

## Looking at Schools for Families of Children with SEND

Ask to look round the school. Ask to have some time with the Head or SENDCo if they are not the person showing you the school.

If it is an 'Open day' ask for some 1-1 time to ask questions you don't want to ask in front of other parents or arrange a time another day to ask those questions. You do not have to share detailed information about your child's needs in front of other parents.

Give schools time to arrange for those meetings. They often have busy schedules and may not be able to make time to speak to you immediately. You can also look at the school website at their SEND information. They will have an Accessibility Plan, a SEND Report and school policies all on their website.

You may want to visit twice, first by yourself so that you can ask questions without distractions. You may then want to visit your first choice setting with your child to see how they respond.

You can write things down to ask and take a list. You can write down answers. Don't be afraid to call or email back if you are not sure of something. This is the beginning of a relationship with a school which will last many years. Schools welcome parents who ask questions and want to take an active role in their child's learning and school life.

You will be looking for the 'best fit' for your child and your family.

### Experience:

Questions you might ask	What you Experience
Have you worked with children like my child before?	Welcoming, warm, interested. School will want to find out as much about you, as you about them. If your child is with you, do they talk to you both?
What training have you had in school?	School may not have all the skills your child needs, but they will have some that they can talk about. They show they want to learn about your child as an individual and they are thinking what your child may need to help them progress. Access to training has been affected by Covid.

What is already in place?	School see you as your child's expert. They may ask lots of questions as well as tell you what they offer. They show you what they are doing already. You can also look at the school SEND report, and their Ofsted report for information.
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### Transition:

School transitions are much faster than they used to be, with the majority of children in full time by Week Two.

Questions you might ask	What you Experience
How will you support the transition of my child into school	A balanced approach between 'being the same as everyone else' with flexibility and individual adaptation
Can my child have extra visits	Recognition that induction may be as long or as short as it needs to be. Recognising that some children might need visits even before induction day, sometimes just for a few minutes.
Will you visit my child at home/ in their previous setting	Recognising that the child may be different in other places and learning from what works elsewhere. This has been affected by Covid restrictions over the last few years.
Are you able to undertake training to meet the needs of my child?	School may have to complete training (for Health Needs or Manual Handling) before your child can start
Will there be a transition meeting for my child	Ensuring everyone involved has a plan of how to make transition a success for all

### Environment:

How does the school's environment allow my child to feel confident, included and learn. Remember it is a working environment and there will be schools of different ages and different upkeep. Brand new schools may look very smart but not be the right space. Older schools might not be as smart but have more space. Remember that if your child has physical needs schools can look at adaptations to make the building accessible.

Environments to think about	What you Experience
Coming into school	Is it secure, but still welcoming. Are entrances well labelled. Does it tell you where to park as a visitor?

	<p>Is there room for a blue badge on the car park and how does that work?</p> <p>Welcoming, warm, interesting and busy. Not too hectic. Alternative entrances if necessary.</p> <p>Can you see who works in school, their name and job title?</p>
The classroom	Organised, well lit, not too hot, space to move, not too loud. Visual timetables, children encouraged to know everything has a place and where to get things/put things away
Other learning spaces	Are there any? Organised, timetables, flexible
The playground	Spaces to be quiet and to be busy. Identified places to find support
Assembly	Do the visuals from the classroom carry into assembly
Dinnertime	Is it too loud, too squashed, too busy. Can your child access the dinner tables/chairs What are the alternatives if a dinner hall does not work?

## Learning:

Questions you might ask	What you Experience
How do you plan for different children's needs	Differentiated curriculum, lots of different learning styles- listening, doing, looking
How do you use IT for learning	Tablets, computers, apps and games, alternative recording (such as taking photos), programmable toys
<p>When will my child work with the teacher or Teaching Assistant</p> <p>How does the Teacher and TA liaise with the OT/physio. Speech and language therapist/ specialist teacher</p> <p>How do I know what has been said or done if a specialist visits my child</p>	<p>Every child will spend time with the teacher or teaching assistant. Every class teacher is responsible for the children in their class.</p> <p>The best outcomes for children are not always achieved by having a constant adult presence. Children make best progress when they are learning for themselves, with extra support where needed for specific things.</p>
Will my child always be taught in the classroom	Are they flexible, can other children join in, for example in therapy programmes.
	Are you seeing children being busy in classrooms, with 'busy noise'. Children should be engaged in learning, in being with others. It won't be silent!