



**AMPUTEES
NSW**

Starting School

Choosing a school for any child takes careful planning. It's important to consider whether the school offers support programs that suit your child's needs. In the case of limb difference, it may be more relevant to ensure your school is accessible and your child will be able to embrace all the opportunities the school has available.

Choice of schools

All children have a right to enrol in their local primary school. Schools develop educational programs which aim to meet the individual needs of children.

Your choices include:

- Local government primary school
- Catholic primary school – the Commonwealth Government provides funding which is distributed through the Catholic Education Office to support schools to include children with disabilities
- Independent school where the inclusion of students with disabilities is actively supported.

It is recommended that parents and carers contact their local school to discuss their child's needs by:

- term 2 of the year before starting school for a child with disability
- term 2 of two years before starting school for a child needing help with access or mobility, e.g. for wheelchair access or if other significant changes to the school environment may be required.

How to decide which school

Make an appointment with the school principal to discuss your child's needs and what their school can offer your child.

You may like to consider:

- What is the size of the school?
- Does the school have any previous experience with children with disabilities?
- Will your child physically have access to all school facilities?

In most cases, your child will transition to school with minimal adjustments. You may like to consider:

- Attending school open days
- Speaking to parents whose children have started school
- Talking to people who know your child, such as their preschool teacher, Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist

Meet with your school

For the first meeting at the school, parents or carers should take:

- any relevant information – medical reports, any reports provided by therapists or other agencies, organisations or health personnel
- details of any resources or equipment that are used or required for day-to-day activities.

By sharing information about your child, schools can make informed decisions about each child's individual needs.

The NSW Department of Education provides local Educational Services teams to support schools in areas such as equity, curriculum, leadership, learning and wellbeing, support for students with disability.

Depending on your child's needs, the school may refer to these teams to ensure appropriate accommodations are in place for a smooth transition into the school environment. Local team scan be contacted on 131 536.

School Environment Assessment

Once you have chosen your school, it is helpful to schedule a school visit with your Occupational Therapist and/or Physiotherapist. They will be able to assess the current school environment including the classroom, bathroom and playground, and make any recommendations for changes that are required or may be helpful for your child. This may include the installation of equipment such as a ramp, handrails, or accessible taps. Or it may include the purchase of appropriate desks and chairs or even stationery! The better the school is set-up for the children attending, the easier it is for each child to integrate into their school life.

Your physiotherapist and/or occupational therapist can also work with your child on practising skills that may be helpful in school. The Children's Hospital at Westmead offers a school starters program for children with a limb difference starting school the following year. This includes both skills for children as well as an education and support component for parents.

Resilience and feeling settled

Talk with your child in the lead up to starting school.

It's important they feel confident managing a new educational environment, and comfortable with social challenges that may occur.

Some children have not encountered another child with a difference and consequently, curiosity can be heightened as they try to understand. It's important to prepare your child with skills to react to situations that may be uncomfortable.

Children like to find common interests to their peers which is the foundation of starting friendships. Helping your child to embrace their difference and join in activities will be a big step in developing confidence and resilience.

Talk regularly with your child's teacher can provide insight into how your child is coping with school.

It can help if the school community understands that your child has interests, likes, and dislikes, and will progress and achieve, just like every other child.