

Things to consider on a school visit for your child with SEND

What you ask your child's potential school will be personal to your child and their needs, but the following questions may help you put together your own list.

For Mainstream and Special Schools

About The School and its Environment

- How big is the school site - how do pupils move around, is it safe and secure?
- Will the environment be too overwhelming for a child with sensory sensitivities?
- Are there quiet spaces for children to work 1:1 or as a 'chill out' space?
- How accessible is the school for children with mobility difficulties/wheelchair users?
- What are the toilets like? Are there facilities for children who need changing?
- Is the school uniform easy to manage for children who have difficulty dressing themselves?
- What are the playground facilities like? Are there quiet areas for children who don't want to run around or play football?
- What happens at break and lunch times - is there any structure and who is responsible for supervision?

About Learning and the Curriculum

- How are classes arranged? Is it strictly by age?
- For younger children - is there a particular pattern to the school day/week?
- How does the school use teaching assistants? How are class teachers involved if a child has one-to-one support?
- Is support given within the classroom or by taking children out for one-to-one or small group work?
- What experience does the school have of children with similar needs to my child?
- How are children supported to take part in PE and swimming and on school trips?

About Social Support and Communication

- How does the school help new children settle in and make friends?
- Ask to see the anti-bullying policy. How does the school prevent bullying and what action do they take if it happens?
- How does the school manage behaviour linked to a child's disability? Are all children expected to follow the rules or does the school make adjustments for individual pupils where needed?
- How does the school communicate with parents? Is there a home/school communication book? Are parents able to have a regular catch up with the teacher?

For Special Schools

If you are looking at special schools for your child, you also may want to ask these questions.

- What areas of need does the school cater for - is there a suitable peer group for my child?
- Do staff have qualifications and / or experience in teaching children with my child's particular needs?
- Therapies - are there therapists on site? Are therapies delivered on an individual or group basis? Is this by therapists or therapy assistants? How is the therapy integrated into the curriculum? Are these sessions often weekly or for a set time or given as written in my child's EHCP?
- What kind of medical support is available? If this is on site, will it be administered by a qualified practitioner or by a trained assistant? If my child uses specialist equipment, will the staff be trained to use the equipment correctly?
- What alternative communication methods are used, for example Makaton/PECS? Are staff trained in these? Is assistive technology available for children who need it?
- Does the school have specialist facilities, such as a hydrotherapy pool or sensory room?
- How does the school manage behaviour? If they use physical restraint, what is the policy for this?
- Are there links with mainstream schools or colleges?
- If the special school requires transportation from home, your

local authority may provide help if your child meets the criteria. Check your council's schooltransport policy and seek advice on your rights if in doubt.