case, contact your young person's year coordinator.

Often teachers may arrange students into group to complete tasks. Talk to your young person about group work in class. If this is an issue, speak to your young person's teacher and consider approaching your allied health workers if it is an issue your young person needs assistance with to manage building relationships.

## CONVERSATION STARTERS TO DISCUSS CHALLENGING ISSUES WITH TEACHERS

Sometimes, you will want to make contact with the school and arrange to speak with a teacher about an issue your young person is having in their class. Email or ring the school in the first instance to set up a time to have a conversation. The following script might help you begin a conversation:

**Conversation starter:** 'Hi (name), is there a time that we could meet to discuss how (young person's name) is going at school? I can meet with you after school most afternoons. I appreciate the support you provide (young person's name) and I want to follow up with a few concerns (young person's name) has recently come home with. I understand that working together as a team to support (young person's name) is important.'

Here are some other ways you can begin conversations with school staff.



**Issue:** Your young person is having difficulty functioning effectively in group work situations.

**Conversation starter:** 'We want to support (young person's name) to experience different ways of learning in the classroom. Our young person is having difficulty joining in group work. How can we support them to engage and participate more effectively in group work?'

**Issue:** Your young person has indicated they have no friends at school.

**Conversation starter:** '(Year/Wellbeing Coordinator's name), my young person is having some difficulty making friends. Are there any clubs or activities that the school hosts that support friendship skills development?'

**Issue:** Your young person is having issues with their body image.

**Conversation starter:** '(Year/Wellbeing Coordinator's name), my young person seems to have body image concerns. Do you have any experience with this or are you able to help me access support (e.g. the school counsellor) at school (or in the community) to help my young person?'

**Issue:** Your young person is overwhelmed by multiple assessments due in the same week.

**Conversation starter:** 'We are working on time management at home, but (Name) is struggling with the current exam block. Could we discuss if any spacing of tasks or misadventure provisions apply here?'

## DISABILITY PROVISIONS FOR NAPLAN

Disability provisions for NAPLAN in secondary schools ensure students with identified disabilities can take part on an equal basis by providing adjustments that reflect the support they normally receive in class. These may include alternative test formats such as braille or large print, help from a support person to indicate responses, extra time, rest breaks, special seating, or access to a physical calculator if a student is unable to use the online version.

All adjustments are tailored to the student's individual needs and are usually recorded in their personalised learning and support plan.

Most decisions are made by the school in consultation with parents - and students where appropriate - who must give consent, while some adjustments require approval from NESAs.

Schools must keep documentation confirming a student's disability and the reasons the adjustments are needed.

Parents begin the process by discussing their young person's needs with the school, providing relevant documentation from health professionals, and giving consent for any recommended adjustments.

Most adjustments can be approved by the school, but some require an application to NESAs: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/naplan/naplan-adjustments>

## EXCURSIONS AND CAMPS

Planning early with the school is essential to ensure your young person is supported on excursions or camps. Begin by discussing what the activity involves and sharing any information about your young person's needs. Allied health specialists can also suggest helpful supports or adjustments.

Meet with your young person's support staff at the school to develop a detailed plan that considers their health, sensory and behavioural needs, as well as everyday routines such as medication, personal care, toileting, sleep, food preferences, travel sickness, and any fears or phobias.

The best thing to do is to talk to your young person about what will happen or might happen, on an excursion or at an overnight camp. If you can, get a map of the venue or area and talk through the bed arrangements, especially if they have to share a cabin or dormitory, the eating areas and catering, what to do during free time, where to go if they need time out, and who to talk to if they're feeling anxious or homesick.

Practise sleeping in a tent in the backyard or at a relative or friend's house. Use tools like calendars to count down and packing checklists, and even visit the camp location beforehand if you can.

Ask the school if you can volunteer to assist on excursions or camps. If you're really worried you could even think about staying nearby just in case of emergencies.

## HOMework

Create a space in your home that allows your young person to complete tasks set for homework. The space needs appropriate lighting, desk space and a comfortable chair that encourages your young person to complete homework.

Encourage your young person to take a break once they arrive home from school or afternoon activities and enjoy some quiet time to recharge, reflect and spend time with their family before they commence homework or home study.

Use a noticeboard or whiteboard in their study space to display their school timetable and a homework/home study schedule that includes assessments and tasks and after-school activities. This way everyone in the family can keep track of your young person's activities.

Identify the process your young person's school uses, such as an assessment handbook, to communicate homework or assignments that are required to be completed. Check to see if your young person's school uses technology or an app to set and keep track of homework tasks and assignments.

Seek the school's help if your young person becomes overwhelmed with tasks set to be completed at home. Work with your young person and the school to negotiate task priority and completion dates if they are struggling to complete all set homework and assessments.

## MOBILE PHONES

Obtain a copy of the school's policy or guidelines on student mobile phone use and support your young person to understand them.

Talk with your young person about a prepared response should another student ask to borrow their phone. Encourage your young person to respond by telling students they are unable to share their phone and suggest the student approach the office if they need to make a call.

Talk to your young person about mobile phone usage while travelling to and from school using transport such as a bus or train. Agree on a response your young person can offer should they be encouraged to search inappropriate websites.

Talk to your health professionals and the school's learning support staff about phone use and ensure your young person has a clear understanding and you support and agree to the school's protocols.

Ensure you set up appropriate boundaries around mobile phone use and talk to your child about social media rules, cyberbullying and being careful about what details they reveal about themselves online. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/resources>

## PERIOD KIT

Talk to your daughter about what to do at school if she gets her period. Keep a period kit in her backpack, which can include sanitary products and a change of underwear.

Discuss with your daughter where she can go to for help if she needs another uniform or feels unwell.

## SCHOOLWORK ORGANISATION

Obtain a clear list of stationery requirements for the school year. Gather all prerequisites and cover books (if required to do so; some subjects, such as Science, ask for a plastic cover as a minimum) and ensure they are clearly labelled.

Find out if the school has a BYOD (bring your own device) scheme or if you are required to provide IT for your young person. Seek guidance on the specifications and talk to the school if you have any concerns providing this resource.

Set up a space at home for your young person to store all their schoolwork, books and folders, as not all books will be required each day.

Obtain a copy of your young person's school assessment handbook or access the school's app so you are aware when an assessment task is due.

## SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-advocacy helps young people with disability or autism express their needs, make choices, and participate in decisions. It builds confidence and independence by teaching communication skills, understanding rights, and encouraging self-awareness, enabling them to access supports and have a stronger voice at school and beyond.

Find out how to help your teenager develop self-advocacy skills here: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/development/social-emotional-development/self-advocacy-helping-teenagers-speak-up-for-themselves>



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

Discuss with the school any support programs such as Peer Support or a buddy program that might be available for your young person when they first commence at the school.

Find out if the school has any clubs or extracurricular activities that might provide your young person with a mechanism to develop friendships with others.

Approach the school and discuss with your young person's teacher or learning support coordinator or principal any issue where your young person is actively excluded and seek advice regarding the strategies the school is adopting to manage this.

Consider supporting your young person to join a club or activity outside of schools to expand their friendship circle. It may be Scouts, a music class, cultural group or a sporting group.

Check with your parish to see if they have a youth group or other youth-based activities.

Include your young person in planning meetings at the school to assist them to increase their levels of independence and build confidence in their ability to advocate for themselves. Ensure you and your young person know who will be attending the meeting. Reinforce with your young person

that you are there to support them.

Encourage your young person to talk about their experiences, what they are finding difficult and how they would like to be helped.

Work towards supporting your young person to be able to clearly articulate their goals and have discussions with staff about strategies that can be implemented to support these goals.


## TIMETABLE MANAGEMENT

Access a copy of the school timetable and a map of the school as early as possible. Check to see if there is a virtual map showing classrooms, the school hall and other areas that your young person can access on their device, or download a copy to print from the school website.

Determine and discuss with your young person places they can safely use if they are seeking a quiet, calm space. Check the library opening hours and talk to your young person about this.

Set up a timetable at home that includes blocks of time for tasks or activities at home such as bedroom tidying, pet care and feeding, home chores, outdoor activities etc. and practise transitioning between these tasks.

Ask the school if a buddy can be appointed



to accompany them around the school to make sure they are able to get to each class.

Load a copy of their timetable onto their phone, have several copies at home as well as a space in their bag. Keep a copy yourself in your phone or wallet that includes the times that breaks and lessons start and end.

## TRAVEL TO AND FROM SCHOOL

In the school holidays, practise taking the bus or train or walking to school so they are familiar with the process. As much as possible, try to do this at the times your young person will be using this transport.

If your young person is eligible for funded assisted transport, ensure this is discussed with the principal of the school and be aware of the parking space for pick-up and drop-offs.

Enquire at the school to determine if there is the possibility of a 'travel buddy' - a student who also uses that transport service - being appointed to support your young person while in transit.

Consider role playing travel plan changes so your young person is able to problem-solve and manage a change in routine e.g. if the bus or transport fails to arrive, if they get off at the wrong bus stop or miss the bus or train. Talk through what could happen and what they could do in different scenarios.

Practise using a mobile phone to ensure your young person is able to connect with key people to seek assistance if they have disruptions to their travel.

## UNIFORMS

Ensure you have all the requirements for each subject e.g. an apron for cooking, PE gear, safety glasses etc.

Make sure you label the timetable to note which uniform (academic or sport) is worn each day.

Make sure all parts of the uniform items are labelled with your young person's name - even shoes and socks.



# SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL: YEARS 11–12

Stage 6 can be a stressful period in your child's schooling. If they are commencing Stage 6 at a new school, contact the new school while they are in Year 10 to organise transition visits for your teenager.

Speak to your child's school principal to ensure that options to complete Stage 6 are available at the school.

Organisation is the key and your teenager may need more help than they did in Year 10.

Be aware that as your child commences Stage 6, they may experience increased fatigue as a result of the increased teen pressure to perform at high levels in all subjects.

Don't hesitate or wait until scheduled parent-teacher interviews to make contact with the school. Arrange for a meeting with the learning support coordinator and/or teachers if you are aware there are concerns or issues with your child's progress. Set up regular meetings with their support team at the school to keep track of your child's progress.

## THE FIRST DAY

Ensure your teen knows where to go on the first day of Year 11 and who to ask to speak with if they are feeling overwhelmed.

As the number of students who may be continuing to Year 11 decreases make sure that your teen is aware of who amongst their peers is continuing.

Make sure your teen knows what the school's expectations are when they have timetabled free periods.

Ensure your teen asks for a timetable of any excursions or extra visits at the start of the year.

## CHOOSING SUBJECTS

The requirements of HSC courses as stipulated by NESA require careful planning and consideration, so early planning is essential.

NESA also provides advice to schools

regarding curriculum options for students with disability. Parents can access this information through the NESA website and also through their school's learning support coordinator. Find out more on the NESA website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/diversity-of-learners/special-education/accessing-curriculum>

## CURRICULUM PATHWAYS

Decisions about a student's curriculum are made on an individual basis, involving parents, teachers and school staff to create a personalised plan.

- ▶ **Differentiated standard syllabus:** Most students with disabilities will have their needs met through adjustments to the standard NSW syllabus, which can include adaptations, reductions or expansions to the curriculum.
- ▶ **Life Skills courses:** For students with significant learning needs, NESA provides Life Skills courses for Years 11–12, allowing students to access different outcomes and content than those in the standard curriculum.

### LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

- ▶ Courses based on Life Skills outcomes and content are an option for students who cannot access the standard outcomes of the regular curriculum.
- ▶ These courses are available from Years 7-12 and are part of both the Record of School Achievement (RoSA) and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) credentials.
- ▶ The focus is on building practical abilities for daily living, social interaction and employment, such as managing money, using transportation and improving social and emotional skills.

A student who starts a Life Skills course in Stage 5 must continue with a Life Skills course in Stage 6.

### DISABILITY PROVISIONS FOR THE HSC

Disability provisions in the HSC are practical arrangements designed to help students who couldn't otherwise make a fair attempt to show what they know in an exam room.

Provisions include extended time to complete exams, or a quiet, separate space in which to do exams.

More information can be found in the NSW Government's HSC disability provisions guide for teachers and parents at: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/hsc/disability-provisions/guide>

## EXAM PREPARATION

Speak to your teen's learning support coordinator about any exam support the school may be able to offer. If your teen experiences anxiety, talk to your teen's health professionals so strategies can be implemented early to support them.

Begin conversations early about any special provisions that may be available for your teen as they prepare for exams, particularly HSC exams. Ensure the school applies for NESAs approval for special provisions for your teen.

Seek advice from the school regarding NESAs misadventure and illness documentation requirements and guidelines so you are prepared if an application is needed.

Talk to your allied health professionals about the extra stress that will occur with the Trial and HSC exams and work out a plan with the school if your teenager is overwhelmed with anxiety on the day.

## POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

As your school journey comes to a close when your teen completes their final year of school, preparation needs to begin early to ensure post-school success.

Parents or carers need to begin conversations with students about pathways

they are considering after school. Encourage your teen to talk to the school's careers advisor, who will be able to provide information about options for post-school pathways and any forums or networks that might be available.

Support can be found on the following websites:

**National Disability insurance Scheme (NDIS)** <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/finding-keeping-and-changing-jobs/leaving-school>

**Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training** <https://www.adcet.edu.au/>

## APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

Young people can commence an apprenticeship or traineeship with an employer or while they are still at school. Training Services NSW offers support to apprentices and trainees with a disability and their employers, including alerting employers to the Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support programs provided by the Australian Government.

Support offered by the NSW Government targeted at young people with disability is aimed at helping them transition to further education or work:

- ▶ NSW Public Sector Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program roles for people with disability
- ▶ Careers NSW support for those wishing to enter the workforce, change careers or develop new skills. Support is provided through individual career guidance and information. People with disability are one of the key equity groups which are targeted by this service.

## STUDY AT TAFE


In accordance with the National Skills Agreement, students with disability are able to access fee-free TAFE places. Students can access TAFE disability support services: <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/study/support-services/disability>

TAFE NSW employs disability teacher consultants who are responsible for establishing and coordinating specialist teaching and non-teaching support services for students with disability. Their tasks include:

- ▶ coordinating the appropriate design and modification of teaching programs, including provision of assistive teaching technologies and specialised equipment
- ▶ supporting TAFE NSW teachers of students with disability with their teaching methodologies and appropriate modifications to meet student needs
- ▶ liaising with Disability Employment Services for students with disability as they finish their studies and transition to employment.

Under its Disability and Access Services program, TAFE NSW also provides students with disability with a range of services such as:

- ▶ assistive technology and equipment
- ▶ negotiation, review and implementation of reasonable adjustment plans.



Students with disability training through the Smart and Skilled program also attract funding for their training providers to ensure there are reasonable adjustments and support in place.

### **STUDY AT UNIVERSITY**

Both the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* apply to all educational settings, including universities.

At the ten New South Wales public universities the Higher Education Disability Support Program provides funding to eligible higher education providers, to assist with supporting students with disability to access, participate and succeed in higher education.

The program includes the following features:

- ▶ funding is allocated based on the number of students enrolled

- ▶ funding is also available for students where equipment and educational supports are required for those students with 'high cost needs'
- ▶ funding can be used for staff training, student support, and to modify course content.

Students with a disability may also be eligible for the Educational Access Scheme via UAC <https://www.uac.edu.au/future-applicants/scholarships-and-schemes/educational-access-schemes>

### **SCHOOL'S OUT FOREVER!**

Year 12 students often participate in ceremonies, formal occasions and end-of-year graduations and activities. Talk with your teen, allied health professionals and the school about what is going to happen so your teenager is not overwhelmed and can enjoy and celebrate the end of their school days.

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