# 

# Supported Inclusion SCHOOLS

**operational Manual**

## Last updated APRIL 2021

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## purpose

This document is a manual that supports school Principals and the Department of Education and Training’s (the Department’s) regional and central staff to implement the Supported Inclusion Schools model.

To be truly inclusive, Supported Inclusion Schools must deliver the highest quality of education for all learners and the local community will need confidence that this is the case. While the places allocated for students with specialist needs is relatively small compared to the schools’ long-term enrolment projections, it is the newest and most innovative component of the proposed Supported Inclusion Schools model. Therefore, this manual largely focusses on the inclusion aspects of the model and the needs of specialist students.

The Operational Manual is a ‘live document’, and as such it will be updated and revised throughout the implementation process. It provides guidance about the model and addresses potential implementation challenges through answering five key questions:

1. What is a Supported Inclusion School?
2. What are the objectives of the Supported Inclusion Schools model?
3. Who can attend a Supported Inclusion School?
4. What do Supported Inclusion Schools offer?
5. How do Supported Inclusion Schools operate?

These questions are addressed in the following chapters. Additional resources and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) also feature throughout to help guide implementation.

## section 1: what is a supported inclusion school?

A Supported Inclusion School is a mainstream school with a physical design and an integrated specialist provision that provides additional support to a proportion of students with disability. The schools specifically support students who would usually attend specialist schools to instead attend a mainstream school.

While we design all new schools to enhance inclusion and participation for all students irrespective of need, these schools have additional specialist facilities and targeted support that allows them to enrol a higher proportion of students with a disability than a typical mainstream school.

In a Supported Inclusion School, there is no separate building for students with disability. Instead, flexible design (combination of larger and smaller spaces) can allow schools to have students with disability in the classroom with their peers, with the flexibility to utilise smaller spaces for targeted teaching and therapies as needed.

Supported Inclusion Schools build the capabilities of staff to respond to the diverse needs of their students and provide access to a suite of Department educational resources and programs that support exemplary inclusive practice.

The first two Supported Inclusion Schools opened in Term 1, 2020.

## Frequently asked questions

**Is a Supported Inclusion School a specialist school?**

Supported Inclusion Schoolsare registered as mainstream schools.

Registration as a Supported Inclusion Schoolsmodel simply means that a number of places at the school are set aside for students with disabilities.

Supported Inclusion Schools offer high-quality learning for all students, extra support for students with disabilities, and focus on inclusive education that welcomes all students. Supported Inclusion Schools provide students with the same access to opportunities as at any other neighbourhood government school in Victoria: the only difference is the greater capacity these schools have to support students with disability.

**How can Supported Inclusion Schools better support students?**

Supported Inclusion School staff can access a suite of educational resources and programs from the Department that support exemplary inclusive practice at the schools, with a particular focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities.

The schools should provide individual support, mentoring and school-wide professional learning opportunities that prioritise development of inclusive practice, as well as staff induction that emphasises the schools’ approach to inclusive practice.

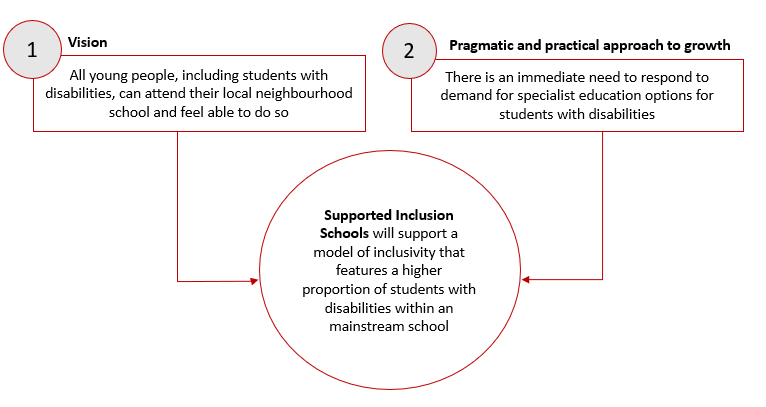
Supported Inclusion Schools are expected to develop a strong culture and pursue innovative approaches, so their findings can be shared with the broader system. In this way, all schools can benefit from the development of new and better ways of supporting students with disabilities.

Additional resources

* [Student Support Services policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy?Redirect=1)
* [Inclusive education resources and information](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/additional-needs/Pages/default.aspx)
* [Inclusive education for students with disabilities resources and information](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/Inclusive-education-for-students-with-disabilities.aspx)

# Section 2: Why are we establishing Supported Inclusion SCHOOLS?

**FIGURE 1: SUPPORTED INCLUSION SCHOOLS MODEL OBJECTIVES**



## Short-term objectives

The Supported Inclusion Schools model has two short-term objectives:

1. **Increase opportunities for students with disability to attend a school closer to home, study alongside mainstream students and access specialist infrastructure and teaching expertise**

This represents the Department’s aspirations of an inclusive Education State, ensuring that all students can access high-quality education close to their home.

These students will receive enhanced support to attend mainstream education classes (where appropriate) and receive additional support in specialised facilities including areas designed for targeted teaching and therapies. The schools will build the capabilities of staff to respond to the diverse needs of their students through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities.

1. **Respond to a growing demand for education options across Victoria, particularly for students with disabilities**

Detailed Department analysis suggests there is a growing demand for specialist education options. The Supported Inclusion Schools model is intended to respond to short-term enrolment gaps in key areas across Victoria and provide greater options for students with disabilities and their families.

## Long-term objective

In the long term, Supported Inclusion Schools represent an opportunity to present a forward-looking model for inclusivity in all schools. Supported Inclusion Schools will develop into centres of excellence for inclusive education within the Victorian system.

This means Supported Inclusion Schools will eventually support other schools by modelling best practice inclusive education and by supporting system capability-building.

### 

# Section 3: Who can attend A Supported Inclusion SCHOOL?

## Overview

All Victorian students are entitled to attend their designated neighbourhood school. Supported Inclusion Schools have registration as mainstream schools.

This registration aligns with the Supported Inclusion Schools model objectives to provide for a higher number of students with disabilities.

Each Supported Inclusion School has an enrolment policy that covers enrolment for all students, including the enrolment of students with disabilities.

## Mainstream enrolment

All students residing in the designated neighbourhood zone of a Supported Inclusion School are eligible to enrol, in line with the Department’s policy on enrolment and placement, as outlined in the Guidelines for Enrolment in a Victorian Government School, see Enrolment.

Where there are insufficient places at a school for all students who seek entry, students applying under the school’s mainstream provision are enrolled in the priority order of placement reflected in the Department’s Placement Policy, as outlined in the Guidelines to enrolment in Victorian government schools, see Enrolment.

## Specialist enrolment

Each Supported Inclusion School reserves a number of places for students with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria for specialist provision, as outlined in their respective Enrolment Policy.

Students residing in the designated neighbourhood zone who also meet the specialist provision eligibility criteria count towards the total number of places reserved in each school in their specialist provisions.

Any remaining places will be available for students with disabilities from outside the designated neighbourhood zone, who meet the eligibility criteria for specialist provision in the school’s Enrolment Policy. Students who live outside the designated neighbourhood zone seeking to enrol under the specialist provision, can access the school’s Specialist Provision Enrolment Policy for information including the eligibility criteria, evidence required, priority order of placement and appeals process.

Each school’s Enrolment Policy is formulated through broad consultation across the Department, including with the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA), regions and the Principals of each Supported Inclusion School, and agreed by the Department’s infrastructure Planning and Delivery Committee. The Enrolment Policy requires approval from the Regional Director of the region in which the Supported Inclusion School is located.

**Principles for operationalising the Enrolment Policy for the specialist provision**

Because Supported Inclusion Schools are a new addition to the Victorian education system, it is likely that school staff, parents and neighbouring primary schools and early childhood settings require support to understand the schools’ enrolment policies.

In implementing their enrolment policy, Supported Inclusion Schools should:

* provide clear and consistent information about the school’s enrolment policy and processes. Support to develop these communications will be provided to the principals.
* ensure all parent information sessions include information about the school’s status as a Supported Inclusion School.
* ensure all neighbourhood primary schools and early childhood settings are informed about the school being a Supported Inclusion School.

Additional resources

* [Students with disability policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/studentswithdisability.aspx)
* [Program for Students with Disabilities policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psd.aspx)

# Section 4: What support do Supported Inclusion SCHOOLS offer?

## Overview

Supported Inclusion Schools, for the most part, operate like other Victorian government schools. The point of difference for Supported Inclusion Schools is their unique objective to support a higher number of students with disabilities than most other Victorian government mainstream schools in the short term.

This means that Supported Inclusion Schools adhere to all the relevant Victorian government school sector policies, frameworks and processes. But there are areas for extra emphasis or care in terms of what Supported Inclusion Schools offer in order to support their objectives and mitigate risks.

This section focuses on what Supported Inclusion Schools offer in three stages of a student’s journey.



It presents the services and features that Supported Inclusion Schools should offer at each stage of the journey. It then outlines the resources and capabilities, or ‘the enablers’ that make this possible. The enablers fall into four categories:

1. Curriculum and pedagogy
2. Educational resources, equipment and assistive technology
3. Physical environment
4. Student transport

It also provides an overview of guiding principles as they relate to inclusive education.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To support the objectives of Supported Inclusion Schools, best available evidence on inclusive practice suggests four guiding principles for promising practice. In considering what Supported Inclusion Schools should offer, schools should consider adopting these principles.

### TABLE 7: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Principle[[1]](#footnote-2) | What this looks like in the school |
| 1. Focus on inclusive practice at whole-of-school and in-class level | Whole-of-school practices include adjustments to:   * Culture, policies and practices * development of support structures * systems of funding support * provision of, and access to, equitable learning opportunities.   At an in-class level, research suggests the most prominent practices are:   * differentiating curriculum or introducing alternative curricula * application of universal design * use of information technologies * individual planning through Individual Education Plans (IEP) * focus on quality teaching for all students. |
| 1. Value specialist expertise | Effective inclusive practice relies on teachers and support staff with sufficient confidence and capabilities to support students. |
| 1. Set a strong inclusive school culture through strong leadership | Both a positive school culture and positive staff attitudes towards inclusion are repeatedly cited in the literature as important to ensuring positive outcomes for students with disabilities. The 2016 Commonwealth Inquiry into access to learning for students with additional needs received submissions stating that the biggest difference between students having strong educational attainment and outcomes and those not, was the culture of the school they attended. |
| 1. Collaborate and engage parents, families and the community | Collaboration between teacher and students, parents / carers, and education and health professionals is essential to consistently meet the needs of students and improve their learning experiences. |

**Student Journey**

The following section focuses on what Supported Inclusion Schools should offer based on the stages of a student’s journey.

## Stage 1: Enrolment

The first stage of the student’s journey is their enrolment in a Supported Inclusion School. At the enrolment stage, Supported Inclusion Schools should aim to provide a:

* welcoming and inclusive approach for all students
* robust enrolment process
* focus on preparation and orientation.

### Welcoming and inclusive approach for all students

Supported Inclusion Schools have the opportunity to enrol students from within and outside of their designated neighbourhood zone, including a higher number of students with disabilities. Therefore, Supported Inclusion Schools should ensure they adopt and promote an inclusive and welcoming approach to the enrolment of all students.

#### Transition activities with local mainstream and special schools

Secondary Supported Inclusion Schools should plan transition activities in both mainstream and special schools in the local area. Primary Supported Inclusion Schools should plan transition activities in local childcare centres. These activities will help to build the profile of the Supported Inclusion Schools among students and families who may not be aware of the schools and their inclusive enrolment policy.

Transition activities could include:

* information sessions and presentations at local primary schools or the local childcare centres
* ‘experience Year 7’ days
* inviting primary school students to attend events at the Supported Inclusion School
* students from Supported Inclusion Schools visiting and presenting at primary schools.

#### Information sessions

Supported Inclusion Schools should run information sessions to provide opportunities for students and families to learn more about the school. These should operate regularly throughout the year. Student ambassadors can assist and provide a student perspective.

Activities could include:

* a tour of the school
* a presentation from the principal, staff or students
* classroom visits
* opportunities to meet staff and students already at the school
* Q and A with staff, students and current parents or carers.

### Robust enrolment process

Supported Inclusion Schools should follow the enrolment policies outlined in Section 3. In addition, they should focus on data collection and [student data transfer](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/transition-year-6-7/guidance/student-data-transfer).

#### Data collection

Understanding student needs prior to them starting at the school is essential for successful transition. Collecting data on incoming students is a critical part of enrolment. Schools are required to maintain records of their students using [CASES21](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-administration-systems/policy). Destination schools will need to download these records for their incoming students and follow up any missing information.

Important information to collect includes:

* academic records
* health and wellbeing information
* Individual Education Plans (for students with disabilities or other students who have one)
* funding information for students who are funded under the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD).

#### Student Support Group meeting

The school may hold a Student Support Group (SSG) meeting with the student’s family and relevant professionals to identify the student’s health and wellbeing requirements and learning needs. This will assist the schools to identify any additional support the student may need or make other reasonable adjustments prior to their start date. For example, Supported Inclusion Schools might choose to refer students to the PSD assessment service, conduct additional diagnostic assessments/observations, and request information about the student from the parents or carers.

To minimise any stress for the student, Supported Inclusion Schools should ensure any additional assessments are undertaken in a low-stakes environment and their purpose is properly explained to students and families.

### Focus on preparation and orientation

#### Preparation

Supported Inclusion Schools should aim to understand the strengths, challenges and needs of new students before they arrive. In order to do this, schools should dedicate time to analysing the data collected during the enrolment process and take steps to prepare. Home group teachers should monitor preparations for new students.

Preparations might include:

* additional professional development for staff
* differentiated curriculum and modes of instruction
* physical environment changes
* equipment, educational resources and technology
* transport

Additional resources

Deakin University, in partnership with the Department, has developed [AllPlay Learn](https://learn.allplaylearn.org.au/), an online professional learning resources for teachers on inclusive education.

#### Orientation activities

Orientation activities before or during the first few weeks of school are important for easing the concerns of students and their families and making them feel welcome and included. Orientation activities might include:

* an orientation day with introductory activities to help students familiarise themselves with the school and begin to build positive relationships with staff and their peers
* peer support program run by a senior school leader with groups to foster peer-to-peer learning and help students manage their transition to a new environment
* a buddy program where students are paired with another student who they can turn to for support
* parent evenings where parents can learn more about the school and raise any concerns
* study skills programs to build skills, including reading timetables, managing time and seeking help
* students from the Supported Inclusion Schools visiting feeder schools to talk about their experiences
* additional orientation activities and visits for students with disabilities (based on need).

Additional resources

Further suggestions from the Department about [Year 7 orientation activities](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/transitions/Pages/induction.aspx).

## Stage 2: Duration of Enrolment

Once students are enrolled in a Supported Inclusion School, schools should aim to integrate them as much as possible by providing:

* high-quality learning in mainstream classrooms
* Student Support Groups (SSGs)
* Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
* behaviour Support Plans where required
* alternative learning environments and additional supports, where applicable
* access to Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Workforces, where applicable.

### High-quality learning in mainstream classrooms

Learning should occur in mainstream classes to the greatest extent desirable and practicable for each individual student. Supported Inclusion Schools can achieve this through the following strategies.

#### Strong inclusive practice and differentiation

Each student should have opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours in a range of domains and contexts, and to actively participate in mainstream classroom curriculum and other activities. To ensure inclusive practice benefits all students, teachers should aim to differentiate learning by adapting teaching strategies according to a student’s background, experiences, individual personality and individual goals.

Including students with disabilities in mainstream classes and differentiating as needed is generally viewed as the preferred environment for learning, particularly given the benefits of peer interactions. However, the degree to which each learner can participate will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

#### Professional Learning Communities

Teachers with specialist education qualifications, skills and experience should be grouped into [Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/improvement/plc) PLCs involve teams of teachers working together to improve student outcomes. Evidence suggests teachers working together in a focused and professional way can lead to improvements in practice and student outcomes.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Examples of PLC structures.

* Primary school: Four teachers from the same grade level, including one teacher with special education training.
* Secondary school: Teachers from different subjects in the same grade level, including one teacher with special education training.

#### Team teaching

Team teaching (or co-teaching) can enhance the capacity to differentiate learning activities and create opportunities for teachers to learn from each other. Optimal team teaching for the Supported Inclusion School context would be a generalist teacher with a special education teacher. Some of the different arrangements for team teaching include:

* station teaching: teachers teaching in rotating stations
* parallel teaching: dividing the class into two groups to undertake differentiated activities
* one teaching, one assisting: one teacher delivers the instruction and the other assists students
* tag team teaching: both teachers plan and deliver the lesson together.

For teaching to be effective, teachers need to respect each other and agree on roles and responsibilities. They also need dedicated time together to plan.

Additional resources

Deakin University has developed resources on team teaching.

#### Full and flexible use of education support staff

[Education support staff](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/dimensions-work-education-support-class/overview) can play a variety of roles beyond providing one-on-one support. Supported Inclusion Schools should aim to employ education support staff strategically in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning. The tasks they carry out should supplement, rather than replace, the instructional role of teachers, therefore creating opportunities for teachers to spend more time teaching students.

These tasks may include:

* implementing supplemental small-group and individual instruction
* engaging in class-wide instructional monitoring of student work
* collecting data on student performance
* assisting students who require personal care support (e.g. eating, using the bathroom)
* partnerships with other specialist school settings and opportunities for short-term secondments
* facilitating peer interactions based on guidance from the teacher.

### Student Support Groups

[Student Support Groups](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-groups/policy) and [Individual Education Plans](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/individual-education-plans-ieps/policy) provide structure and support that allows students with disabilities to manage school and make progress in their learning.

Each student with a disability should have a Student Support Group comprising of the principal (or nominee), the classroom teacher (in a primary school) or year level or wellbeing coordinator (in a secondary school), the parent/guardian/carer and, where appropriate, other education or health and wellbeing professionals. Students themselves should also be involved, as appropriate.

These regular meetings should be held based on the student’s needs and aim to discuss progress towards learning goals and agree on any changes required to the supports being provided.

Additional resources

The Commonwealth Department of Education has developed a [fact sheet](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/dse-fact-sheet-3-parental-engagement_0.pdf) on family engagement for students with disabilities.

### Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

An IEP is a written statement of the educational program designed to meet a student’s individual needs. Each student with a disability must have an IEP developed with their Student Support Group that sets out their long and short-term learning goals.

IEPs are a key mechanism to ensure accountability for each student’s needs and progress, and to enable personalised learning, which is considered best practice for students with disabilities.

Additional resources

[The Department’s guidance](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/individual-education-plans-ieps/policy) on developing IEPs.

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### Alternative learning environments and additional supports

While Supported Inclusion Schools should aim to create an integrated environment, spending some time in alternative settings outside of the mainstream classroom can help students regulate or address a specific need.

At certain times, the needs of some students may be best met in alternative settings. In many cases, students will move between different learning settings on any given day. These alternative learning environments can be applied to students with and without a formal diagnosis, based on individual student needs.

Examples of alternative settings include:

* small groups (e.g. between two and 10 students), with size determined by the level of need and learning activity to be undertaken
* one-on-one support with a specialist teacher or education support staff with individual supports aligned to Tier 3 of the School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) framework (see section below)
* use of a special-purpose space, such as a sensory room or language therapy centre
* small group and one-on-one support may occur in larger classroom environment or in separate areas.

Additional resources:

[VCAA resources](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/static/docs/VC%20Towards%20Foundation%20Levels%20A-D%20guidelines%202017.pdf) on curriculum planning for students with disabilities.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has developed [information and resources](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/), including illustrations of practice, to show how teachers can adapt the curriculum for students with disabilities.

### Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Workforces

Health and wellbeing are critical to a student’s learning, development and achievement. Schools have access to a range of health and wellbeing professionals both within and external to the Department. The Department’s Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Workforces consists of a range of specialist services to support schools and students with a disability.

This includes the [Student Support Service](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy) (including psychologists, speech pathologists and social workers), allied health professionals (including occupational therapists and physiotherapists) and visiting teachers, who work with students who require regular, complex medical support.

## STage 3: Transition to new learning settings

Transitioning to a new learning setting can be both exciting and stressful for students and families. All students require support when [transitioning from primary school to secondary school](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/additional-needs/Pages/disability-starting-secondary.aspx) and from secondary school to post-school options. Students with disabilities may need more intensive support and more time to prepare. The level of support and planning required may differ depending on the nature and severity of the student’s disability. During the transition to a new learning setting, Supported Inclusion Schools should aim for the following features:

* strong collaboration with families
* joint planning between schools
* proactive planning for post-school pathways.

### Strong collaboration with families

Collaborating with families is an important element of inclusive education. Schools and teachers should endeavour to develop a partnership with families during transition to ensure positive outcomes for the student. Developing partnerships may take time and require some negotiating. It is important for the school to acknowledge the impact of the change on the student and the family and acknowledge the family’s knowledge of the child.

Additional resources

All[Play Learn](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/classrooms/Pages/resourcesinclusiveedresources19.aspx), a resource developed by Deakin University and the Department, includes information on the experiences of families during transitions.

### Joint planning between schools

Transition is a joint responsibility between the primary school and the secondary school. Supported Inclusion Schools can ensure a smoother transition for students in the following ways:

#### Student Support Groups

Student Support Groups comprise school leaders, teachers, families and any relevant support professionals (e.g. Department regional staff or other wellbeing or health professionals). Primary schools should invite representatives from the designated secondary school to a Student Support Group meeting to discuss the transition to secondary school.

#### Data transfer

Data transfer between education settings (early childhood education settings and schools) is extremely important to ensure a smooth transition and the continuation of a student’s learning.

This information should include:

* academic records
* health and wellbeing information
* individual Education Plans (for students with disabilities)
* any other support plans (Behaviour Support Plan, Educational Needs Analysis etc)
* funding information (if applicable).

All schools are required to use the information data base CASES21 to transfer student information. For their students with disabilities, Supported Inclusion Schools should consider completing a Transition Statement.

A Transition Statement is a tool that helps create a shared understanding of the student’s abilities and needs. In transferring information, schools should take steps to ensure that the confidentiality of the student and their family is protected.

Additional resources

The [Department’s transitions framework](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/transition-year-6-7/policy) provides schools with guidance on how primary and secondary school can collaborate on student data transfer.

The Department has developed [guidelines](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/Transprmrytosec.pdf) for schools on transitioning students with additional needs from primary school to secondary school.

### Proactive planning for post-school pathways

Post-school planning for all students should include options that foster independence and support ongoing life skills development, social inclusion, and the pursuit of active and fulfilling experiences.

Students with disabilities face additional barriers to post-school pathways. Proactive planning that involves the student and their family can help overcome these barriers and enable transition into employment or further study.

#### Career education and planning

Supported Inclusion Schools should ensure that students begin career planning early and are supported by their career’s advisers, Student Support Group, Careers Coordinators, National Disability Insurance Agency planners, and other staff.

Career planning activities include:

* exploring the student’s interests, strengths, values and aspirations
* identifying personal strengths and preferences
* informing the student’s parents/carers through information sessions and careers fairs
* providing guidance with making informed subject, course and career decisions
* discussing their options for post-school pathways, including:
* [apprenticeships or traineeships](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/training/learners/apprentices/Pages/default.aspx)
* accredited training at a TAFE or private training provider
* pre-accredited training at a [Learn Local](https://learnlocal.org.au/) provider
* learn Local providers are a particularly suitable option for students with disabilities as additional wraparound support is provided to each learner and flexibility to meet individual learning requirements
* programs are designed to be flexible to meet learners' needs and support them to return to study, improve their literacy and numeracy skills, gain a qualification, broaden their employment options and learn new skills.
* universities.

Additional resources

[Resources](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/work/Pages/welldone.aspx) developed by the Department on preparing students with a disability for workplace learning.

#### Workplace learning opportunities

Supported Inclusion Schools should provide students with opportunities to participate in a variety of [workplace learning opportunities](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/work/Pages/default.aspx), irrespective of whether they have decided on their post-school pathway. The different options available mean all students should be able to access workplace learning, including those with a disability.

Workplace learning opportunities include:

* work experience (generally in Year 10)
* school community or volunteer work
* structured workplace learning
* apprenticeships and traineeships
* school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs).

Additional resources

[AllPlay Learn](https://allplaylearn.org.au/secondary/secondary-students/transition-guide/) has developed a post-secondary school transitions guide.

#### Networks and partnerships

Schools should develop networks and partnerships that they can draw on to assist their students with their post-school transition. Partnerships are crucial for the successful transition of students with disabilities.

Examples of organisations with which to develop partnerships include:

* universities
* training Providers, including TAFEs and Learn Local providers
* [Local Learning and Employment Networks](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/llens.aspx), which have a particular focus on young people at risk of disengaging, or who have already disengaged, from education and training and are not in meaningful employment
* [Head Start](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/finance/Pages/srpref116.aspx), which provides opportunities for students to undertake paid, on-the-job training while completing their VCE or VCAL. Student Resource Package credit funding will be provided to participating schools that host Head Start staff.

Additional resources

DET provides [information for schools, students and parents on supporting students with additional needs](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Pages/disabilitypathways.aspx) in their career and pathway planning.

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) produced a [report](https://www.cyda.org.au/resources/details/85/post-school-transition-the-experiences-of-students-with-disability) in 2015 on post-school transitions for people with a disability.

# Enablers

The following sections outline the resources and capabilities that schools will need to deliver the services outlined in the previous section. These fall into four categories:

* curriculum and pedagogy
* educational resources, equipment and assistive technology
* the physical environment
* student transport

### Curriculum and pedagogy

The overarching objective of Supported Inclusion Schools is to provide curriculum and pedagogy that is rigorous and accessible for all students. In order to achieve this, teachers need to be adept at identifying students’ achievement in relation to the Victorian Curriculum, abilities and individual preferences. Teachers need the skills to cater for all learners and the multiple entry points and pathways for individuals and groups of students, including students with special learning needs. The four main areas of focus for Supported Inclusion Schools include:

* relationship building
* strengths-based practice
* differentiation
* a developmental approach to assessment.

Many of these pedagogical approaches are already commonplace within schools, rather than representing something new. However, Supported Inclusion Schools should ensure a specific focus on these elements as central to teaching practice, given their diverse student cohort.

#### **Relationship building**

Positive teacher-student relationships are the foundation of effective learning. They promote a sense of belonging, build student engagement, and help teachers to understand student needs. Supported Inclusion School staff should prioritise getting to know their students in the first few weeks of school.

Additional resources

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has developed a [resource](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/the-first-few-weeks-illustration-of-practice) which shows a teacher using a number of strategies to build relationships and ensure engagement and participation, including for students with disabilities.

#### **Strength-based practice**

Supported Inclusion Schools should promote strength-based practice, which focuses on the strengths of the student, their families and their community, and seeks to enhance these. It represents a move away from a deficit approach, which focuses on what is wrong with the student and what they cannot do. A strength-based approach does not ignore areas of concern and supports teachers to see students and their learning holistically. Adopting and encouraging a strength-based approach will help Supported Inclusion Schools to maximise learning and wellbeing outcomes.

#### **School-wide Positive Behaviour Support**

To assist in embedding [strengths-based practice](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/childhood/professionals/learning/strengthbappr.pdf), Supported Inclusion Schools are encouraged and supported to implement the [School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/behaviour-students/guidance/5-school-wide-positive-behaviour-support-swpbs-framework) framework.

SWPBS is a framework for creating safe and positive learning environments in schools, while improving the social-emotional and academic outcomes for students. It utilises a preventative approach that relies on research-based practices, including developing clear behavioural expectations, teaching these expectations, acknowledging appropriate behaviour, consistently correcting inappropriate behaviour, and using behavioural data to systematically solve problems.

Victoria adopted a coaching model to support the implementation of SWPBS in schools, which can take three to five years for full implementation. The coaching model focuses on developing the practical skills of school staff to implement SWPBS at their school.

#### **Differentiation**

Differentiation is a key aspect of inclusive education. It has also been identified by the Department as a [High Impact Teaching Strategy (HITS).](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/improve/Pages/hits.aspx) Differentiating teaching is when the teacher adjusts the lesson to ensure that all students can access the instruction and make progress. Teachers can differentiate by adjusting:

* the process: the way they plan to teach something, for example, by deciding to use explicit teaching or group work
* the product: how the student demonstrates success
* the content: delivering different parts of the curriculum to different students[[3]](#footnote-4).

Supported Inclusion Schools, like all schools, should routinely use differentiation to ensure that learning is accessible for all students. As differentiation requires a high degree of planning and skill, it is critical for Supported Inclusion Schools to build teacher capacity in this area. Planning in teams with designated planning time can help teachers to plan for how they will differentiate.

One way that Supported Inclusion Schools can cater to all students through differentiation is through Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This is the conscious and deliberate creation of lessons and outcomes that allow all students to access and participate in the same curricula. When taking a UDL approach, teachers prepare the learning environment with flexible means, methods and materials that allow them to better meet the needs of every student. Teaching and learning strategies could include:

* direct, explicit teaching, demonstration and presentation
* dialogue, storytelling, community of inquiry
* creative activities with media, general and specialised equipment and materials
* investigative activities with general and specialised equipment and materials
* construction, modelling and simulation through play-based learning and / or authentic settings
* display of learning resources and student work
* quiet reflective activities and / or individual research.

**A developmental approach to assessment**

Supported Inclusion Schools should adopt a model of assessment that focuses on finding out where the student’s point of need is, then teaching to that point of need to move the student forward with their learning. This approach is called a developmental approach to assessment. The [ABLES Assessment Tool](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/ablesintroguide.pdf) supports schools to adopt a developmental approach for students with disabilities and additional learning needs. It provides teachers with explicit guidance material and resources that help them to plan effectively for and teach students based on their individual learning needs. The ABLES Tool assesses students against three learning areas:

* English, reading and writing
* English, speaking and listening
* personal and social capability
* social
* self
* emotion
* interpersonal development.

The ABLES Tool can produce four reports: A Learning Readiness Report; Student Profile Report; Class Report and School Report. Together, these assessment reports provide a comprehensive picture of a student’s strengths and abilities.

### Educational resources, inclusive equipment and assistive technology

All schools are required to make reasonable adjustments for a student with a disability to enable them to access their education on the same basis as their peers, including allowing them to participate in, or derive a benefit from, the educational program. This may require thinking about ways teachers can make reasonable adjustments in their day-to-day practice, and where technology or resources may increase accessibility. This means Supported Inclusion Schools need to consider two key enablers to best serve all students:

* high-quality educational resources
* assistive technology and inclusive equipment.

#### Educational resources

There are many educational resources that cater specifically to supporting students with disabilities. These resources provide support for teachers and students in the classroom. However, it can be challenging to navigate resources online, and understand their relative effectiveness. As a first step, Supported Inclusion Schools should look to existing Department resources and initiatives that support students with disabilities. Refer to the following examples.

* [Inclusive Classrooms professional learning program](https://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/professional-learning/inclusive-classrooms):
* The program supports school staff to build their capability to implement inclusive practice by providing a suite of high-quality professional learning courses.
* Courses are comprised of self-paced online learning as well as face to face or virtual conferenced sessions supported by a facilitator. Participants learn a range of teaching strategies and adjustments that can be implemented at the whole-school, classroom and individual levels to support students with diverse learning needs.
* Courses run for eight weeks, providing up to 20 hours professional learning aligning with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Course completion contributes towards annual Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) professional learning teacher registration requirements.
* Medical and accessibility programs for complex health needs and disability, supplementary to the PSD.
* Help for students with vision impairment, including the [Glasses for Kids](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/glassesforkids.aspx) initiative.
* ABLES curriculum assessment and reporting tool, mentioned above.
* Supplementary assistance for [home-based education](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/homebased.aspx) when a student is unable to attend school.
* [Teaching and support resources](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/supportingautisticstudents.aspx) to create autism friendly environments for students and families.
* [Abilities awareness program](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/information-and-resources.aspx) for students to discover what they can do.
* [English as an Additional Language (EAL)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/diversity/eal/Pages/default.aspx) resources and help for refugees and newly arrived students.
* [Programs for gifted and talented students](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/student-excellence-program.aspx).

#### Assistive technology and inclusive equipment

Assistive technology is any device or system that allows individuals to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to or increases the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed.[[4]](#footnote-5) Broadly, it refers to any tool or technology used to enable student learning. Assistive technology has been shown to improve outcomes in a range of studies, particularly for literacy and speech skills.[[5]](#footnote-6) Depending on the needs of the student, assistive technology can provide:

* better access to physical spaces
* increased mobility
* more opportunities for communication
* access to computers and other technological devices for learning
* opportunities for differentiation and individualised instruction.

Beyond technology, there may also be a need to incorporate specific equipment into the built environment to increase accessibility. Many aspects of the built environment are designed based on the Victorian School Building Authority’s (VSBA) special school planning provision and described in the following section. However, there may be a need for additional items depending on the cohort, such as a hydrotherapy pool, or more targeted equipment such as individualised bikes for students.

There are different options for schools to consider based on need, and some examples include:

### TABLE 8: TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of technology or equipment | Examples |
| Day-to-day equipment in the classroom | * closed captioning of video and multi-media resources * live captioning of teachers’ voices in classrooms * headphones * communication software * tablets / devices * literacy aids or software that allow text to be read aloud * portable amplification equipment or tools that allow magnification of content * ability switches and switch-adapted toys |
| Mobility equipment | * customised or adjustable furniture * ramps |
| Inclusive recreation equipment and resources | * hydrotherapy pool * individualised bikes / sporting equipment * sensory garden and community courtyard. |

### Physical environment

Supported Inclusion Schools are built to accommodate a higher number of students with disabilities than traditional mainstream settings. This means specific aspects of the school’s physical environment cater to diverse learning needs. These aspects mostly relate to:

* considerations for accessibility - physical environment
* learning spaces for classroom / teaching.

An overview of each is provided below.

#### Considerations for accessibility

The school, as a built environment, should be as least restrictive as possible to cater to all students. The Department considered a range of factors in line with universal design principles, for example:

* equitable use
* flexibility in use
* perceptible information (e.g. the design communicates necessary information regardless of the user’s sensory abilities)
* tolerance for error (e.g. the design minimises hazards / unintended consequences)
* low physical effort
* size and space.

Schools should contact the Victorian School Building Authority if they require any additional support or guidance on these aspects.

You can contact the VSBA by email: [vsba@edumail.vic.gov.au​](mailto:vsba@edumail.vic.gov.au) or by phone: 1800 896 950 on weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm.​

#### Learning spaces

Accessible learning spaces represent a main feature of difference compared with mainstream settings. Learning spaces have been designed with three categories of use in mind.

* **Tier 1:** Large learning spaces most resembling ‘mainstream’ classrooms – serving approximately 80 per cent of students at any given time.
* **Tier 2:** For smaller groups (up to 10 students) requiring a moderate level of additional support – serving approximately 15 per cent of students at any given time.
* **Tier 3:** For very small groups or one-on-one support, for the highest need students – serving approximately 5 per cent of students at any given time.

Students may move between the tiers in the course of a day. The main difference between this model and the floor plan of other new schools is the greater provision of Tier 2 and Tier 3 learning spaces. The below image represents a learning community floor plan, with shaded tiers of space use.[[6]](#footnote-7)



## Student Transport

### Overview

Victorian government schools are responsible for providing advice to families about travel assistance options available to their school, including accessing public transport.

The Department provides additional support for some schools and families to help with the logistics and/or the cost of transport.

* + The [School Bus Program](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/transport/Pages/schoolbus.aspx), which provides free travel for some students who live in rural and regional Victoria.
  + [Financial help with student transport](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/conveyance-allowance/policy), also known as the conveyance allowance, which helps some families with the cost of transporting students to their nearest school (the conveyance allowance is not intended to cover all travel assistance costs).
  + Schools can provide information about the [Victorian Student Pass](https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/myki/concessions-and-free-travel/children-and-students/school-students/), a discount Myki for full-time students under 18 that allows unlimited travel on all public transport, which is available through Public Transport Victoria.
  + [Students with Disabilities Transport Program](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/transport-students-disabilities/policy) (SDTP), which helps some families with the logistics of transporting students with disabilities to their specialist or integrated school.
  + Transport special consideration in instances where a family believe that their circumstances are exceptional (complex or compelling) or when they wish to appeal a transport decision under the other support streams.

Because the two Supported Inclusion Schools are in metropolitan Melbourne, the students enrolled in the mainstream provision are not eligible for the School Bus Program or the conveyance allowance.

The Department’s current policy settings also render students with disability attending Supported Inclusion Schools ineligible for the SDTP.

The conveyance allowance is considered to be the most appropriate form of transport assistance available to students enrolled in the specialist stream of all Supported Inclusion Schools from the commencement of the 2021 school year.

For students with disability living less than 4.8km from the school attended, there is currently a process to apply to the Transport Special Case Consideration Panel for access to a conveyance allowance where special or complex circumstances exist.

### Principles for implementing student transport policy at a Supported Inclusion School

Because the Supported Inclusion School model is a new addition to the Victorian education system, it is likely that parents / carers of students at Supported Inclusion Schools will require support to understand the transport policy.

In implementing the policy, Supported Inclusion Schools should:

* provide clear and consistent information about the transport options available to families and students enrolled at the school, including information about the Victorian Student Pass
* emphasise that mainstream students have exactly the same support available to them as mainstream students at any other government school
* emphasise that Supported Inclusion School students and their families are not eligible for the SDTP, but that they have the right to apply for special consideration.

To help the Department review this policy in the future, Supported Inclusion Schools are encouraged to collect information about the travel patterns of their students, noting in particular any difficulties caused by the policy.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What support for transport is available to students at Supported Inclusion Schools?**

All students enrolled at Supported Inclusion Schools are able to apply through Public Transport Victoria for the Victorian Student Pass, a discounted Myki card that provides school age students with unlimited travel on public transport.

**Do parents/carers have the right to appeal this policy or apply for special consideration for their child?**

Yes, the Department has a standard process for considering appeals or requests for special consideration for transport-related matters.

Families wishing to apply for special consideration should access the [special consideration page of the Department’s website](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/transport/Pages/specialcasestransport.aspx), where the process and application forms can be found.

Additional resources

* [School Bus Program Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-bus-program/policy)
* [Conveyance Allowance Program Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/conveyance-allowance/policy)
* [Transport for Students with a Disability Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/transport-students-disabilities/policy)
* [Application for Special Consideration and Appeals Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/transport/Pages/specialcasestransport.aspx)

# Section 5: How are Supported Inclusion SCHOOLS organised?

## overview

This section describes practical guidance about implementing Supported Inclusion Schools in practice, along with frequently asked questions. It covers:

* governance and leadership (including setting an inclusive school culture)
* resourcing
* staffing and recruitment
* communications, engagement and branding.

Further queries about implementation can be directed to Todd Macbeth, Director of Inclusive Education Professional Practice Branch, Professional Practice and Leadership Division at the Department.

## Governance and leadership

### Overview

Victorian government schools are established and governed in line with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic) and Departmental policy. This includes:

* compliance with the regulatory framework for Victorian government schools, as regulated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) (i.e. the minimum standards for registration including the Child Safe Standards)
* accountability to the Department
* oversight by a school council
* leadership by principal class employees
* development of strategic and annual implementation plans
* compliance with a range of Department policies.

Within these limits, principals have considerable freedom to structure and manage their schools to best fit the needs of their staff, students and the wider school community.

Being a Supported Inclusion School does not impose an additional governance or leadership obligation on schools aside from the existing requirements of registration. Instead, the school leadership team in collaboration with school councils (to the extent of their powers, duties and functions) should incorporate the operation of the Supported Inclusion School into their existing structures and processes as much as possible. While this may necessitate some changes to structure or approach, it should not require wholesale changes to a school’s operation. For example, this might involve:

* establishing an Inclusive Education Advisory Committee
* recruiting members of leadership with inclusive education experience
* identifying a role in the school to specifically focus on inclusive education.

Supported Inclusion Schools and leadership should also consider ways to support the Department to evaluate and improve the Supported Inclusion Schools model, through collection of data including, but not limited to:

1. Parent Opinion Survey
2. Attitudes to School Survey
3. School Staff Survey
4. School assessment data

### School culture

A critical factor for the success of Supported Inclusion Schools is the development of an inclusive school culture by school leaders.[[7]](#footnote-8)

To do this, effective school leaders should:

* lead, in collaboration with the school council, the development of a cohesive school vision, values and philosophy for inclusive education
* recruit staff with mindsets and beliefs consistent with the vision for inclusive education.

Also, the Supported Inclusion School’s culture should:

* acknowledge that every student can learn and has the right to learn
* focus on collaboration among staff, with support services and families
* focus on professional growth and risk-taking to help staff build skills in inclusive practice
* expect that inclusion is everybody’s business
* acknowledge the individual needs of every student
* celebrate the strengths of every student
* identify and eliminate barriers to inclusion
* foster a culture where students themselves are welcoming and respectful of diversity and students with disabilities
* include students in decision making and encourage student voice, leadership and agency.

#### **Principles for school governance and leadership of Supported Inclusion Schools**

While Supported Inclusion Schools are a new addition to the Victorian education system, it should be relatively straightforward to incorporate them into existing school governance and leadership structures.

Supported Inclusion Schools should:

* ensure the school council is briefed on the school’s status as a Supported Inclusion School, including its registration, the targeted approach to teaching and learning, and the focus on including a larger number of students with disabilities within a mainstream school
* ensure a specific focus on inclusion is comprehensively embedded in school strategic planning, annual implementation planning and staff performance and development planning, to make it a focus of everyone at the school
* ensure the leadership structure of the school – including principal class and leading teachers – are aware of their responsibilities as a Supported Inclusion School and seek opportunities to innovate
* consider including a member of the school’s team, who has a role focused on inclusion, in the school’s leadership team, to ensure their views on inclusion are considered in all leadership decisions
* emphasise the importance of an inclusive culture through all interactions, policies and processes, making it clear that the school has a primary emphasis on supporting all students, including those with diverse needs
* use the school’s additional funding through the PSD to pursue innovative ways to support the achievement of educational outcomes, which could include new approaches to curriculum, staffing, pedagogy, technology and structure
* implement a continuous feedback and improvement cycle for leaders and staff on the Supported Inclusion School model, noting that staff should voice concerns or suggest improvements to a responsive leadership, while leadership should seek improvement where possible and celebrate success
* periodically review the implementation of the Supported Inclusion School model within the school, including the school’s Enrolment Policy, to determine if all aspects of its operation are working appropriately and whether there are improvements that could be made.

## Resourcing

### Student Resource Package

Victorian government schools receive the bulk of their funding through the Student Resource Package (SRP). The major source of resources under the SRP are based on student data (enrolment and demographic), which is a per-student allocation adjusted based on the level of schooling and their family and community characteristics. The other sources of funding allocated in the SRP are school-based infrastructure and program payments, and targeted initiatives that have specific targeting criteria and a limited lifespan.

Government schools can also supplement their SRP funding through fundraising, so long as those efforts comply with the Department’s policy.

### Program for Students with Disabilities

An additional source of funding for government schools is the [Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psd.aspx). The PSD is a supplementary funding program that provides resources to schools to support the provision of education for a defined population of students with disabilities. Students with moderate to severe needs who meet criteria for one of the following seven program categories are eligible for PSD funding:

* physical disability
* visual impairment
* severe behaviour disorder
* intellectual disability
* hearing impairment
* autism spectrum disorder
* severe language disorder with critical educational needs.

### Principles for resourcing Supported Inclusion Schools

While being a Supported Inclusion School does not confer additional funding, the enrolment of a proportion of students with disabilities who may qualify for PSD provides Supported Inclusion Schools with the opportunity to innovate in how they support students with disabilities.

In considering the resourcing of their school and, in particular, their support for students with disabilities, Supported Inclusion Schools should:

* seek opportunities to achieve ‘economies of scale’ whereby the high proportion of PSD-funded students and greater amount of PSD funding provides opportunities to do things more efficiently or more effectively
* actively engage with the support, resources and services that the Department offers to all schools, such as the Student Support Services (explained below) and visiting teacher workforce, and the suite of inclusion initiatives
* purchase and implement assistive technologies and educational resources for students with disabilities to a greater degree than mainstream schools
* form partnerships with other schools and community services in their area to share best practice and align the support provided to students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Health and Wellbeing Service Support Manager, SSS Branch Manager or the Koorie Education Coordinator in your Area.

Additional resources

* [Student Resource Package — Equity Funding (Student Based Funding)](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-resource-package-srp-equity-funding-student-based-funding/policy)
* [Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/disabilities.aspx)
* [Student Resource Package — School Specific Programs](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-resource-package-srp-school-specific-programs/policy)

### Departmental services

Schools can access a range of Departmental resources and services, including curriculum resources, professional learning programs, professional services (such as legal, communications and IT) and multi-disciplinary Area-based teams, who provide schools, students and families with local access to a range of expertise.

This wide range of supports and resources include:

*Student Support Services*

Student Support Services (SSS), comprises a mix of allied health specialists, including psychologists, social workers and speech pathologists. SSS provide specialised support to assist schools in supporting students’ health and wellbeing – particularly the most vulnerable students.

SSS support schools in managing complex cases and providing guidance on intervention by building the capability of teachers and school leaders and providing support to students.

*Visiting Teacher Service*

The Visiting Teacher Service professionals help teachers understand how to support students with disabilities and give advice on their progress, provide reports to help with funding applications, help students to use assistive equipment and support schools to create Individual Education Plans.

*Inclusive Education Scholarship Initiative*

Each Supported Inclusion School will be offered a scholarship to undertake a VIT-endorsed postgraduate course focused on inclusive and special education or Applied Behaviour Analysis. These scholarships are available to support full tuition fees and contribute towards casual relief teacher costs for the approved courses under the initiative.

This initiative promotes an advanced understanding of special and inclusive educational needs in the context of access and success for people with diverse educational needs. This provides an opportunity for teaching staff to further develop their skills to build supportive environments that promote inclusion and collaboration in these schools.

*Behaviour coaching*

The Behaviour Coaching Unit in the Inclusive Education Professional Practice Branch can provide support and guidance to school leadership on leading evidence-based teaching practices and developing an inclusive culture.

Working with leadership, the behaviour coach initiative assists schools to build the capability of their staff to use differentiated instructional strategies to increase student engagement, and evidence-based behavioural interventions to reduce serious behaviours of concern.

The provision of a range of supports will be made available to Supported Inclusion Schools and deployed based on school and student need. These may include:

* + high-quality differentiated curricula programs
  + training in differentiated instructional strategies
  + coaching for individualised behaviour support.

In addition, the Behaviour Coaching Unit can support the school’s overall strategic direction of adopting inclusive practices through the use of behavioural science.

### TABLE 3: EXAMPLES OF WIDER SYSTEM SUPPORT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | |
| Professional learning support / communities | Teachers in nearby schools may be offered the opportunity to attend professional learning at the Supported Inclusion School, to foster collaboration and best practice sharing. |
| Visits and observations | Teachers may be invited to visit the Supported Inclusion School (including through short term staff exchange with a specialist school) to observe activities within and adjacent to classrooms. |
| Support and advice | Specialists in the Supported Inclusion School could provide advice on approaches and interventions for specific disabilities. |
| Shared resources | Particular tools, equipment and resources could be shared across schools to support inclusive practice and improve students’ experiences. |
| Data collection and evaluation | The two Supported Inclusion Schools in 2020 can support the evaluation, improvement and wider rollout of the Supported Inclusion School provision model by documenting their approach to implementing it for sharing with other schools and participating in any evaluation conducted by the Department throughout the school year. |
| Documenting and circulating learnings | Supported Inclusion Schools can share their learnings with the wider system via reports or Departmental communication channels. |
| Speak with experts, Departmental staff, critical friends | The principals and key staff of the two Supported Inclusion Schools in 2020 may extend their expertise system wide. |

## 

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Do Supported Inclusion Schools receive any additional support?**

The Department is committed to the success of the Supported Inclusion School model and providing the best possible support for the students enrolled at participating schools. Supported Inclusion Schools may access the SSS workforce of allied health professionals and visiting teachers, and the various inclusion initiatives offered by the Department. The Department will also provide ongoing assistance from a working group dedicated to supporting the rollout of the Supported Inclusion School model.

## considerations for recruitment

### Overview

Victorian government schools are responsible for the recruitment, induction and ongoing professional learning of their staff. Supported Inclusion Schools are committed to implementing evidence-based inclusive education practices to achieve the best possible outcomes for their students.

The following are considerations when undertaking recruitment and induction processes, to support the implementation of the Supported Inclusion School model:

* staff recruitment processes highlight and support the school’s commitment to inclusive education
* staff induction processes provide a solid grounding in the school’s approach to inclusive practice, including the school’s expectations of staff in this area
* individual and school-wide professional learning prioritises development of inclusive practice.

### Considerations for recruiting and inducting staff into Supported Inclusion Schools

When recruiting staff, Supported Inclusion Schools may wish to consider the following:

* Detail the school’s participation as a Supported Inclusion School, its commitment to inclusive education, and its practice and pedagogy for achieving inclusion in the school profile section of recruitment advertisements
* In relevant recruitment processes, include a selection criterion that focuses on inclusion and/or education of students with disabilities, in compliance with the Ministerial Order and Department Recruitment Policy
* Follow the Department’s [induction guidelines](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/induction.aspx), which may demonstrate the school’s commitment to inclusive education and professional learning for all staff to foster an inclusive, best practice culture.

### Considerations for professional learning in Supported Inclusion Schools

Supported Inclusion Schools may consider the following regarding professional learning of staff:

* Seek opportunities for the roll-out of school-wide professional learning on inclusive education
* Make a specific commitment to inclusion, and actions to support it, a feature of the professional development plans for staff
* Support for ‘in the classroom’ professional learning in inclusive education, such as team teaching, mentoring, peer observation and professional coaching from learning specialists
* Support for ‘beyond the classroom’ professional learning in inclusive education, such as access to experts at staff meetings, group critical reflection, and formal courses/programs.

Additional resources

* Human resources policy, guidance and resources – available on the Department’s [Policy and Advisory Library (PAL)](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal)
* [Workforce Management — Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workforce-management-schools/overview)
* [Training and Professional Development for School Staff](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/default.aspx)

## Communications, branding and ENGAGEMENT

### Overview

Victorian government schools have a responsibility to make themselves welcoming to all students. This is particularly important for Supported Inclusion Schools, because of the greater capacity these schools have to support students with disability and the need to create an inclusive environment for all students. All the other domains of activity mentioned in this manual concern the internal considerations for doing so, while this section considers the external ones.

A positive community expectation and perception is integral to the success of Supported Inclusion Schools. It is imperative that these schools are not regarded as a more inferior option than a mainstream school for mainstream students, or than a standalone special school for students with disabilities. There are several key things that Supported Inclusion Schools can do to position themselves as exemplars of best practice for inclusive education.

* Ensure the school’s branding, communications and collateral strongly demonstrate the school’s culture of inclusion, its commitment to inclusive education, its efforts to promote the inclusion of all students, and the benefits of this approach.
* Actively engage with families and students to both promote the school’s ethos and approach, and to seek feedback from the school community on how things can be improved.
* Actively engage with the broader community, including organisations that can support the school in promoting and improving its inclusive culture and approach, and primary schools / early childhood settings that feed into the school.

### Principles for branding and communication

The branding and communications for Supported Inclusion Schools should reflect their commitment to ensuring that all members of the school community are valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop and succeed.

The following principles will support this intent.

* Ensure that branding, once developed, is public facing to help generate positive public perception about the school’s capability and purpose.
* Ensure that all school communications emphasise the school’s inclusive approach and speak equally to all students, both mainstream and specialist. This includes information brochures, web pages, email signatures and forms.
* Ensure the achievements of all students and great examples of inclusive education are regularly shared through official school communications channels, noting the benefits to all students of such an approach.

### Principles for student, community and family engagement

Active engagement with students, families and the broader community is critical to the success of Supported Inclusion Schools, possibly even more than at other schools. This will help to overcome issues of perception, share expertise and develop new approaches for inclusive education in partnership with other providers, and leverage support and services from other organisations.

Engagement should seek to achieve the following.

* Ensure all students are aware of the school’s commitment to inclusion and asked about their ideas for how to improve this.
* Ensure all parents are aware that the school will cater to all students and that the school has adequate structures and supports in place to do this effectively.
* Ensure that families of students with disabilities are consulted on what additional supports will be provided.
* Emphasise that the school will respect and value the knowledge families have of their child’s learning.
* Establish strong partnerships with nearby schools – both mainstream and specialist – to foster expertise sharing in inclusive education.
* Establish productive relationships with allied health providers and community organisations in the local area, to help support additional needs students at the school.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**How can we ensure that Supported Inclusion Schools are perceived as a positive education option for mainstream students and / or students with disabilities?**

A key factor in the success of Supported Inclusion Schools is the perception of the schools by parents of both mainstream students and the parents of students with disabilities. These schools should be considered a great education option, where students have all the opportunities, they would at a regular neighbourhood school, and students with disabilities receive the support they need.

Key factors for ensuring a positive perception of a Supported Inclusion School are:

* an uncompromising commitment to inclusive education
* a strong and inclusive school culture
* innovative leadership and pedagogy focused on inclusion and outcomes
* genuine communication and two-way feedback with parents
* high quality partnerships with the community and other organisations.

**Why is inclusive design the preferred option?**

The Victorian Government’s *Special Needs Plan for Victorian Schools* requires all newly built government schools or schools undertaking planning work to provide facilities to accommodate the diverse needs of students. Universal and inclusive design principles ensure environments are usable by all without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

Supported Inclusion Schools have been designed to increase inclusiveness within education for a substantial cohort of students with disabilities, within a local neighbourhood setting. These schools are designed to maximise accessibility for all members of the community.

**Do students with disabilities receive less support at Supported Inclusion Schools than they would at specialist schools?**

No. Supported Inclusion Schools will provide students with disabilities enhanced support to attend mainstream education classes (where appropriate) and receive additional support in specialised facilities including areas designed for targeted teaching and therapies.

These schools build the capabilities of staff to respond to the diverse needs of their students, through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities.

The spaces are designed to support specific learning needs, with acoustics, lighting, resource access and physical comfort factors designed to address the needs of students with disability.

Additional resources

* [Student Engagement Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy)
* [Student Engagement Resources](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/behaviour/engagement/Pages/default.aspx)
* [Our Partnerships](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/partnerships.aspx)

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2. Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of the research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. Teaching and Teacher Education, 24(1), 80–91. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/classrooms/Pages/approacheshitsdifferentiation.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. World Health Organisation 2004 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Maor D, Currie J, Drewry R 2011, *The effectiveness of assistive technologies for children with special needs: A review of research-based studies*, European Journal of Special Needs Education, 26(3). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Provided by the VSBA [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Sources: Forlin CI, Chambers DJ, Loreman T, Deppler J, & Sharma U 2013, *Inclusive education for students with disability: A review of the best evidence in relation to theory and practice*. The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY); Jenkin et al (2018), *Improving Educational Outcomes for Children with Disability in Victoria*, Monash University Castan Centre for Human Rights Law; expert interviews. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)