

# Moving On Moving Up



Choosing a Secondary School for your child  
with Special Educational Needs





## Choosing a School for your child with Special Educational Needs

We recommend that before you visit any school you have thought about what questions you want answers to. This checklist contains most of the more obvious and general points. You might want to refer back to these once you have visited several different schools, so keep a checklist for each school that you visit. At the end of this booklet there is space to make notes and enter any particular questions that are important to you but which are not covered elsewhere.

Parents of children with special needs are no different to any other parents when it comes to choosing the right school, all though you may need to visit several schools before you find a school that you feel will meet your child's individual Special Educational Needs before making your final choice. Look for an environment where your child is most likely to thrive – where they will feel happy and secure at school and benefit from the kind of teaching that enables them to develop, learn and meet their potential.

It is important to involve your child when making this important decision. Get your child's views too; tell them what you are doing and why. Included inside is a section is for you and your child to complete, either together or independently. The questions here will help you to talk to your child about their feelings and wishes.

Contact Halton Parent Partnership Service for further information, advice and support.

 0151 511 7733

 [parentpartnership@halton.gov.uk](mailto:parentpartnership@halton.gov.uk)

 [www.haltonparentpartnership.co.uk](http://www.haltonparentpartnership.co.uk)

 /HaltonParentPartnership

## Things to look for during the visit

When visiting a possible new provision you might want to use the following form. You don't need to ask all the questions but the form may help you to think about what is important. Look through the questions for ideas and decide which ones are important for you and your child.

**Name of school / college 1:**

**Date visited:**

**Name of school / college 2:**

**Date visited:**

**Name of school / college 3:**

**Date visited:**

# What to look for:

Tick if this is important to you

## School environment:

- Does the school feel welcoming?
- How do the students behave towards each other?
- How do students behave towards staff?
- How do staff behave towards each other?
- How do staff behave towards students?
- What does the building / environment look like? (clean, tidy, bright etc )
- Would the building / environment suit your child?
- Is the school noisy?
- Could my child get to all areas of the school easily?
- How secure is the site?
- Are there good facilities for individual subjects / specific needs?
- Is it easy to get around the school?
- How do staff speak about children with additional needs, what sort of attitudes do they have?
- Where you given clear, useful information?

### SCHOOL 1

How did they score?

Scale 1-5

1 poor 5 excellent

### SCHOOL 2

How did they score?

Scale 1-5

1 poor 5 excellent

### SCHOOL 3

How did they score?

Scale 1-5

1 poor 5 excellent

### Notes

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# Questions you could ask .....

Tick if this is important to you

## About additional / specific needs:

- How will school get to know my child before he/ she starts there?
- How will my child get to know the school, especially in the first few weeks?
- These are my child's needs; do you have staff with specialist qualifications / experience?
- SEN policy - How are special educational needs like my child's met?
- What proportion of the students have additional needs?
- Does the school have experience of supporting children with similar difficulties to my child?
- Ask about support staff. How many, their roles/ qualifications etc.
- Could you outline the support that may be available to my son / daughter?
  - How would this be arranged?
- How will subject staff be informed of my child's needs, and support requirements?
- (If appropriate) How will other children be helped to understand my child's needs?
- Where do students spend their break and lunch time?
- How is unstructured time supported for students with additional needs?
- How would you encourage my child to mix with others?
- How does the school work with outside agencies (e.g. Speech & Language, School health)?

SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	Notes
How did they score? Scale 1-5 1 poor 5 excellent	How did they score? Scale 1-5 1 poor 5 excellent	How did they score? Scale 1-5 1 poor 5 excellent	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
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1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
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**NOTE** - Ask for copies of policies that you would like to see: Bullying, behaviour, equal opportunities, giving medication, pastoral care, Special Educational Needs.



# Questions that you could ask...

Tick if this is important to you

## About pastoral care:

- Who would my child speak to if they had a problem?
- What would happen if my child misbehaved?
- How is good behaviour and success rewarded?
- What behaviour would make a school suspend, or permanently exclude a child?
- What is the school policy on bullying?

## Generally:

- Has there been a recent OFSTED inspection?
- How many pupils are there?
- How is the school funded / staffed?
- What extra-curricular activities are there? How are they funded / staffed?

SCHOOL 1 How did they score? Scale 1-5 1 poor 5 excellent	SCHOOL 2 How did they score? Scale 1-5 1 poor 5 excellent	SCHOOL 3 How did they score? Scale 1-5 1 poor 5 excellent
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1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
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1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

## Notes

## THINGS THAT YOU MAY BE ASKED FOR:

- A copy of your child's statement / EHC plan
- What level of support have they had in the past?
- Which agencies are already involved with your child?
- Your child's current attainment (e.g National curriculum levels)

## Your Notes:

## Young Persons view

Sometimes it will be appropriate for parents to visit schools before the child does, especially if there are lots of choices and different types of schools that need to be considered. Transition to secondary school can be an anxious time for any child; it would be especially confusing if you took your child to too many schools. Parents may wish to shortlist just a couple of possible options before they organise for the child to visit. Visiting too many schools may be overwhelming for some children. Limiting the number of different schools that are visited can reduce anxiety.



School 1: <input type="text"/>	Comment
What did you think of the school?	
What did you like about it?	
Is there anything that you didn't like?	
Is there anything that you are worried about?	
Is there anything else that you want to know or to find out more about?	

<b>School 2:</b> <input type="text"/>	<b>Comment</b>
What did you think of the school?	
What did you like about it?	
Is there anything that you didn't like?	
Is there anything that you are worried about?	
Is there anything else that you want to know or to find out more about?	

<b>School 3:</b> <input type="text"/>	<b>Comment</b>
What did you think of the school?	
What did you like about it?	
Is there anything that you didn't like?	
Is there anything that you are worried about?	
Is there anything else that you want to know or to find out more about?	

# A Parent's Story



In a perfect world I would have wanted my twin boys to be in the same school, but they have very different needs.

Bobby has high-functioning autism and is academically quite gifted. We knew he'd fit into mainstream but we were looking for a small and nurturing place and we needed them to be flexible with Bobby and understand his difficulties.

The school we chose has been brilliant. They prepared a thorough transition plan before he started, made a visual timeline to help him to navigate the day's routine and have very gradually introduced him to every aspect of school life. His learning support assistant knows what he can and can't cope with, and has helped to push him to make the most of his academic skills while also working on his social skills.

Bobby's twin, Alec, has complex learning difficulties as well as autism. I knew he would be perfectly well behaved in a mainstream school, but that it would all go straight over his head. He needed very specific teaching methods to help him focus. Classes at the special school we chose for him are very small (about eight children with one teacher and about four assistants). He started in a class that taught him using sensory techniques and has now moved to an autism class where he has speech therapy every week. Alec has made tremendous progress and is really happy.

You can't go by what the rest of the world thinks and you can't go by what you'd hope for if things were different. You have to make a judgement based on your child's welfare in the here and now. I always did bear in mind that I could change schools if they weren't suitable, but both have been ideal.

**Debby, from Stockport (mother of seven-year-old twins Bobby and Alec, who have autism)**