A Short Guide to Running a

# School Playgroup



**A school playgroup is a welcoming space where families can come together within a school setting to play, learn and connect. Some school playgroups are run by families and parents who volunteer to lead the group. Other school playgroups are run by teachers within the school.**

**School playgroups help children become familiar with the school environment, supporting a smooth transition into kindergarten or primary school. They also provide opportunities for parents and carers to build relationships with the school community, staff and other families.**

**School playgroups can strengthen early learning, promote school readiness and foster a sense of belonging for both children and their families.**

## Playgroup Space

- Provide clear signage directing families to the playgroup room, entry point and parking, plus a brief welcome note explaining how the school site works – for example which gates are open and where visitors should sign in.
- Where possible, use a space with direct or easy access to an outdoor area, so children can move between indoor and outdoor play.
- Choose a room close to a kitchen if possible, so tea, coffee and snacks can be prepared without leaving the group unsupervised.
- Check the room and pathways are pram and mobility-aid friendly. Look for wide doorways or ramp access and a spot to park prams near the entrance rather than blocking walkways.
- Set up a quiet corner with soft furnishings or cushions away from the main play area for feeding, settling a child, or for anyone who needs a moment away from the group.
- Confirm there are toilets and baby change facilities within easy reach of the playgroup space – ideally including an accessible toilet and a change table or mat, so families don't need to cross the school grounds.

## Partnerships and Promotion

- Connect with early childhood services, kindergartens and community organisations.
- Engage school staff such as teachers, wellbeing officers or family liaison workers.
- If you're a teacher wanting to start a playgroup, approach the principal with a clear plan- link the playgroup to school priorities such as transition to school or community engagement. Propose a low commitment starting point and be ready to address supervision and duty of care.
- Partner with local services that support families and early learning.
- Encourage current school families to spread the word and invite others.
- Promote the playgroup through the school, local community centres, newsletter and social media.

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## Toys, Resources and Activities

- Where possible borrow equipment from an onsite rather than purchasing new – this keeps costs down and makes the most of resources already on site.
- Consider visiting your local Toy Library to borrow toys and equipment.
- Offer a variety of play-based learning experiences – for example blocks, puzzles and pretend play. Consider incorporating activities children may encounter in kindergarten, so the transition feels familiar.
- Include early literacy and numeracy activities such as books, songs and counting games, ideally drawing on resources already use at the school.
- Encourage routines similar to a school day – for example group time, a bell, a transition signal and pack-up time. This helps the children to build familiarity with the rhythm and expectations of school life.
- Support children to develop social skills such as sharing, turn-taking and communication, including opportunities to interact with older students – for example a visit from a buddy class or a shared activity with younger students close in age to the playgroup attendees.
- Allow time for free play as well as guided group activities, balancing open exploration with structured moments that mirror a typical classroom.






## An Important Note

- Take time to build relationships and create a welcoming, inclusive environment. Have a familiar staff member greet new families in the first few weeks, or pair new families with an established playgroup family.
- Recognise that school playgroups are often a family's first point of contact with the school, so a positive early experience can shape how confident they feel engaging with the school later on.
- Be mindful that some families may be new to the school system or unfamiliar with Australian schooling systems. Offer clear, plain-language communication and don't assume prior knowledge of how schools work.
- Invite family input and participation in shaping the playgroup, such as a short feedback survey each term or an informal chat at pick-up, so families feel ownership over how it runs.
- A strong school playgroup builds confidence, connection and a sense of belonging – not just for children, but for parents and carers navigating a new community.

## More Information

**Playgroup in Schools**

This Playgroup Victoria resource provides more information on the benefits of school playgroups and how to set one up.