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Information Advice and Support Kent

**A service for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
Helping you to make informed choices**



Choosing a School

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One of the questions we are most frequently asked is “which school would be best for my child?” We are unable to recommend schools, every child is unique and therefore everyone’s experience will be different. However, we can suggest a number of things you might want to consider or ask about when you are looking.

We would advise you to keep an open mind about the opinions of others and visit schools to form your own views before making any decisions. By doing some research, asking questions and getting a feel for the school will help you to make your decision.

Key Points to consider when choosing a school

- Start with local schools
- Visit at least two schools so you can make comparisons
- Take your child’s views into account
- Research all school options before making your mind up
- Your child has a right to a mainstream education

Make a checklist of all the things that are important to you and your child, which could include friendship groups (when considering secondary transfer). This will help you to ask the right questions.

Comparing schools:

Schools are required to publish an SEN Information Report, these can be a useful starting point if you want to compare school’s generally for how they support pupils with SEN and what resources are available.

You may find it difficult working out the type of setting your child or young person might need and finding the ‘best match’ can be really challenging. An example of this might be where a child’s academic attainment is in line with others of the same age, but they have social and emotional or communication needs which are affecting their confidence, self-esteem or mental health in general.

Visiting schools on your shortlist:

This isn't always possible for special schools, but you could phone or email them so you can discuss your child's needs and the provision set out in your child's draft plan. You may wish to consider:

- The curriculum followed and the level and range of qualifications open to pupils
- The range and nature of the needs of other children in the school/year/class
- The physical environment of the school – would it suit your child?
- If you are able to visit - how were the children being taught, the classes, the staff and facilities available etc.
- Consider any therapies specified in the EHC plan and whether any of the schools you are comparing have in-house expertise.
- Behaviour policy and how it may suit your child
- School's Prospectus & Ofsted report

You know your child best and will be well placed to weigh up the plus and minus points about each setting. You may not find a setting which is the exact fit so focus on where would be the 'best match'.

Choosing and naming a school in an EHC plan

Parents and carers tell us they don't know where to start and it feels such a responsibility receiving a draft Education, Health and Care plan and being asked which school you would like to request.

Most children with SEND will go to a mainstream school and can be supported by KCC's [Local Offer](#)

You can consider the following type of school: a maintained school, an academy or free school (funded by the Secretary of State for Education), some of these schools have a Specialist Resource Unit (SRP); a non-maintained special school, a Section 41 independent School, or an Independent School. Please see link below for more explanation about the different [Types of schools and other settings | \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice](#)

If you are considering a special school for your child, we advise you to also research local mainstream schools at the same time, so you can compare what they can offer. We understand this can feel overwhelming for parents. The more information you gather, the easier it will be to make your decision.

Looking through the draft Education, Health and Care Plan:

It is important to look at the outcomes that are being sought for your child (see section E of the plan); and the provision (Sections F,G and H of the plan), as this will help you to compare this with the provision a school or setting can offer to help your child to achieve their outcomes.

If you are wondering whether a special school might be appropriate, look for anything in the plan which suggests a high ratio of staff to students, or anything in the plan or the specialist reports used for the needs assessment that show your child would benefit from a specialist placement.

If you spot anything in the specialist reports which you feel should be in the plan (under the different sections), or you think of anything you would like to change or add you can let the local authority know within 15 days of receiving the draft. [What sections should an EHC plan have? | \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice](#)

Your child's views

Your child's views are important, draw from what they have told you, and their experiences from their current school; are they happy and settled?; have any difficulties emerged which are related to the setting or the type of setting they attend?

What is the view of the current early years setting or school

Are they already providing the level of support outlined in the draft plan? If not, how are they going to provide what's in the plan?;

If they believe your child's needs can be best met at a different type of school, why?

Independent schools

Some independent special schools are included in the lawful list of schools you can request you can [**View the list of approved independent schools and colleges, known as 'section 41' schools**](#)

For a wholly Independent school not on this list, you can 'make representations' (request and give your reasons) for it to be named. The local authority must consider your wishes but there is no conditional duty to name even if the school can offer a place. They will only name an independent school where a place has been offered.

Often the reason the local authority reject a request for an Independent school is due to costs (the third of the reasons 'incompatible with the efficient use of resources'). They will name a school in the EHC plan they believe is suitable and if you disagree you will have the option of appealing.

Home Education and Education Otherwise than in School/College (EOTIS/C):

[**Home education and 'education otherwise' | \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice**](#)

For further information about visiting schools see our leaflet [Special Educational Needs Transfer to the next phase of education](#)

Where to get further information and advice:

You can contact **IASK Helpline** see next page.

For information about SEND services and Kent County Council's process and procedures see **Kent County Council's SEND Information Hub (Local Offer)** link: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs>

On request, this information can be provided in alternative formats.

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