

# CPA Student Success Guide

Oscar, CPA Client

A guide to navigating the  
years 7 and 8 successfully

# Your goals are our goals

The transition to secondary school is a big challenge for all students and their parents, and even more so for those with a disability. How do they develop their independence? Build the social skills to fit in with their peers? Capitalise on learning opportunities?



**How to use this guide**  
To help you get the most from this guide, each section has three key areas:

GOAL

OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

OUTCOMES

So, you'll easily be able to discover which CPA services correspond to the goals and the outcomes these services are designed to deliver.

To ensure students can achieve the best possible outcomes during this crucial life stage, we've created the CPA Student Success Guides.

Each guide has been informed by evidence-based thinking and long-time learnings. We've also looked closely at the Australian Curriculum, to see where our programs and services align, not only within curriculum, but also with the known educational, social and emotional goals of students as they journey through secondary school.

The full kit includes three guides, each covering two school years: Years 7 and 8, 9 and 10, and 11 and 12. Because students goals and needs change over the course of secondary school, there will be some crossover of goals between years.

This kit will assist teachers, parents, and students living with a disability to discover the wide range of fun and engaging programs and services students can access through CPA to support achievement of those goals.

CPA is proud to be a Department of Education specialist allied health provider, pre-qualified to provide a range of supports in schools to ensure learning adjustments are appropriate and effective for students.

The allied health services that CPA can deliver under this Scheme are occupational therapy, speech pathology, physiotherapy, exercise physiology and behaviour support.

For further detail, visit: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support/programs-and-services/specialist-allied-health-service-provider-scheme->

## These guides were designed with teachers, parents and students in mind



**For teachers,** we know that you want the very best for your students and are constantly trying to balance the demands of the classroom with shaping the curriculum to meet your student's needs.

**This guide will help you identify the supports that can help your students achieve their goals and become the best versions of themselves.**



**For parents,** we know that you want your child to experience all that secondary school has to offer, the same as any other teen. You might be overwhelmed by the support options available for your child but want to ensure they are armed with the tools to succeed and most importantly, to enjoy these important years.

**This guide will help you identify the supports that can help your child achieve their goals and become the best version of themselves.**



**For students,** we know that secondary school can be overwhelming and exciting at the same time. This guide will arm you with the supports you need to excel in secondary school depending on your goals as you progress through the years. You can pick and mix your supports however suits.

**This guide will help you identify the supports that can help you achieve your goals and become the best version of yourself.**

Whatever the service or program, you can be confident that any student with a disability will benefit from our unrivalled experience and expertise, as well as be inspired to learn and develop in an engaging, safe and supportive environment.



# Smoothing the transition to secondary school

Making the leap from primary to secondary school can present considerable challenges. How do you cope in a new environment? How do you make new friends? How do you juggle homework?



## Coping with change

This guide is designed to support students in years 7 and 8 with a range of conditions to deal confidently with adjustments as they make their journey into the next stage of life; to help them develop the life skills they need to truly find their voice and realise their potential.

During the transition to secondary school, students will naturally be faced with challenges like:

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Let's look at how students can navigate all of these goals with great success



## Coping with transition

It's natural to feel a certain level of anxiety in new surroundings. Especially when making the leap from a primary school of a few hundred students where you're in the same class each day, to a secondary school where there can be over 1,000 students and classes in various locations.

### OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

#### Occupational Therapy

NDIS CATEGORY 15

Transitioning to secondary school can be an exciting yet anxious time for any young person and their family.

CPA's Occupational Therapy team can be a great support to students while they're adapting to the transition from primary to secondary school.

CPA OTs can support students with building independence and confidence around functional everyday tasks. Through specific and individualised supports, CPA OTs can provide support with emotional regulation, developing daily routines and the use of positive strategies or outlets to manage the transition to secondary school.

#### Workshops

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 10 11 15

CPA offers a broad range of weekly, group-based project learning opportunities called Workshops. These programs provide students with the chance to develop life skills and confidence at their own pace. The Workshop topics vary each term of the school year, but include themes such as managing money, developing communication and career skills, as well as providing the opportunity for students to create a Workshop around their own unique goals.

For students facing fear and anxiety about the transition to secondary school, CPA also offers a Transition to High School Workshop. During the Workshop, a variety of topics are covered, including understanding the difference between primary and secondary school, coping with new people, how to join school programs, making friends, juggling homework and more.

#### Individualised Coaching

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 10 11 15

Individualised Coaching is a core service offered by CPA. It's a personalised, 1-on-1 service where CPA's professionally trained Lifeskills Coaches work with the student around their individual goals. Coaching promotes the student's ability to self-reflect and develop an action plan to achieve their goals. This 1-on-1 support is 100% client focused meaning the student can progress at their own pace with the support and expertise of a Lifeskills Coach cheering them on every step of the way.

As a student makes the transition from primary to secondary school, CPA's ultimate aim is to arm students with the tools to advocate for themselves, maximising success and ensuring the transition is as seamless as possible.

This support can start from the beginning of secondary school, and continue through the school years.

### OUTCOMES

- ☆ Confidence to cope at this pivotal time in life
- ☆ Focused development of desired life skills
- ☆ Improved ability to communicate and interact with peers
- ☆ Strategies to deal with fears and anxieties
- ☆ Support and encouragement from peers





## Accessing a new environment

Moving from a primary to secondary school environment comes with a range of challenges that can be overwhelming for any student. For students with physical disabilities, accessing the school environment and moving between classrooms can be one of those challenges. Going from one classroom and one teacher to moving around multiple classrooms on any given day can lead to physical and cognitive fatigue.



### OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

#### Occupational Therapy

NDIS CATEGORY 15

CPA's Occupational Therapy team really comes into play once parents have chosen a school – especially if it's a mainstream school. To ensure students can independently access their school grounds, an OT will work with the school and conduct a site visit to look at any environmental modifications that are needed. Common environmental modifications include the installation of ramps for easy wheelchair access or rails in bathrooms to enable independence. The OT will work closely with the school, parents and student to identify any pain points and determine how these can be overcome.

An OT can also look at strategies that can be implemented in the class environment to support the cognitive load, as well as helping students develop organisational and time management skills.

#### Physiotherapy

NDIS CATEGORY 15

In conjunction with CPA OTs, CPA Physiotherapists look at how students can mobilise within their environment.

For students who walk (with or without a walking aid), a physiotherapist will assess the school environment focusing specifically on walking routes. They will look at whether or not the student needs to navigate stairs or uneven surfaces and work with them around the skills they need to be successful.

The student may engage in a physiotherapy program to develop skills and build strength and endurance. CPA physiotherapists and OTs work closely with students who use both a wheelchair and a walking aid for their mobility to identify the best method for getting around, in order to balance the physical and cognitive fatigue often experienced.

#### Individualised Coaching

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 10 11 15

Individualised Coaching plays an important role in helping students deal with new environments, and the challenges that can be magnified in a mainstream school environment.

Here, a CPA Lifeskills Coach can support by helping identify the various challenges they need to overcome, and work together to implement strategies, actively set goals, and create pathways to achieve these goals.

### OUTCOMES

- ☆ Confidence to move from classroom to classroom
- ☆ Strategies to deal with energy levels and fatigue
- ☆ Ability to work towards set goals to overcome challenges

# Managing schoolwork and homework

Getting around school is one thing, but just like all new secondary school students, coping with an increased amount of schoolwork – not to mention homework – is another. Learning how to take notes, feeling confident to ask questions in a classroom of new people, and figuring out how to manage new levels of work at school and home can be challenging. Coaching in time management, how to complete homework within set timeframes, and accessing the curriculum are all important skills to learn early on in secondary school.

OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

## Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology

NDIS CATEGORY 15

Some students require alternative methods of accessing the school curriculum and completing their school work. Assistive technology can be a great asset.

CPA OTs and speech pathologists work with students to identify the best solutions to meet their needs. Some students record their school work through handwriting, some through typing and others will require specific technologies such as voice recognition software or eye gaze systems.

Regardless of the method, CPA's therapists will support the student and teachers to learn the method.

## Individualised Coaching

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 10 11 15

Support can also come in the form of Individualised Coaching. A CPA Lifeskills Coach is experienced in the strategies needed to manage time effectively. They will work closely with the student, advising on specific strategies to assist with time management and designing ways of approaching homework that ensures all tasks can be regularly completed on time.

OUTCOMES

- ☆ Confidence to take notes in the classroom
- ☆ Confidence to participate fully in the classroom
- ☆ Ability to effectively manage time with the right tools
- ☆ Ability to focus on learning

# Keeping up with peers

Just like any young person in a new environment, fitting in and being seen as 'one of the crowd', is fundamental to positive self-esteem. The early years of secondary school are when new relationships begin forming, so it's important that students have the independence and confidence to self-advocate for inclusion with their peers. For example, something as simple as being able to get out of a school uniform and into a PE kit can have a huge impact on feeling confident to participate in school programs with their peers.

OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

## Occupational Therapy

NDIS CATEGORY 15

CPA OTs promote participation and well-being by supporting students with a range of individualised strategies across many aspects of school life.

CPA OTs can support students with skills in building independence around self-care and daily living routines, increasing fine motor skills or building skills around concentration and fatigue.

## Physiotherapy

NDIS CATEGORY 15

For many students, keeping up with their peers physically can be a challenge. CPA physiotherapists work with students around their participation and inclusion goals and support them to develop the skills and confidence to engage in school life.

## Workshops

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 10 11 15

Complementing these therapy services are CPA's Workshops – a broad range of weekly, group-based project learning opportunities. These programs provide students with the chance to develop life skills and confidence, at their own pace. Facilitated by a CPA Lifeskills Coach, the Workshops cover a variety of topics each term, many of which can assist with the goal of 'keeping up with peers'.

OUTCOMES

- ☆ Confidence and skills to advocate for self-inclusion in everyday schooling activities
- ☆ Ability to manage personal needs throughout the day
- ☆ Confidence to participate fully in physical activity
- ☆ Focused development of desired life skills
- ☆ Enhanced self-esteem



## Getting involved in physical and social activities

One fundamental element of keeping up with peers is getting involved in extracurricular activities, for example sports, drama, art or music. This is an integral part of secondary school for most students. Whether it's for individual fitness or to participate in group activities, social and physical activities not only help with physical wellbeing, but also mental wellbeing. Taking a break from the classroom and 'letting off some steam' is hugely beneficial for a positive mind-set.



### OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

#### Exercise Physiology

NDIS CATEGORIES 12 15

Research shows that physically active adolescents turn into physically active adults. This is why instilling healthy behaviours at a young age is so important. CPA believes that exercise, sports and even general play needs to be accessible to students with disabilities, too.

As with all CPA supports, CPA's Accredited Exercise Physiologists focus on a client-centred 1-on-1 approach. Exercise Physiology is available for students with all types of disabilities – physical, sensory and intellectual. These sessions can also be complimented by CPA's range of gym, sports and hydrotherapy programs.

#### Physiotherapy

NDIS CATEGORY 15

CPA physiotherapists are experts in movement and mobility and work with students around their participation and inclusion goals. They support students to develop movement skills such as walking, running, sports skills and dance. CPA physiotherapists can also provide individualised recommendations around adaptations to PE programs to maximise a student's engagement.

#### Camps

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 11 15

CPA Camps provide a unique opportunity for students to spend time with peers and develop their physical activity skills, but in an environment away from school. Camps usually take place over 2-6 days. CPA offers a range of themes, including swimming triathlon camps, football camps (covering soccer, touch football and AFL), ski camps and general activity camps. They're extremely popular, with many students attending multiple camps throughout the school year.

For students who are socially isolated, camps offer many benefits beyond physical wellbeing. They provide the opportunity to meet and interact with others their own age, who may be on a similar journey to themselves and create opportunities to be in group situations in an offsite environment.

### ★ OUTCOMES

- ☆ A healthy level of fitness
- ☆ Improvements in skills, strength and endurance
- ☆ Learning team building and problem-solving skills
- ☆ Socially interacting and engaging with peers
- ☆ Increased participation in activities with peers

# Making and keeping friends

Like most students making the transition to secondary school, making friends is an important component in determining how well they settle into their new environment. Having someone to talk to and reflect with on the common challenges, goes a long way to helping smooth the transition.

OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

### Speech Pathology

NDIS CATEGORY 15

Reading social cues, and initiating, maintaining and closing conversations is a critical aspect of making and keeping friends. CPA Speech Pathologists can support students to develop these skills with the goal of maintaining and nurturing friendships. For students who use AAC, CPA Speech Pathologists support students to develop the skills they need to interact more effectively with others.

### PEERS®

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 11 15

PEERS® (Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills) is a very successful certified social skills intervention program from the University of California. It's designed to build social skills for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

PEERS® takes place over 16 weeks in select CPA centres and is run by CPA specialists who have been specifically trained in the program. Students taking part in the program learn how to talk to a range of topics around friendship such as 'How to use appropriate conversational skills', 'How to organise successful get-togethers with friends' and 'How to handle arguments and disagreements'.

### Workshops

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 10 11 15

CPA's Workshops are designed to facilitate friendship development across students with different disabilities. While facilitated by a CPA Lifeskills Coach, the Workshops are in effect a peer support and mentoring program, dealing with the issues and challenges facing students today. Participants are supported to make friends and build a network of people to talk to, with the aim of forming long-lasting friendships.

OUTCOMES

- ☆ Confidence to integrate socially
- ☆ Building skills to communicate effectively
- ☆ Enhanced ability to meet and keep friends
- ☆ Ability to express one's self

# Keeping safe online

The development of personal, social and emotional skills is hugely important at this stage in a student's life. Particularly in this digital age, online connectivity is a given for the vast majority of teens and comes with both positives and negatives. With access to the online world of social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter, online safety becomes a big consideration in secondary school.

OUTCOME-BASED SUPPORTS

### Individualised Coaching

NDIS CATEGORIES 4 9 10 11 15

Through CPA Individualised Coaching, students can be supported to navigate the tricky world of online connectivity. This involves first teaching them to understand the concepts of online safety and cyberbullying. What do those terms mean? Bullying, for example, can often be a hard concept for students to grasp. While students transitioning from a mainstream primary school may have had some opportunities to learn online safety, 1-on-1 coaching can increase understanding and awareness of issues like 'grooming' to reduce their risk of becoming impacted by this type of criminal activity. Once the student fully understands the concept of online safety and cyberbullying, the Lifeskills Coach will address concepts like what does a good friend look like? What does a bad friend look like? Understanding this will support them to learn how to recognise cyberbullying, what to do about it, how to not engage in it, and who to tell if they experience it.

OUTCOMES

- ☆ Understanding the concepts of cyberbullying and online safety
- ☆ Learning why online safety is important
- ☆ Learning how to recognise when cyberbullying occurs
- ☆ Learning how to respond to cyberbullying



# Oscar's story

Destined to light up the stage and star in the Olympics



**Oscar is a charming, effervescent 11-year-old boy with a passion for sports and drama. He supports Real Madrid, loves to play cricket, basketball, long jump, and has represented the state in swimming and running.**

His mum, Lucy believes he's destined for the stage or the Olympics – or both! Oscar wants to do it all, and he will, with the support of his family, school and CPA.

Currently in year 6, Oscar lives with Down syndrome. He will soon be transitioning to a new high school for year 7. Mum Lucy wants Oscar to be truly integrated in this new environment. Lucy's experience so far has been that Oscar, and other children with disabilities, are often not included, particularly in sport. She feels this puts Oscar at a disadvantage and stigmatises him.

"In a mainstream school he gravitates to mainstream kids because he's high functioning and he identifies with them. I understand that mainstream schools have to keep everyone safe and cater for the lowest denominator, but Oscar isn't the lowest denominator. It's not a one size fits, and it creates incredible frustration for him," says Lucy.

## Preparing for the move

Today, Oscar's biggest challenges are self-regulating his fluctuating emotions and behaviour, improving communication skills, and increasing his independence. Lucy also anticipates that Oscar will find a new and bigger school environment challenging to find his way around initially.

"I want Oscar to have genuine relationships, to have a girlfriend or boyfriend, whichever way he wants to go, and enjoy all the things anyone else experiences," says Lucy.

Going into high school and into his teens, Lucy believes Oscar would benefit from some lifeskills coaching, being involved in a sex education type group, or a social group where they can discuss appropriate friendships and mirror these experiences under supervision. These programs will equip Oscar with the skills to build meaningful relationships, engage with his peers, and form firm friendships.

Lucy would also love Oscar to participate in an independent living skills course involving cooking, basic money management, catching transport, and shopping.

"He wants to have a girlfriend and jump on the bus, but he wouldn't know which stop to get off at. He has the desire but not the ability, so we're constantly at battle trying to meet him halfway to allow him some independence, but in a safe way," says Lucy.

## Building on existing support

Sport and physical activity is a big part of Oscar's existing support strategy with CPA.

"Sport is a real leveller at school. Kids go "wow he can swim, he can play basketball, and he's actually really good." It's his way in, it's the way he integrates through all levels of society," says Lucy.

And for Oscar, it has an additional snowball effect, where it positively impacts all areas of his life. Expending his energy makes him happier and helps him regulate his emotions and release frustrations, which then enables him to be ready to sit, listen, read, and behave appropriately. Oscar's primary school teachers allow him frequent exercise breaks as a reward, because they've recognised it helps him to re-calibrate and focus.

At CPA, Oscar regularly attends the Multi-Sports program and the Multi-Sports Holiday program, working with CPA Exercise Physiologist William. Heading into high school, Lucy is keen for Oscar to work with a trainer at CPA in the gym. While he loves gym work and is super active, he does find it easier to focus with supervision.

"He has so much energy and has found his passion in sport. He's very good with gross motor skills – he can ride a bike and climb up a wall, but he struggles with fine motor skills like writing and puzzles – part of that is due to low muscle tone and part is where his interests lie," says Lucy.

Oscar also works with one of CPA's Behaviour Support Practitioners to continue working on his current goals of finding and keeping friends, emotional regulation and socially appropriate behaviour. These sessions help Oscar understand how he is feeling, how to control his emotions, and begin steps into learning about sex education.

## The big step to high school

Moving to secondary school is a big and exciting step for Oscar. The first big leap is getting Oscar into their first choice of school; one which focuses on independent living skills as part of the curriculum, so Oscar has the opportunity to be the best he can. Lucy and Richard wish for Oscar to have lots of social and sporting interaction with typically developing children because this is where Oscar learns appropriate behaviour and is supported in the wider community.

Whatever else arises during this journey, Oscar and Lucy will address at the time with the support of the school and CPA experts.



# Services and Programs at a glance

The following table provides a consolidated snapshot of some of the Services and Programs available from CPA along with the goals each service supports. The relevant NDIS category is also shown to assist with plan budgeting.

There’s no one-size-fits-all way to learn, which is why our programs and services are offered in-person at local CPA centres, in the community, or online via CPA Telepractice. This virtual option provides the flexibility to access services from any device, and the ability to speak to a therapist or other specialist in more private surroundings. CPA programs and services are available on various days at a range of times throughout each term of the school year, as well as during school holidays.

## Notes

GOAL	SERVICES	NDIS CATEGORIES
Coping with transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Occupational Therapy</li><li>Workshops</li><li>Individualised Coaching</li></ul>	<div>15</div> <div>49101115</div> <div>49101115</div>
Accessing a new environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Occupational Therapy</li><li>Physiotherapy</li><li>Individualised Coaching</li></ul>	<div>15</div> <div>15</div> <div>49101115</div>
Managing schoolwork and homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Occupational Therapy</li><li>Speech Pathology</li><li>Individualised Coaching</li></ul>	<div>15</div> <div>15</div> <div>49101115</div>
Keeping up with peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Occupational Therapy</li><li>Physiotherapy</li><li>Workshops</li></ul>	<div>15</div> <div>15</div> <div>49101115</div>
Getting involved in physical and social activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exercise Physiology</li><li>Physiotherapy</li><li>Camps</li></ul>	<div>1215</div> <div>15</div> <div>491115</div>
Making and keeping friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Speech Pathology</li><li>PEERS®</li><li>Workshops</li></ul>	<div>15</div> <div>491115</div> <div>49101115</div>
Keeping safe online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individualised Coaching</li></ul>	<div>49101115</div>



## About CPA

Cerebral Palsy Alliance (CPA) is a leading provider of disability services throughout NSW and ACT, supporting young people with a range of physical and neurological conditions to achieve their goals and reach their potential.

Conditions we support include cerebral palsy, autism, global developmental delay, acquired brain injury, muscular dystrophies, stroke and genetic syndromes.

We work closely with young adults with disabilities, empowering them to develop the skills they need to live their best life – whatever their next adventure.

Start your journey with CPA today and let us challenge, encourage and support you to achieve your goals.

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## Contact us



1300 888 378



[ask@cerebralpalsy.org.au](mailto:ask@cerebralpalsy.org.au)



[www.cerebralpalsy.org.au](http://www.cerebralpalsy.org.au)