

Useful questions to ask when visiting High Schools with a view to a placement for a young person with special educational needs?

- Is the school experienced in working with pupils with special educational needs?
- How have these pupils fared?
- Are there any staff with particular interest/experience in this area of need?
- How are pupils supported in class?
- How are TAs deployed? Will your child be supported by a large number of staff in the transitional period?
- Are there special transition arrangements e.g. extra visits?
- Are there any provisions such as social skills groups or 1-1 sessions with learning mentors to support emotional wellbeing?
- Do other agencies come into the school e.g. counselling, OT, SALT?
- What happens at break and (especially) lunch times? Are there safe spaces for pupils to go who may need peace and quiet? Are there clubs?
- How is behaviour managed in the school? What are the sanctions and systems?
- The peer group: are there any peer support systems or friendship/ buddy systems? How does the school deal with bullying?
- The homework policy; is there any flexibility for pupils who may struggle with home learning?
- Special arrangements for exams.
- How do parents communicate with the school and vice versa?
- Is there a parent of a pupil with same diagnosis with whom I can be put in touch if the other parent consents to this?

While you may want to ask a lot of questions, it is also important to experience the “feel” of the school and your own emotional response to the environment and the people you meet.

Family Action Islington SEND Service (Impartial Support Advice and Information on Disability and Special Educational Needs). Lough Road Centre, 61-71 Lough Road, London. N7 8FF

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Additional points best to consider when looking at school?

- What is the staffing structure, is the SENCO part of Senior Leadership?
- Ethnic minorities and diversity within the school?
- What is the parental involvement, regular meetings etc?
- Look at the schools SEN policy and SEND Information Report
- Check their admissions policy (if looking at independent placement)
- Are children educated by year group or ability?
- Look at the physical layout of the building, how will it impact on sensory needs/difficulties?
- What are staffing ratios, do they have 1:1 if needed?
- Think about the needs your child has now, not what they might need next year.

If it is a special school or unit you might also ask:

- What range of disability does the school cater for, range of needs?
- What therapies are available?
- What subjects will my child be able to study?
- Would they get some qualifications
- Will they get help with personal and life skills?
- What inclusion experiences does the school offer?
- Is there an appropriate group of children for my child to learn with and find friends?

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