



Flexible Schooling Options

Comparison guide for PDA families in Australia

When mainstream school attendance is not working for your PDA child, Australia offers a range of flexible alternatives. This guide summarises the main options, including eligibility, access, and PDA suitability.

1. Modified Mainstream Attendance

- Description: Negotiated reduced or modified attendance within your current school
- Eligibility: Available to any student — requires school and department agreement
- Access: Through your school's principal and welfare coordinator
- PDA suitability: Good for partial recovery and transition — most accessible starting point
- Cost: Free

2. Distance Education

- Description: State-based accredited schooling delivered remotely
- Eligibility: Varies by state — some require a "geographic isolation" criterion, others accept health-related exemptions
- Access: Apply through your state education authority
- PDA suitability: Good — reduced social demands, flexible pacing
- Cost: Free (state-based) — small charges for materials in some states

3. Hospital School / Flexible Learning Centres

- Description: Specialist educational settings for students with significant mental health or attendance barriers
- Eligibility: Requires referral — usually through school counsellor or paediatrician
- Access: State education authority referral
- PDA suitability: High — small class sizes, therapeutic focus
- Cost: Free

4. Flexi Schools

- Description: Flexible alternative schooling programs — often community-based, small group
- Eligibility: Varies — some accept direct referral, some require education authority approval
- Access: Search "flexi school" + your state
- PDA suitability: Often very good — low demand, interest-based learning
- Cost: Free or low-cost through state programmes



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5. Online Schooling (Private)

- Description: Accredited online schooling programmes — several available in Australia
- Examples: Aurora College (NSW), Virtual School Victoria, various private options
- Eligibility: Varies — most accept disability-related enrolments
- PDA suitability: Good — flexible, home-based, interest-driven pacing
- Cost: State options free; private options vary (\$500–\$5,000+ per year)

6. Home Education

- Description: Parent-directed education at home — registered with state authority
- Eligibility: Any family can apply — registration process varies by state
- Access: Apply to your state education authority
- PDA suitability: Highest — complete flexibility, parent-controlled demand level
- Cost: Varies widely depending on approach — some families use NDIS therapy funding as part of the learning plan

Getting advice Your child's paediatrician, psychologist, or school wellbeing coordinator can advise on the most appropriate option. The Home Education Association in your state can provide guidance on home education registration. NDIS support coordinators may be able to assist with accessing some options.