

Things to consider when visiting schools

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Size of the school – would your son/daughter cope with a large school
- Distance from home – getting to school and back.
- Friendships – where are your son/daughter's friends going, how important is this.
- What your son/daughter wants (within reason!)
- How do you feel when you go into the school, is it welcoming, do you feel reasonably at ease, are there displays of pupils' work and activities
- Visit on a working school day – do things seem well-organised, are the pupils well-behaved, how does it feel when everyone is moving around at break times, would your son/daughter cope or feel overwhelmed.
- Are you comfortable talking with the SEN staff, do you feel that they are approachable, and you would have an easy relationship with the relevant people?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

(Take with you a copy of the EHC Plan if your son/daughter has one. You could also take any other written information which you feel might be helpful such as a copy of the most recent IEP, any relevant reports etc)

- How is the Learning Support Department run, how many teachers and teaching assistants (TAs)?
- Are there any qualified specialist teachers within the department (if so, what qualifications do they have) or does the school buy in specialist advice through, for example, STS (previously EIS)?
- Do the TAs have any particular training?
- How is support put in place – is it all in-class or are pupils withdrawn for any specific sessions?
- If pupils are withdrawn, where to, who with, and how often?
- How do the TAs work in lessons, do pupils have to request help or would the TAs check that they are coping?
- Are there different TAs in each lesson or are they assigned to a particular department?
- How are subject teachers kept informed about individual pupils' needs, and how do they work with the Learning Support Department?
- How are the classes organised, are pupils streamed by ability or in mixed groups?
- Do pupils have access to the Learning Support Department at times other than when they are being taught there, such as lunchtimes?
- What resources and equipment is available e.g. computers, Dictaphones etc?
- What rewards systems are in place?
- How regularly is progress reviewed, how often will you meet with the school?
- What other means of communication are there between parents and the school e.g. home-school diaries, reports?
- Who will be your main point of contact should you wish to discuss any queries or concerns?
- What non-academic activities are available at the school?
- What options for qualifications are available, other than GCSEs? (e.g. NVQs, Certificates of Achievement etc)

If your son/daughter has a EHC Plan, ask how the school will put in place suggested teaching strategies

Ask for a copy of the school's prospectus if you don't already have one

You can also ask for a copy of the school's SEN Policy and SEN Information Report

(You don't necessarily need to go through all these suggestions one by one, but this should give you an outline of what to look for and any questions to ask)