

Working Together with Schools

An occupational therapist's guide for families

Where OT Fits In

Occupational therapists can support a student's participation at school, things like fine motor tasks, sensory regulation, transitions, organisation, and access to the physical and social environment. OT input is focused on function and participation, not on diagnosing conditions or determining school placement, which sit with other professionals and the school itself.

Practical Ways to Collaborate

- Share relevant strategies from OT sessions with teachers, in a short, practical summary rather than a lengthy report.
- Request a meeting with the classroom teacher, learning support staff, or student wellbeing team when starting something new.
- Ask whether an OT can join a school meeting, or provide written input, when bigger decisions are being made.
- Keep communication two-way: what's working at school can inform therapy, and vice versa.

Advocating with a Strengths-Based Lens

Advocacy is most effective when it centres the student's strengths and goals alongside their support needs, rather than focusing only on deficits. Framing requests around what helps a student participate and thrive tends to open more collaborative conversations than framing around compliance or behaviour management.

What OT Reports Can (and Can't) Do

An OT report can describe functional strengths and needs and recommend practical, reasonable adjustments. It generally can't guarantee specific school resourcing decisions, diagnose a condition, or replace input from educational or psychological professionals where that's what's needed.

Building the Team Around the Student

The best outcomes tend to come from an ongoing, respectful partnership between family, school, and allied health, everyone bringing their piece of the picture toward the same shared goals.

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