

Towards independence

parent story

My daughter has fairly high needs and going to kinder really helped to develop her confidence and a little independence

Stella has cerebral palsy which makes her speech difficult to understand and she uses a walking frame to get around.

Before she started kinder, her main form of mobility was crawling, which gradually gave her independence around the house and in other indoor settings.

In the early years, we did just about everything together and I was always around to assist her physically or to interpret what she wanted to say.

We went to early intervention, which seemed to be as much about teaching parents as it was about assisting children.

Just about everything she did required my active participation such as swimming lessons, playgroup, social activities, trips to the park and so on.

I felt some trepidation about leaving Stella in the care of others. I was worried that staff at the kindergarten may not be up to speed with her needs but I was quickly reassured.

Stella was with the same staff and children every day and they quickly came to love Stella and understand how to meet her needs and help her to be included in the group.

I felt confident that she was safe, well cared for, and above all, that she was in a great early education environment that was stimulating and helping her to develop a range of skills.

She made friends and learned how to get by without me in attendance to interpret her speech, assist her with mobility and meals. These small steps towards independence were an important foundation for starting school.

It took Stella quite a while to feel confident that her needs would be met if I wasn't around. Kinder was the first step in this process and the kindergarten staff were wonderful at including and reassuring her, while still being firm about making her let me go.

So much happened in Stella's kinder year that really laid the foundation for her starting school.

She began her first tentative steps in her K-walker, she began to use an electronic communication device, we set up regular visits from a physiotherapist, speech therapist and an occupational therapist, all of which flowed fairly easily into the following year at school.

In no time at all the year was over and Stella had made new friends, gained confidence in her ability to eat, communicate, and walk in her walking frame, and both she and I were as ready for school as we were ever going to be.

Sarah Barton



 **Association for Children with a Disability**

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