



How to find a special school appropriate for your child's SEND

You have the **right to request** that a particular school or college is named in your or your child's EHCP. You can **request a preference** for an independent school or college.

Different types of school

You have the right to request any of the following types of school or college:

- A maintained school or nursery (mainstream or special)
- An Academy (mainstream or special)
- An institution in the Further Education sector
- A non-maintained special school
- A section 41 school.*

The only reason the local authority can refuse to name the school you request is if:

- *The setting is unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs ("SEN") of the child or young person* (for example a school for profound and severe learning difficulties would be inappropriate for a high functioning ASD pupil, or a child age seven would be the wrong age for a secondary school) or
- *The attendance of the child or young person would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others;* (this is generally used when the school feels that it would not be possible to accommodate one more child as it would impact the learning of the children already there, or that the child's particular needs may directly impact the children who would be in their cohort) or
- *The attendance of the child or young person would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources.* (This is about cost of the placement, including additional therapies and transport) – there may be two schools that both say they can meet need and can offer a place, but the LA has a duty to choose the most cost efficient appropriate place.

*A Section 41 school is an **independent special school** which has been approved by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Children and Families Act ("CAFA") 2014 as a school which a parent or young person can request to be named in an EHC plan.

You may feel that your child needs a special school, or the information gathered through their Education Health and Care Needs assessment might suggest that a specialist setting would be most appropriate for them. You may be having difficulty knowing where you can find this information and this leaflet is intended to help you look at what is available.

Where to start

You could look at the government website which lists all the schools. <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>

Click on Location

Add your postcode

Do a radius of 20 miles (you can always make this further if you need to later but going above 30 miles will mean the journey is going to be very long, especially if there are school pick-ups on the way). Please note also that the LA will be looking to name the *nearest, most appropriate* school.

Under Establishment type scroll down to click on Special School

Under status click on Open and Proposed to Open

It automatically updates with your search. Don't worry about any other filters at this time – they don't work particularly well as some schools are primary, some secondary, some primary and secondary so you may miss some out.

You will still have a long list – maybe about 20 to 30 but then you can go through them removing ones which are not suitable (for example, wrong age group or doesn't meet your child's special needs). This list can be opened up in an excel spreadsheet or you could create a word document or just a paper list.

If you then click on each school name it will give you the age range and the type of SEN, Ofsted rating, and most have a link to the school website. Keep a note of which ones you have looked at, including the ones you have dismissed as not being appropriate as it will show the LA what you have considered.

Have a look at the website for the ones that look possible and then give them a call. You can introduce yourself and your child, explain that your child has an EHCP/ is going through the EHC needs assessment process, any diagnosis your child has and what this means, what year group they are in, whether you are looking for a special school place now or in the future etc.

You can also ask them questions such as

- the number of children in the school
- how many children in a class?
- what age they start and leave at?

- how far away do the children live / how long are their school journeys?
- What training have the TAs/LSAs had?
- what qualifications did the children/young people have when they left (include academic as well as life skills training),
- where do the young people go after leaving their school? E.g. into apprenticeships, FE Colleges, work or Higher Education?
- do they have onsite speech and language therapists, occupational therapists?
- what is their admissions process? (If the school is in a different local authority there may be additional panels that need to be factored in and they may also require two or three assessment visits to take place before the school can decide)
- whether you can go and visit?
- whether they would be able to admit another child in the particular year group?

Schools are very used to having these conversations with prospective parents and will want to know about your child; they know it is very important for parents to get the information they need so they can make an informed decision.

Keep a record of the information you receive and the date of the call.

You can then email your SEN Officer with the list of schools you have considered and mention which schools you have spoken to and anything useful from your conversation such as, unable to support a particular need.

In your email make it clear which school(s) are your preference. Confirm with the SEN Officer what the next steps will be as this will involve various panels which meet on set dates and you will need to know:

- when these are,
- when the deadlines for paperwork are and
- what the panels are deciding.

It will also be important to confirm which schools the LA are consulting, which will include your choice of school (except for independent schools who are not on the Section 41 list) and other schools they consider appropriate, which will include mainstream.

If you have any questions or want to talk things through, please do not hesitate to contact us via our advice line 01865 810516 or by email sendiass@oxfordshire.gov.uk or schedule a time for a call with one of our advisers: <https://sendiass-oxfordshire.org.uk/about-us/#virtualMonthly>