



Orientation: Strategies for schools

Orientation is an important part of children's transition to school. It is an event or series of events that orientate children and families to significant features of their new school environment.

Orientation occurs at a specific point in time as part of the longer-term process of children's transition to school. The aim is to support every child to feel safe and secure and have a sense of belonging at school.

For an optimal transition, all partners – the child, the family, the early childhood education and care (ECEC) service provider, the school and the community – have a key role to play.

This fact sheet includes strategies that schools may include in their orientation processes. As one size does not fit all, each child and family will have individual needs, concerns and expectations that should be considered and where possible, catered for.

Timing and process

Most orientation to school activities occur in the latter part of the calendar year prior to children starting Prep. Through on-site visits, children and families are introduced to the people, processes, services, routines, expectations and the physical environment of the school.

Communicating with families

As there is a large volume of information for families and children to engage with, look for ways to simplify or streamline how you deliver this information, for example videos as well as live presentations.

Ensure communication with families is clear and inclusive, for example, provide any documents in a range of languages appropriate to new families.

If you are aware of families for whom English is not their first language, be prepared to support their understanding of all information provided.



Create an environment at orientation sessions that is inclusive of diverse family circumstances, for example, cultural and linguistic diversity, children in care, children with disability.

Buddy new families together with existing school families to help ease their concerns and answer questions based on their experiences with starting school.

If children have attended a Queensland Government-approved and funded kindergarten program, ask families to share their child's Transition Statement (ensure you explain clearly why information contained in the [statement](#) would be useful to you).

Build in time for children and families to ask questions.

Before orientation

- Communicate to children and families what they need to bring to orientation, for example, a snack and a hat.
- Be prepared for some families to turn up very early or very late to orientation and consider how the school would manage communicating information to families who cannot attend orientation sessions.

- Look to the wider community to provide support for orientation to school, for example, invite representatives from relevant local services to attend orientation sessions.
- Liaise with any identified community support agencies to prepare for orientation of individual children, for example, staff from an Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP).

During orientation

Belonging to the school community

- Include an Acknowledgement of Country to begin your orientation event to pay respects to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and elders.
- Communicate information about the values and beliefs of the school.
- Highlight the strengths and achievements of the school and excite children and families about the role they will play in the school community.
- Provide information about school rules, code of conduct and general behaviour management strategies either in a face-to-face presentation or through a school handbook.



- Organise for key people at the school to meet new children and families, e.g. Prep teachers, support staff, chaplain, school pastor or counselling staff member, deputy principal and principal.
- Create an introduction pack for settling into school: this could include a video made by existing students as a project where they introduce staff and highlight features of the school that are important to them.
- Collaborate with a local ECEC service provider to produce a video on starting school. This could feature kindergarten children asking questions about school which are answered on camera by current Prep or older school students (departmental consent forms will need to be completed).

Information for families: Processes

- Provide information on how families can drop off and pick up their children.
- Clarify expectations around the length of time appropriate for families to be present before and after school.
- Provide a map of the school to families and children so that they can prepare for negotiating the location of key features on the campus such as Prep classrooms, library, pick-up and drop-off spots.
- Clarify items that families must buy and those that are useful but not expected.

- Communicate with families about how they can appropriately be involved in the school community and what processes need to occur prior to this involvement, for example, volunteering requirements and training for student protection.
- Suggest food that would be appropriate to bring to school for morning tea and lunch.
- Create a document for families with everything they need to know about the school and key dates for when actions need to be taken – highlight items needing immediate action.

Information for families: Services

- Arrange for various key services in the school to have a representative present at orientation, for example:
 - administration services
 - uniform service
 - Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)
 - parent committees
 - volunteers.
- Ensure representatives provide information to families about these services, for example, times, cost, bookings and other expectations.
- Consider using a video to show how services are typically run.



Information for children: Processes

- Provide children with a welcome booklet that highlights key processes, features and parts of the school that they will come across – use photos where possible and minimal text to make it more accessible to children.
- If appropriate, ask the children if they have any questions or concerns.
- Coordinate orientation sessions to include a break time so that they can see where students eat and play.
- Invite an older cohort of students to orientation and buddy the students up with new children – the older students could serve as a mentor/support when the new children start Prep.

Information for children: The environment

- Although the exact classes may not yet be organised, familiarise children with key parts of classrooms, for example, where to find books and other resources the different spaces available to them.
- Describe a typical daily Prep routine so children know what kind of activities to expect. Consider using a visual representation such as a book or display poster/card.
- Take the children and their families on a tour of the school so that they can begin to familiarise themselves with the whole school environment, for example, the library, sports facilities, administration.
- Display visual signs for key features in the school, for example, amenities, library, where children put their bags.

Following orientation

- Check in regularly with children and families to gauge how they're managing the transition to school.
- Ask families to provide spare uniforms/clothing for children for the first day/week in case they are needed.
- Create and distribute tip sheets for how parents can support their children at home during the first week, throughout their time in Prep and beyond.

More information

Transition to school

deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/about/transitions

Parent and community engagement framework

education.qld.gov.au/schools/parent-community-engagement-framework

