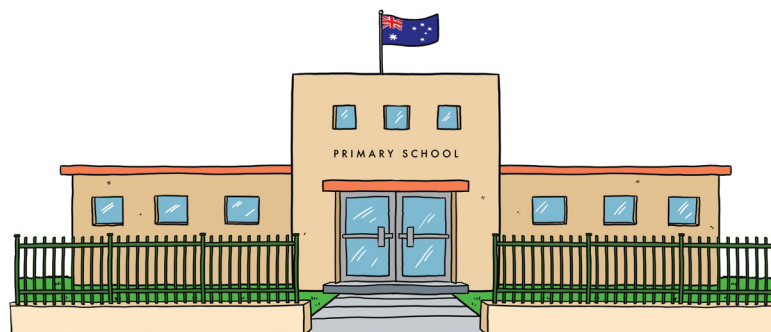


# A guide to transition to school



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# The Parent-Teacher partnership

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Starting school is an important step for children and their families.

The transition to school may present many challenges for children on the autism spectrum and their families and teachers. The year before starting school may well be one of the hardest for families with a child with special needs. Prior to starting school, many of the skills children have learned since birth have been taught by their parents and carers. Families usually remain the most consistent teachers that children have throughout life. Throughout this Guide for Transition to School, the term parent will be used to describe a child's parent, carer or guardian.

It is vitally important for parents and teachers to understand each other's views of what makes a successful school placement. For example, for some teachers keeping up with the curriculum may be seen as successful, whereas a parent may view success as their child looking forward to school each day.

Having the opportunity to engage in open and honest conversations throughout a child's schooling will be crucial, particularly as there may be challenges ahead. Establishing these common indicators of success also helps parents and teachers to identify areas where further support may be needed. For example, if a child is not currently making friends in the playground, the attention may focus on developing social skills.

Positive Partnerships is a program set up in 2008 by the Australian Federal Government to improve the educational outcomes for school-age students on the autism spectrum. Positive Partnerships' resources include online training modules for parents and teachers of children on the autism spectrum and information on developing effective parent-teacher partnerships. For more information, visit [positivepartnerships.com.au](http://positivepartnerships.com.au)

“Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other members of the child’s family. Effective partnerships are based on mutual commitment, trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the education of the child.” (Positive Partnerships, 2018)

## Why work together?

When schools and families work together, they can:

- identify areas of need and prioritise what to work on together. This can lead to improved learning outcomes for the child on the autism spectrum;
- develop student-centred plans that build skills for all aspects of life;
- bring a range of perspectives and experiences to the decision-making process. When decisions are made through collaboration, all involved are more inclined to commit to the plan;
- experience collaborative problem-solving opportunities. These opportunities allow for parents and school staff to brainstorm ideas and learn from each other.

Effective family-school partnerships don’t just happen; they take considerable effort and commitment from both parents and school staff. It is especially important to focus on:

- understanding the other’s party’s skills, knowledge and perspective;
- creating a sense of balance, especially mutual respect, trust and commitment;
- developing effective communication systems that allow for a positive relationship to develop and to ensure that all members of the team are on the same page;
- maximising opportunities to partner and learn from each other.

(Positive Partnerships, 2018)

As a parent and early childhood educator of a child on the autism spectrum, preparing the child for school is important. In addition, as a primary school teacher of children with special needs, including autism, it is important to understand how to support the diverse learning and social needs in the school environment.

This Guide to Transition to School aims to support parents and their support teams to prepare a child for transitioning to school. This includes information on setting up a collaborative partnership and developing the skills that support a successful transition to school. It also focuses on how teachers can work with a child's support team to set up autism-friendly school environments to support the child's diverse learning and social needs.

In this guide, visual strategies are widely recommended to enhance communication, support behaviour, facilitate learning, and develop independence.

As you move through this guide, it is a good idea to write down a child's characteristics, areas needing further help, and current strategies in place. This profile of the child, can be given to prospective schools and teachers to help them understand the child's specific needs, which will enable a smoother transition. You can enter all this information into the Book About Me for my Teachers, available on the Aspect website [autismspectrum.org.au/ebook/about-me-resource](http://autismspectrum.org.au/ebook/about-me-resource).

To get started, parents and early childhood educators can complete the 'Starting School' checklists in the appendix and on our website at [autismspectrum.org.au/ebook/tts-checklist](http://autismspectrum.org.au/ebook/tts-checklist) which covers all developmental areas to determine what skills a child might need to work on in the lead up to starting school.





## *a different brilliant*

understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests & aspirations of people on the autism spectrum

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is Australia's largest autism-specific service provider, with one of the biggest evidence informed autism-specific schools programs in the world. A not-for-profit organisation, we work in partnership with people of all ages on the autism spectrum and their families to deliver positive, practical supports, services, practices and research that recognise *a different brilliant® - understanding, engaging and celebrating the strengths and interests of people on the autism spectrum.*

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