

Questions to ask schools

Getting started

When choosing a school it's important to gather information. In this information sheet we list some of the questions that you can ask the school. The aim of these questions is to help you decide whether the school will be able to meet your child's needs.

Will you provide my child with an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)?

Individual Learning Plans include S.M.A.R.T. goals (goals which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely), written specifically for your child. Ask about the way the school writes and reviews ILPs. A collaborative approach with input from professionals (school staff/therapists) and parents/carers works well. Goals that address the 'hidden curriculum' (areas such as social skills in the playground or during assembly) should be included. ILPs are reviewed at the student Support Group (SSG) meeting held each term.

Will a Student Support Group (SSG) be set up for my child?

SSGs are made up of the key people in your child's life and education, such as:

- School staff (teacher, educational support officer, principal, specialist teacher);
- Professionals (psychologist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist);
- Your child; and
- You!

The group writes and reviews ILPs, discusses funding arrangements and appropriate strategies. The SSG generally meet every term.

For more information about the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) in Victoria and to

download the latest version of the SSG guidelines, visit:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/needs

For information from the Catholic Education Commission:

<http://cecv.catholic.edu.au/temp.gs/getmedia/9f88e0b6-43a4-4222-923c-93f1432aa544/CECV-Intervention-Framework.aspx?ext=.pdf>

For information from Independent Schools in Victoria visit: <https://www.is.vic.edu.au/managing-a-school/about-students-2/students-with-individual-needs>



What supports are available for my child?

The kind of support a school may provide will depend on what kind of school it is, whether your child has additional funding, and whether the school has set up supports for other autistic students.

Support could include:

- an educational support officer (teacher's aide) in the classroom;

- facilities such as an accessible toilet if your child has toileting difficulties;
- the purchase and use of visual schedules or fidget toys;
- options for indoor activities during lunch breaks or setting up a quiet area.

Supports could also include further training for staff members or input from professionals such as speech pathologists, psychologists, or welfare officers.

What help will be provided in the playground?

Outside the classroom is where children learn about the social world of the playground. Your child may require support and strategies to help them to get along with other children. This information may need to be included in the ILP. Ask if the school has lunchtime sports, clubs, or other activities that your child can join.

How does the school handle bullying?

A successful anti-bullying program will target prevention, as well as having procedures in place to deal with bullying. Strategies that focus on building confidence and resilience are great. 'Buddy' programs, in which your child is 'buddied' up with another older child (a mentor) or a child the same age, can also work well. This could help in the playground. It might also mean that your child has a regular partner on excursions or to sit next to during assembly.

How will the teacher and I communicate?

It's important to establish regular communication from the start. This may be through a daily communication book, or you may email or have a weekly catch up in person. When you communicate, talk about your child's strengths and what strategies are working for him/her and any challenges.

What support is there for transitions?

Many autistic students have difficulty transitioning between places, activities or people. Transitions to new places such as a school trip to the zoo; new activities such as music instead of drama; or new

people such as relief teachers or visitors can be especially difficult.

Talk with your child's support staff about developing a transition plan. This plan may list who helps your child from the classroom to the library or from the bus to the classroom. It could be an introductory program for moving to a new grade or a social script used at home and at school to support excursions, swimming programs or school concerts. The plan could also include procedures to advise home about a change in staff or schedule early in the day.



What behaviour management approaches and support does the school use?

Look for proactive strategies to behaviour management.

Proactive strategies focus on planning and support, whereas reactive strategies focus on consequences. An effective proactive strategy involves reinforcing positive behaviours. If your child exhibits behaviours of concern, discuss these during SSG meetings and devise a behaviour support plan that all staff will need to follow if the behaviours happen at school.

Information sheet

You might also be interested in this information sheet:

[Preparing for Transition](#)

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