

A parent's guide to: Choosing a School



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This can be quite a worrying time for parents, especially if your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN). Knowing which school will be best for your child can be hard. This leaflet gives you some ideas which might help you make this decision.

Checklist for visiting schools

All schools will have copies of their most recent Ofsted inspection report and governors' report to parents available for you to read.

Before arranging a visit:

- Go on line if you can and read the School Prospectus, or ask school for a copy. Look on line at the School's Information Report for a wide range of information about how they support pupils with SEN & Disabilities (SEND).
- Carefully think about and write a list of questions that you would like to ask.
- When would you like to visit? (It is best to visit during school hours.)
- Will you be taking your child?
- Do you want someone to go with you?
- Is the school easy to get to? (Think about transport arrangements.)
- Will you be able to meet staff who would be involved with your child?
- Will you be able to talk to other parents of children at the school?

Questions you might want to ask when you visit

- How many children will be in my child's class?
- How does the school support children with SEN?
- Does the school know anything about your child's disability?
- Has the school ever taught any other children with the same disability?
- Are all areas of the school accessible to my child?
- How will my child be supported outside lesson time?
- How does the school deal with difficult behaviour?
- How is bullying dealt with?
- How does the school help children mix and make friends?
- How does the school communicate with parents?
- When can I talk to my child's teacher/s?
- Can I have a copy of the school's policy on bullying, SEN and inclusion?
- Will my child be able to have extra visits to the school before they transfer and what arrangements will be made to help them settle in?

It can be helpful to draw a grid with the names of the different schools you are visiting along the side and the most important questions you want to ask along the top. You can then score each school out of 5. It is easy to forget which school said what if you don't write it down at the time.

After the visit

Questions to ask yourself or talk through with someone.

- Did I feel welcomed at the school?
- Do I think my child would be happy there?
- Will my child get the support they need?
- Did I find it easy to talk to the SENCo/Headteacher/Form Tutor?
- Did the children around the school seem to have a good relationship with staff?
- Do I think the staff will be comfortable and confident in managing my child's behaviour and directing learning?
- Do I think the staff will encourage my child to be as independent as possible?
- Would I feel able to talk to staff about any concerns or issues?
- Will I be able to speak to the SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) if I need to?
- Will the work be presented in a way my child would understand?
- Did the school show me what they do to help children with a variety of needs?

Don't forget to ask your child's opinion – how did they feel about the visit?

If your child is in Year 5, then read on:

Most parents have concerns about what it will be like for their child when they move to secondary school, for instance, about having more than one teacher, so many subjects or moving between classrooms.

It helps to plan ahead

If your child has significant SEN, you may want to start planning the change of school well in advance. You could:

- contact schools and ask for information about how they work with children who have SEN
- visit schools two years before your child is due to transfer
- speak to the SENCo about SEN provision in the school
- talk to other parents or pupils about the schools
- talk to professionals who work with your child about the schools
- talk to teachers in your child's present school and ask them for their views about what your child needs and which school might suit your child
- start to talk about secondary schools during review meetings in Year 5.
- if your child has a Statement, the Year 5 Annual Review should begin to look ahead to secondary school
- at the review in Year 6 the SENCo from the secondary school should come to the meeting so they have a chance to find out what support your child might need.

Visiting the New School

All secondary schools provide information for parents and will have open days in the Autumn Term when parents can visit the school.

It is a good idea for parents to:

- visit all of the schools your child could attend
- take your child to the open evenings
- talk to your child about the schools
- ask your child for his/her opinion
- allow them to share in deciding which school they should go to.

Don't forget to talk to your child about the new school, what they are looking forward to as well as any worries they have.

Sendiass Oxfordshire can offer:

- A telephone helpline: **01865 810516**
- Information, advice and support on matters to do with your child's SEN
- Help with communication between you and the Local Authority
- Trained volunteer Independent Parental Supporters and Independent Supporters
- Advice about preventing and resolving disagreements
- Training events for parents and groups – see SENDIASS website
- An informal Drop In SEN Advice session, 'Talking Points', – see website for dates

**Contact us on: 01865 810516 or
text 07786 524294
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Confidentiality Code:

Everything you tell us will be treated in strict confidence. We will not disclose our records to, or discuss the case with, a third party outside SENDIASS Oxfordshire without your consent, except if we suspect a child is at risk.