



Down Syndrome  
Victoria

Supporting Victorian families since 1978

# Transition To Secondary School



Resource funded by

**nib** foundation

[downsyndromevictoria.org.au](http://downsyndromevictoria.org.au)

# Introduction

## Key considerations for your child and family

1. Being a regular member of your community
2. Making choices
3. Developing abilities
4. Being treated with respect and having a valued social role
5. Growing in relationships and having friends
6. Looking to the future – employment and independent living

This booklet is designed to help you work through the decisions you need to make about schooling.

The key is to look at what you want for your child and family.

## Have a vision: what do you want from schooling?

1. Remember that you know your child best
2. Be prepared to work as a member of a team to get the best outcomes for your child.
3. Be confident that any decision you make will be the right one at that particular time given what you know.
4. Realise that no decision is set in stone, re-evaluate as needed - you can always change schools if circumstances change.
5. The right school is one where you and your family feel accepted.



# Your legal rights

The most important pieces of legislation that you need to be aware of are:

1. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992
2. Disability Standards for Education 2005

Since March 2005, all education and training providers, in every state and territory, have been legally required to ensure that all students are able to access and participate in education and training on the same basis.

The Standards say that education providers must consult and make reasonable adjustments.

# Decision Flowchart

## School system

- Government
- Catholic
- Independent
- Home based

## Working with the school

- An effective partnership
- Communication
  - Individual education plan
  - Advocacy, negotiating

## Family situation

- Siblings
- Work
- Location
- Financial considerations
- Religion

## Your child

- Needs
- Strengths

## The First Day

- Prepare your child

## What to do after you have chosen a school?

- Enrol
- Transition program
  - Engage DSV Education Support Service

## How do you find the right school?

- School visits
- Websites
- Resources
- Other parents
- Support personnel

## What are you looking for?

- What is your vision for your child's future?

# Considerations and Placement

Some of the things to consider when making a decision about which of the school systems you will look at are:

- religious beliefs
- philosophy on education - private or public schools, same sex or coeducational
- financial cost
- safe environment
- location
- family

Each family will have their own views and so it is important to find a school that is a good match for your child.

## Possible placements for your child

Irrespective of cognitive ability all children are eligible to attend a mainstream school.

### Mainstream

This is a regular classroom that is open to all students and has a comprehensive curriculum. It caters for differences within the class. The teacher is required to provide work that is at appropriate levels for different groups within the class as well as whole class activities. Mainstream schools have access to regionally based support services including psychologists, speech pathologists and visiting teacher services.

### Special setting

Dependant on a child's level of cognitive functioning, options may include a special school or special developmental school.

### Dual Placement

Dual enrolment comprises attendance at a mainstream school and special school.

There are four schooling system possibilities for your child – government, Catholic, independent and home-based.

## School Systems

The following websites provide further information about each system.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
[education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au)

**“Every child from Foundation to Year 12 is guaranteed a place at their local public school.”**

All schools have their own website.

In terms of establishing educational needs for support through the Program for Students with Disabilities a review is conducted in Year 6 or the equivalent in specialist schools. Year 6-7 Reviews must be submitted for all students undertaking transition from Year 6 to Year 7 attending mainstream schools. Year 6-7 Reviews are mandatory for students in receipt of Level 1 to 4 Program for Students with Disabilities support.

A similar process of Review assessments and application is undertaken for students changing schools.

## Use of funding

The school Principal signs off on how funding should be allocated for the support of the student. The majority of funding is usually used for the employment of an Education Support Officer to support your child's program in the classroom. Other uses may include paying for outside consultancy such as the Down Syndrome Education Support Service.





**CATHOLIC EDUCATION  
COMMISSION OF VICTORIA**  
[cecv.catholic.edu.au](http://cecv.catholic.edu.au)

You do not need to be a Catholic to attend a Catholic school.

Selection criteria will be displayed on individual school websites.

If you choose a Catholic school then it is important to put your child's name on the waiting list as early as possible.

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA**  
[is.vic.edu.au](http://is.vic.edu.au)

This website provides information about the independent school system.

You can then go to each school's website to find out information about that particular school.

Each school has its own philosophy and enrolment procedures.

You don't need to follow a particular religion to enrol in most independent schools.

If you are thinking of choosing an independent school it is important to put your child's name on the waiting list as early as possible.

In 2014 the funding arrangements for independent school changed. The funding they previously received has been replaced by increased recurrent funding to each school which includes a loading for students with additional needs.

**HOME SCHOOLING**  
[education.vic.gov.au/school/  
parents/needs/pages/  
homebased.aspx](http://education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/needs/pages/homebased.aspx)

This DET website has information about home schooling, the legal requirements, registration, the curriculum range, and assessments required as well as a parent information booklet.

# What do I look for in a school?

When you are visiting schools you are doing two things:

- Collecting as much information as you can to get a good idea of whether this school will be able to provide a great education for your child. Go with a list of prepared questions
- Trying to get a feel about whether this school is a positive and welcoming place to be

It is important that you try to talk to the teacher as well as the Principal and the office staff.

Ask if you can arrange a visit to see the school and classrooms.

The attitude of the school towards additional needs is the important factor for you to consider. The best decision is one which is best for ALL the family.

## The key things that you are looking for are:

- School staff with a **positive attitude**
- A curriculum program that supports a pathway to life beyond school
- Staff willing to seek training

## I have chosen a school - what do I do now?

### Enrol

There will be paperwork to fill in and documents to be provided.

You may need to confirm the place, and potentially pay a deposit.

### Consider extra supports

Meet with the school to consider:

- Funding and support
- Assessments
- Extra supports and equipment
- Transition program

Keep all paperwork in a file so that you can find it easily and refer back to it if needed.

### Transition program

Each school should prepare and implement a transition program. Ensure you are aware of allocated dates and times to attend.



# Getting your child ready for secondary school

## Prior to the school year

- Support the school with its planned Transition program, ensuring full attendance at all events, including those that have been generally planned for all incoming students, as well as those specifically planned for your child
- As a family, attend school events such as Open Days, Productions, tours etc. Have the child give you a tour of the school
- Speak openly and frequently to your child about the impending move to secondary school, using it as a prompt for more "grown-up" behaviour
- Speak about "school rules". If personal safety is of concern, highlight a specific rule such as, "Students must be in the classroom when the bell goes". Talk about this rule often!
- Use a countdown calendar which the child marks off. Use photos on the calendar featuring the school, new classrooms and teachers
- Make up a pictorial or colour coded timetable of their week and refer to it and review it regularly. This will assist them in reading a timetable at their new school
- Establish a good routine at home focussing on preparing for school each day and reading and homework sessions
- Build independence skills. Practise getting dressed/undressed, showering, packing bags, opening containers, folders etc.

## During the school year

- Establish a means of communication with the school that is appropriate and efficient. Daily contact may have been possible in the primary setting, however, in secondary school, this is not always possible. (It is also not always conducive to building autonomy and independence in the child.) Email, text messaging, a communication book or a student diary may be possibilities
- Check the school diary for notices and communications EVERY night. Make it part of your routine
- Try not to over load the child with too many after school commitments, particularly during the first term of Year 7. Allow time for winding down, processing and relaxing each day during this busy and potentially stressful time in your child's life
- Ensure that regular PSG (Program Support Group) meetings are scheduled and that minutes are taken, signed and distributed
- Keep a folder/file of all PSG minutes, Individual Education Plan (IEP), Semester reports and educational, speech, psychological and occupational therapy assessments
- Trust teachers to do their job but be open and willing to share information, research and ideas that will support your child.

## How do I work with the school?

### An effective partnership

An effective partnership starts with good communication, sharing of knowledge, and being able to work towards a common goal.

## Advocacy

There may be times when things are not going as well as you had hoped.

It is best to deal with an issue as soon as possible. Start by going to the person who is closest to the issue. Often this will be a classroom teacher or principal.

You need to be prepared with any written information, know your rights, and your options.

You may take someone to support you if needed.

# School Readiness Checklist

Following an extended transition program below is a sample of possible goals and priorities for a Year 7 student.

- ✓ To establish a warm working relationship between the student, class teacher and education support personnel
- ✓ For the student to be happy coming to and being at school
- ✓ To establish the student's communication mode/s
- ✓ To be able to communicate their needs
- ✓ To be sensitive to the needs of others
- ✓ For the student to be comfortable in their environment
- ✓ To greet people and respond to being greeted
- ✓ To display appropriate manners
- ✓ To compliantly follow daily classroom and school routines
- ✓ To happily separate from their parent/s
- ✓ To respond to the bell and move to the next class
- ✓ To move between classrooms



- ✓ To sit and listening quietly
- ✓ To listen to the teacher and respond appropriately
- ✓ To stay in their seat / at table when required
- ✓ To have the student tackle some work independently
- ✓ To comply with requests / instructions
- ✓ For the student to willingly start and complete a task
- ✓ To establish and hold eye contact when talking to people
- ✓ To manage undoing their schoolbag zip
- ✓ To manage undoing their lunchbox, drink bottle, glad wrap
- ✓ To independently eat & drink (only your own) at appropriate times during the day
- ✓ To know where the toilets are
- ✓ To interact appropriately with their peers inside and outside
- ✓ To develop responsibility for their own belongings
- ✓ To respect others belongings
- ✓ To respect physical boundaries inside and out
- ✓ To be aware of danger
- ✓ To turn take / share / play cooperatively
- ✓ To follow appropriate behavioral and other rules
- ✓ Same rules, expectations, consequences for ALL children
- ✓ To remember, retain the rules
- ✓ To be able to deal with anger / frustration – where to go, who to tell

Developing independence is the goal for starting school. A student with Down syndrome may need assistance to learn these skills but it's important not to create dependence

Staff should remember to use first person language ie. "Person with Down syndrome" NOT "Down syndrome person"



# Further information

Here is where you can find more information:

Down Syndrome Victoria:  
[www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au](http://www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au)

'Transition To Secondary School' booklet and transition links under Education Support Service.

Association for Children with a Disability:  
[www.acd.org.au](http://www.acd.org.au)

Booklets and tip sheets online, positive education planning resource, partnership approach.

Raising Children Network  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

Information about choosing schools, enrolling, school options, school support.





## Down Syndrome Victoria

Supporting Victorian families since 1978

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