

# Choosing a kindergarten



Kindergarten gives your child opportunities to learn through play, interact with other children, develop skills and confidence, and have some fun.

## What should I look for in a kindergarten service?

General things to look for include how the educators interact with parents and children, the facilities and equipment, and the types of activities on offer. You can also ask specific questions about how the service can support your child's individual needs. Other things to think about are how far you want to travel and whether children from your chosen kindergarten go to a particular school.

### Approachable staff

A positive approach will go a long way towards making kindergarten a great experience for your child, this includes people who:

- focus on your child's abilities
- engage directly with your child, not just through you
- work with your child at their own level and pace
- make time to meet with you and any specialists
- think about creative ways to adapt the kindergarten program to include your child

You should feel confident that kindergarten staff can keep your child safe, support their needs and extend their learning.

### Physical environment

Look for a service that is safe, clean and well-equipped. You will also want to know that the kindergarten can cater for the physical needs of your child. This might include making modifications such as installing grab rails or ramps.

### Inclusive participation

Ask how your child can participate in the learning and development opportunities in the program. For example, how they would include a child in a wheelchair in outdoor play, or how they support children with sensory needs. While they may not have all the answers straightaway, you should feel reassured that the service will explore ways to include your child in all activities.

### Complex care needs

Ask about how the kindergarten meets any complex medical or personal care needs. You will want to know that your child will be cared for safely and with dignity, privacy and respect.

## Can I check the quality rating of a service?

The quality of early childhood services is rated under a system called the National Quality Framework. You can check the quality ratings of early childhood services, including child care and kindergartens, on the [Starting Blocks website](#).

## Can the kindergarten get extra support to include my child?

By working together with the kindergarten service you can help them to understand your child's individual needs and plan a program that includes all children. There are many things that kindergartens can do to support children with a variety of different needs, and not all of these require extra funded support.

Some kindergartens can get extra support to include children with disability through the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program. This is done by setting up a Program Support Group which includes your family and kindergarten staff to help everyone understand your child's needs and plan for their inclusion.

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support program may provide kindergartens with:

- specialist training for teachers to meet the individual needs of the children with disabilities or complex medical needs
- specialist advice on inclusive learning programs
- minor building modifications
- extra assistants to work with the teacher to support all children in the program

The resources allocated to the kindergarten will be used to support the kindergarten to respond to the needs of all children in the group. Speak to the kindergarten teacher to find out more.

## When should I start planning for kindergarten?

Start planning for kindergarten in the year before your child is due to start. This will allow time for everyone to understand your child's needs and for the kindergarten to have things in place so that your child can fully participate in the program.