



Parent Story

More than just breathing the same air

To me, inclusion involves much more than just breathing the same air. It involves making sure children are active participants in their daily lives. Just being there isn't enough.

Despite using a wheelchair and requiring full assistance with transfers, toileting and personal care, my son is an independent, confident and happy student. The whole school recognises the characteristic sound of the spoke-dokies on his wheelchair, but just as much, they recognise his happy personality and smile.

The fact that my son has cerebral palsy means that he needs to learn skills which able-bodied children spontaneously develop. The development of peer-to-peer relationships and social skills can be interrupted by the need for an adult carer nearby.

Other children learnt very quickly that my son only speaks about himself and they would run off, leaving him to his own devices. Fortunately, we were able to pick this up early and avoid any significant issues by specifically teaching him to ask about, and show interest in, other children.

So too, finding aides with sufficient skills to know when to support my son and when to step away is an important factor in the success of my son's inclusion. The school has been able to manage all of these issues well.

I really appreciate the enthusiasm, and often ingenuity, of the staff and students, who always begin with the assumption that excluding my son is not an option. As an example, when the notice came home about line-dancing at school, I didn't expect him to be included, but the photos showed otherwise. There he was, a happy and engaged student, doing just the same as everyone else, albeit in a wheelchair.

Funding is essential to provide the supports that my son needs at school, but just as important is a positive attitude that flows through from the principal to all staff and students. I want my son to have equal access to the same opportunities as his peers. His school has taken this in their stride, which is a credit to the whole school community.

Parent