



**Down Syndrome
Australia**

Inclusive therapy in the education system

This resource has been developed to provide information and advice to schools and therapists on providing therapy in the school setting in an inclusive way.

With the introduction of the NDIS more children and people with Down syndrome are accessing early intervention services and therapy. For many people, particularly school age children, some of this therapy and support is being delivered in the educational setting. The decision whether therapy is provided in the school setting needs to be discussed with teachers and the principal in order to ensure that the best decision for the child is achieved.

Therapy may involve a practitioner visiting the school to make recommendations about ways to support the child in the classroom and outdoor activities. This may include an occupational therapist, speech therapist or physiotherapist.

It is important that any therapy provided in schools be delivered using an inclusive approach, thereby supporting the overall inclusion of the child with Down syndrome in the educational setting.



This resource has been developed to provide some helpful suggestions for practitioners to consider when delivering therapy in the educational setting, which helps children learn the skills in the place they use them.

Planning stage

- Work with the family to plan the therapy before starting. Discuss building a relationship with the child and what the priorities for therapy are in the school setting, like communicating with peers, or physical development etc.
- Work with the school to determine what will work for the classroom in terms of therapy during school hours.
- Put yourself in the place of the child – does the therapy being delivered make the child appear singled out?
- Organise any assessments that need to be done at times when students are doing relevant work. For example, attend the school at story writing time and work with a small group of students including the child with Down syndrome.
- Provide information to the teachers and support staff on ways therapy and supports can be woven into other classroom activities.
- Work with the teachers, the family and the child with Down syndrome to identify goals for the child that support participation in activities with their peers.

In the classroom

- Try to provide the therapy within the classroom rather than taking the student out of the classroom setting.
- Incorporate gross motor activities into physical exercise for all class members where possible – other students will often benefit from physical breaks as well.
- Look at the sensory play items the school has and incorporate this into the therapy plan.
- Adapt activities to suit an age appropriate game or activity, e.g. using playground games for gross motor skill development.
- Identify a time where there is the opportunity to be inclusive. There is no point having a visit when the class are participating in silent reading or working independently.
- Share your notes, objectives and goals with teachers and encourage the teacher to share their focus and objectives.

This resource has been developed in consultation with people with Down syndrome and their families.

Where to go for more information

Down syndrome association contact details

There is a Down syndrome association in each state and territory. You can contact these associations for support and advice. We are here to help you. Our associations are made up of a wide range of parents, professionals and people with Down syndrome who work or volunteer with us. Please visit our website at www.downsyndrome.org.au or call 1300 881 935 to be automatically connected to your closest association.

