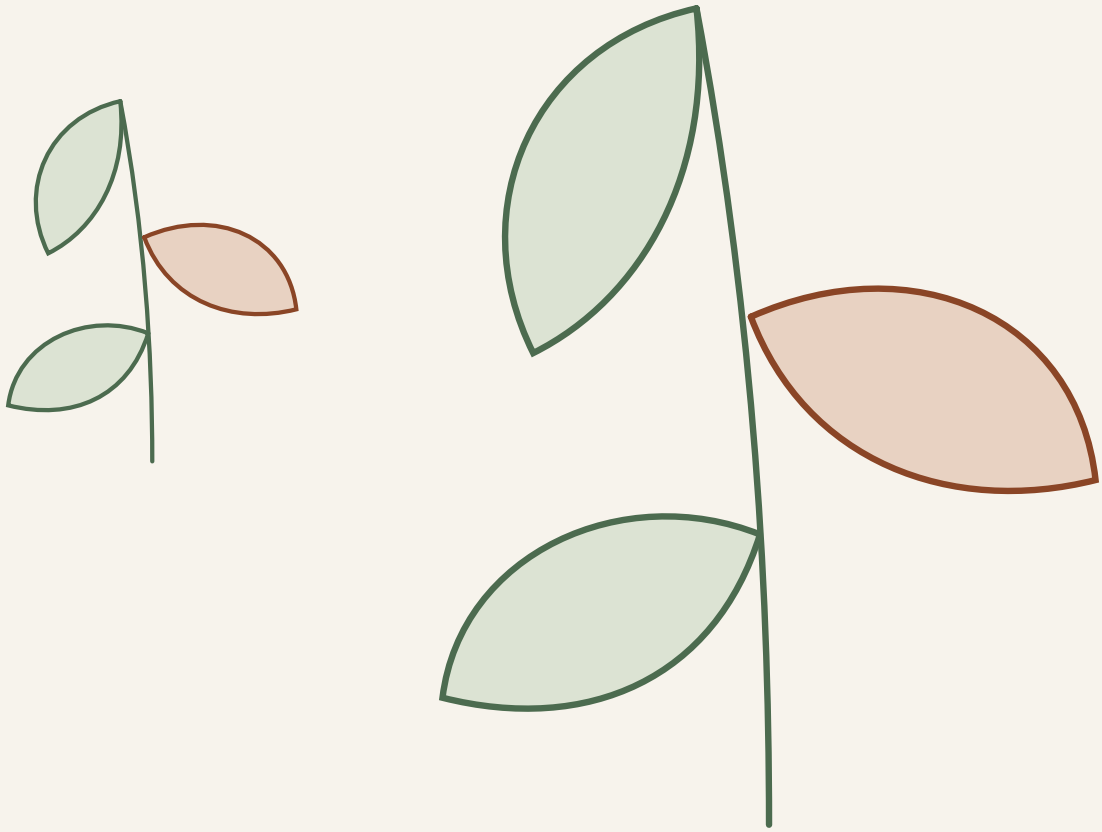
UNDERSTORY SUPPORT



School Meeting Pack

Before, during and after · Catholic schools edition

A calm, practical guide for parents and carers of children who need extra support at school. Plan what to say, keep track of what's agreed, and know what to do next.

Understory Support
Calm, clear support for complex families · Adelaide

SCHOOL MEETING PACK

How to use this pack

You don't need to fill everything in. Use the parts that help, skip the rest.

Meeting in the next few days? Go straight to page 4. It's the shortcut.

What's in here

- **Before the meeting** Pages 2–11
  Work out what you want, gather what you need, ask for the meeting, and look after yourself. Includes who's who in Catholic schools and how to bring in extra support.
- **During the meeting** Pages 12–14
  A one-page sheet to bring in, phrases for when you freeze, and a table for what gets agreed.
- **After the meeting** Pages 15–19
  The follow-up email, checking things happen, what to do if they don't, and after a hard meeting.
- **Keeping a record** Page 20
  A meeting log for the whole year.

A few things to know

- You can type into the boxes on screen, or print it and write by hand.
- Use one copy per child, per meeting. Save a blank copy first.
- You're allowed to bring a support person to any school meeting.
- You don't have to agree to anything on the spot. It's fine to take time to think.
- Your child's strengths matter as much as their challenges. Say both.

This pack is general information for families with children at Catholic schools in South Australia. It isn't legal advice. Contact details and processes were checked in October 2026 and can change.

BEFORE THE MEETING

What's this meeting for?

Knowing why you're meeting helps you decide what to bring and what to ask for.

This meeting is about (tick any that fit)

- ☐ Setting up a new plan for my child
- ☐ Reviewing my child's current plan
- ☐ A problem that's come up
- ☐ Behaviour, suspension or being sent home
- ☐ Starting school or changing schools
- ☐ Moving to a new year level or teacher
- ☐ Something else:

What I want to walk out with (three things at most)

1

2

3

About your child's plan. In SA Catholic schools, children who need extra support usually have a **Personal Learning Plan (PLP)**, written with families and reviewed during the year. Whatever it's called, you can ask for a copy before any meeting.

The next page explains who's who, and pages 8–9 explain how support is decided and how to bring in extra support from Catholic Education SA (CESA).

BEFORE THE MEETING

Who's who in SA Catholic schools

Knowing who does what saves a lot of hunting. Titles can vary a little between schools, so ask if you're not sure.

Classroom teacher	Day-to-day learning and adjustments in class.
ESO education support officer	Works with students in and out of class, directed by the teacher or ISO.
ISO inclusion support officer	Coordinates support for students with disability at the school. Usually your main contact for the Personal Learning Plan (PLP).
Principal	Responsible for the school's decisions, including enrolment and support. You can ask for the principal to be at meetings. Questions about extra support usually go to the ISO.
CILAH team CESA Improved Learning through Allied Health	Occupational therapists, speech pathologists and psychologists from Catholic Education SA (CESA). They can observe your child at school, advise the school and come to meetings. School referral only: ask through the ISO, in writing.
Catholic Education Office intake team	Contact them if you've asked for CILAH and the school won't make the referral, or for a complaint the school hasn't resolved. (08) 8301 6600 · intake@cesa.catholic.edu.au

Words you might hear

- **PLP:** Personal Learning Plan.
- **NCCD:** the yearly national record of the adjustments your child gets. It's linked to funding.
- **Reasonable adjustments:** changes the school must make so your child can take part on the same basis as other students.
- **CESA:** Catholic Education South Australia, which runs the Catholic school system in SA.

Who can come to meetings

You can ask for any of these people to be there:

- the principal
- someone from the CILAH team
- a partner, friend or family member
- your child's NDIS support worker or support coordinator, if they have one
- an advocate who works with families with complex needs and understands the school system

BEFORE THE MEETING

If the meeting is in the next few days

No time for the whole pack? Do these five things and you'll be well prepared.

1. **Write your top three concerns.**
   Short and specific. What's happening, and how often?

2. **Gather the most recent report or plan.**
   Personal Learning Plan, therapy report, or the last school report. Which one?

3. **Ask who will be there.**
   Names and roles, so there are no surprises.

4. **Bring someone with you.**
   A partner, friend, family member or advocate. Who?

5. **Write one sentence about your child's strengths.**
   Start the meeting here. It sets the tone.

Then go to page 12 and copy these onto your one-page meeting sheet.

BEFORE THE MEETING

My child right now

A quick picture of how things are. Keep it short. Dot points are fine.

What's going well

What's hard at the moment

What's changed lately

At school, at home, in health, sleep, friendships, family.

What my child says about school

Use their own words if you can. If they can't tell you, what do you notice?

BEFORE THE MEETING

What's already been tried

This stops the meeting going back over old ground, and shows you've already been working on it.

What I've tried at home

What the school has tried

What helped

What didn't help, or made it worse

If you're not sure what the school has tried, that's a good question to ask in the meeting: *"What's been done so far, and has it made a difference?"*

BEFORE THE MEETING

What to bring

Tick what you have. Anything you're waiting on, note when you asked for it.

Document	Have it	Requested	Date asked	Notes
Current Personal Learning Plan	☐	☐		
Last school report	☐	☐		
Therapy reports (OT, speech, psychology)	☐	☐		
GP or paediatrician letters	☐	☐		
NDIS or Thriving Kids documents	☐	☐		
Incident, behaviour or suspension notes	☐	☐		
Emails with the school	☐	☐		
My notes on what's happening at home	☐	☐		
Samples of schoolwork	☐	☐		
Other:	☐	☐		
Other:	☐	☐		

Tip: you don't have to hand everything over. Bring it so you can check facts or show something if you need to. Take copies, not originals.

BEFORE THE MEETING

How support is decided

In SA Catholic schools, support isn't given as a set number of hours. Here's how it works, and what to ask instead.

How support is funded

Commonwealth and state funding goes to Catholic Education SA (CESA), not to the schools. CESA then gives each school a needs-based allocation, using reports the school sends in Term 1 and Term 4 about its students' needs. The students with the highest needs get the most support.

This is why the school usually won't give you an hours figure. It's complicated, and it can take a long time to understand. You don't need to understand all of it to get good support for your child.

Timing matters

Because schools report in Term 1 and Term 4, make sure the school has your child's latest reports (OT, speech, psychology, paediatrician) before then. You can ask the ISO when their reports are due.

What to ask instead of hours

Instead of "how many hours does my child get?", ask:

- What support will my child get, and when in the day?
- Who will give it: the teacher, an ESO, the ISO?
- How often?
- How will we know it's working?
- When will we review it?

Write the answers in your actions table (page 14). They're much easier to check than an hours figure.

Two questions about the NCCD

Each year the school records the level of adjustment your child gets. You can ask:

- "What NCCD level is my child recorded at?"
- "What adjustments is that based on?"

If the adjustments listed don't match what you see happening, that's worth raising.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Bringing in CESA's allied health team

If you feel the school isn't listening, or isn't being fully inclusive, you can ask for CESA's CILAH team to be involved. This isn't a complaint. It's asking for more support for the school and your child.

1. **Email the ISO.** Ask them to make a referral to CILAH, and say you'd like someone from CILAH at a meeting.
2. **Ask for a classroom observation.** CILAH can observe your child in class before the meeting.
3. **Bring someone with you.** A support person or advocate.
4. **Put it in writing afterwards.** Send the follow-up email (page 15). Once you have the CILAH practitioner's contact details, copy them into all relevant emails if the ISO doesn't.

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Meeting request with CESA support – [child's name], [year level]

Hi [ISO's name],

I'd like to set up a meeting about [child's name]'s support at school. I'd like someone from CESA's CILAH allied health team to be part of the meeting, and to observe [child's name] in class beforehand if that's possible.

The main things I'd like to talk about are:

- [concern 1]
- [concern 2]
- [concern 3]

Could you please let me know who will attend and some times that suit. I'll be bringing [support person / advocate] with me.

Thanks,
[Your name]
[Phone]

If the ISO won't make the referral

CILAH is a school referral program, so you can't refer your child yourself. If the ISO won't make the referral, go around them and contact the Catholic Education Office intake team. They can review your child's situation and direct the ISO to make the referral.

(08) 8301 6600 · intake@cesa.catholic.edu.au

BEFORE THE MEETING

Asking for the meeting

You're allowed to ask for a meeting at any time. You don't need a crisis to ask.

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Meeting request – [child's name], [year level/class]

Hi [teacher or leader's name],

I'd like to set up a meeting to talk about how [child's name] is going at school.

The main things I'd like to talk about are:

- [concern 1]
- [concern 2]
- [concern 3]

Could you please let me know:

- a few times that suit you
- who will be at the meeting
- whether you can send me a copy of [child's name]'s current Personal Learning Plan before we meet

[Optional: I'd like someone from CESA's CILAH allied health team to be part of this meeting.]

I'll be bringing a support person with me.

Thanks,
[Your name]
[Phone]

Tips

- Keep it short. Save the detail for the meeting.
- If your child has a Personal Learning Plan, ask for it first so you're not seeing it for the first time in the room.
- You can bring a support person. It helps to let the school know someone is coming.
- If you'd like CESA's allied health team involved, see page 9.

Date sent	Meeting date and time	Who's attending

BEFORE THE MEETING

Looking after yourself

School meetings can be hard, especially when you've been worried for a while. A bit of planning helps.

On the day

- Eat something beforehand, even if it's small.
- Arrive a few minutes early. Park somewhere easy.
- Bring water, your notes, and this pack.
- Decide with your support person who will speak first, and what their job is (taking notes, keeping you on track, speaking up if you get stuck).
- Sit where you're comfortable. You can ask to move.
- It's okay to ask for a break, or to stop and come back another day.
- It's okay to get upset. It shows how much you care. Take a breath and keep going when you're ready.

My support person is

Their job in the meeting

One thing that helps me stay steady

A phrase, a breath, a photo on your phone, a plan for afterwards.

What I'll do for myself afterwards

DURING THE MEETING

My meeting sheet

The page you bring into the room. Everything important, on one page.

Date

Who's there

To start: my child's strengths

My top three concerns

1

2

3

My questions

What was agreed

Write it down before you leave, or ask someone else to.

Next meeting

DURING THE MEETING

Things you can say

It's normal to freeze, get teary or lose your words. Tick two or three to keep in mind, and bring this page in.

To slow things down

- [ ] "Can we slow down for a minute?"
- [ ] "I need a short break."
- [ ] "Can you say that again another way?"

To get clear answers

- [ ] "What would that look like on a normal school day?"
- [ ] "Who will do that, and by when?"
- [ ] "How will we know if it's working?"
- [ ] "What happens if it doesn't work?"

When you're not sure

- [ ] "I'd like some time to think about that before I agree."
- [ ] "I'm not comfortable with that yet. Can we look at other options?"
- [ ] "Can you put that in writing for me?"

To keep your child at the centre

- [ ] "What does [child's name] say about this?"
- [ ] "What's going well for them right now?"

To close the meeting well

- [ ] "Can we go over what we've agreed before we finish?"
- [ ] "When will we meet again to check how it's going?"

Your support person can have a copy too. If you get stuck, they can point to a phrase.

DURING THE MEETING

What we agreed

Fill this in during the meeting or straight after. Every action needs a person and a date.

What will happen	Who	By when	How we'll know it's working

If something is vague, like "we'll keep an eye on it", ask: "Who will do that, and how will we know?" If there's no answer, write that down too.

AFTER THE MEETING

The same-day follow-up email

The most important page in the pack. Send it the same day, or the next day at the latest, while everyone still remembers. It becomes your record of what was agreed.

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Thank you – summary of today's meeting about [child's name]

Hi [name],

Thanks for meeting with me today. Here's what I understood we agreed. Please let me know by [day] if anything is different from your notes.

Agreed actions

1. [What] – [who] – by [when]
2. [What] – [who] – by [when]
3. [What] – [who] – by [when]

Next meeting: [date], or [time frame, e.g. week 5 of this term]

[Optional: One thing I'd still like to follow up is ...]

Thanks again,
[Your name]

Tips

- Keep it friendly and factual. No blame, no emotion. That makes it hard to argue with later.
- Copy the actions straight from page 14.
- If they don't reply to correct it, it stands as the record.
- Save a copy in one folder with all your other school emails.
- If CESA's CILAH team is involved, copy them in.

Sent to

Date sent

☐ They replied and confirmed, or corrected it

Anything they changed or added

AFTER THE MEETING

Checking it's happening

Check in at two, four and six weeks. Write done, partly, or not yet.

Action	2 weeks	4 weeks	6 weeks

What I've noticed in my child since the meeting

If things aren't happening by six weeks, turn to page 17.

AFTER THE MEETING

When things aren't happening

Most things get sorted at the school. Go one step at a time, and give each step a fair chance before moving to the next.

1 A friendly reminder

Email the person responsible. Keep it light. Give it about a week.

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Hi [name], just checking in on [action] from our meeting on [date]. Could you let me know where that's up to? Thanks, [your name]

2 Ask for a review meeting

If it's still not happening, ask for a meeting to review the plan. Use the email on page 10 and bring your actions table from page 14.

3 Go to a school leader

If the teacher can't sort it, go to the principal or deputy principal. The school must have the chance to respond before the Catholic Education Office gets involved.

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Request to meet – [child's name]

Hi [principal's name],

I'm writing about [child's name] in [year/class]. On [date] we agreed [actions]. As of today, [what has or hasn't happened].

I'd like to meet to talk about how we can get this back on track. I've attached the summary email from our meeting.

Thanks,
[Your name]

AFTER THE MEETING

When things aren't happening (continued)

4 Bring in CESA's allied health team

If you haven't already, ask the ISO in writing for a CILAH referral (page 9). If the ISO won't make it, the Catholic Education Office intake team can review your child's situation and direct the ISO to act.

5 Catholic Education Office

If the principal can't resolve your concern, contact the Catholic Education Office intake team on **08 8301 6600** or **intake@cesa.catholic.edu.au**. They aim to respond within three working days, and will usually work with the principal, with support from a senior consultant if needed.

> The SA Department for Education and the Education Minister can't step in on Catholic school complaints. The Catholic Education Office is the next step after the school.

6 Taking it further

If it's still not resolved and it's about your child being treated unfairly because of disability, you can make a disability discrimination complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission. Get advice first. DACSSA (below) can help you work out if this is the right step.

Free help along the way. You don't have to do this alone. DACSSA (Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of SA) offers free, independent advocacy for SA families, including education issues: **08 7122 6030**.

Your school's own process. Each Catholic school should have a complaints policy. Ask the school for a copy.

Keep a record at every step

Date	Who I contacted	What they said or did

AFTER THE MEETING

After a hard meeting

Not every meeting goes well. If you walked out upset, confused or angry, that's normal.

- You don't have to decide anything today.
- Write down what happened while it's fresh. Just the facts is fine.
- Talk it through with someone you trust.
- Rest before you reply to anything.
- Come back to page 17 when you're ready to take the next step.

What happened

What was said that worried me

What I want to happen next (decide later, not today)

If you're feeling overwhelmed and need to talk to someone, you can call Lifeline on **13 11 14** any time, day or night.

Meeting log

A record of every school meeting this year. Handy when things change or you need to look back.

Date	Who attended	Main outcome	Next meeting

About Understory Support

Understory Support helps families with complex needs get through school, health and disability systems, calmly and clearly.

I'm a support coordinator, advocate and neurodivergent parent with more than 20 years' experience in disability, community support and complex family situations. My work is trauma-informed, neurodiversity-affirming, and paced so it's manageable for you.

If you'd like someone with you next time

- Meeting preparation: we work out what you want and plan the meeting together.
- Coming to the meeting with you, and writing the follow-up for you.
- Help when things aren't happening, or when several services are involved at once.

Contact

0480 440 435 · trish@understory-support.com · understorysupport.com.au

Writing: lifebeneaththecanopy.substack.com

Thank you for using this pack. I hope the next meeting feels a little easier.

