



LOOKING FOR A SECONDARY SCHOOL CHECK LIST

This checklist will give you some ideas about the sort of questions you might ask or the kinds of things to look for when considering which school you would prefer your child to go to.

Before visiting a school:

Your child's strengths and their needs:

- What are your child's strengths?
- What are your child's needs?
- What things are most important for your child when thinking about a school for them?
- What do they enjoy about school?

What type of school do they want to go to?

- A local school they can attend with their friends or other children they know from their primary school?
- Do they want to go to a school their brother or sister attends?
- A school that has a particular expertise (for example, sports, arts and or a type of special educational need (SEN), autism/dyslexia/physical needs)?

How will your child get to school?

- Will they be able to walk to school or use public transport on their own?
- Will they need *travel assistance from the council?

***Travel Assistance:** For more information about travel assistance, please contact the **Wandsworth Information, Advice and Support Service (WIAS&S)**



Collecting information about different schools:

For information about all the mainstream and special schools in Wandsworth (maintained, academies and free schools) please see

1) **“Choose a Wandsworth Secondary” booklet:** This booklet is available on Wandsworth Councils website which also includes a list of mainstream schools in neighbouring boroughs:

http://wandsworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/4966/choose_a_wandsworth_secondary_school_2012/200086

2) **WIAS Webpage:** For a list of special schools (in and outside of Wandsworth:

http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/info/200477/wandsworth_information_advice_and_support_service_wiass/1926/special_educational_needs_schools

- Make a list of schools you want to know more about.
- Look at the schools' admission criteria. (***These do not apply if your child has an Educational, Health and Care (EHC) plan.***)
- Some schools have priority areas or give priority to siblings.
- Find out how far the school is from your home.
- Read the school prospectus or look at the school's website for their **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Information Report**. All maintained, academies and free schools **must** publish information on their websites about how they support children with SEN in their school (including policies).
- What are the school's policies on disability, bullying, the role of the parent/carer, safety, absence, administering medicines, equal opportunities?
- What is the school's complaints procedure?
- You could also read the latest Ofsted report for the school, this can be obtained from the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk



Visiting schools:

It is important to visit the school.

Before arranging a visit, it may be helpful to think about:

- Will your child want to visit with you?
- Do you want someone else to visit with you (for example, a relative or a friend)?
- Do you want a guided tour of the school?

Arranging a visit to the school:

- You can visit during a school open day/evening or contact the school to make an appointment to visit.
- You can also ask for an appointment to meet the school's *Special Educational Needs co-ordinator (SENco)/Inclusion manager when you visit.
- In special schools, parents often meet the Headteacher or Deputy/Assistant Headteacher

****The SENco is responsible for organising SEN provision for children in the school and liaising with parents/carers about their children's SEN.***

The school visit:

Class and school environment

- Is the school calm, both in the classrooms and around the school?
- Are the classrooms bright and interesting?
- Is the children's work displayed well?
- Does the layout of the school meet your child's physical needs? (For example, is there easy wheelchair access throughout the school, such as lifts, wide doors, ramps?)
- Is the main entrance and all exits of the school secured?



The staff and children

- Are your child and you made to feel welcome?
- Are the children happy and/or interested in what they are doing?
- How many children are in each class?
- How many adults are in each class (What are they there for)?

School organisation

- What time does school start and finish?
- Is there a breakfast club?
- If your child comes to school by transport how does the school welcome him/her in to the school?
- What size are the classes for each subject?
- How long are lessons?
- What supervision and activities are there at lunch and break times?
- How will the school include your child on school trips?
- Are there any after school clubs (for example, homework, sports, and art clubs)?
- How will the school get to know your child and prepare for their admission into the school?
- Does the school have links with other schools? For example, do special schools link up with mainstream schools?



Help at school

- How will the school meet your child's SEN and/or disability?
- What expertise does the school already have in meeting the SEN and/or disability of children (For example, ASD, Dyslexia)?
- Will your child be assessed when they start at the school?
- What assessments are used for children with SEN?
- How will the school assess, plan, do and review your child's needs and progress (how do they record this and how often)?
- What would happen if your child was not making enough progress?
- What teaching methods and strategies are used to help children's learning?
- Does the school use small group or individual teaching?
- Will your child miss certain parts of the curriculum because of their SEN? How flexible will the school be with this?
- What lessons do pupils miss to receive extra help?
- What support is available for tests and exams?
- Does the school offer GCSEs or alternatives to GCSEs?
- How does the school work with support services to meet the needs of children with SEN and/or disability?
- Are there other professionals based at the school? (For example, speech and language or occupational therapists, educational psychologists or learning mentors)
- Do all school staff get training on SEN and/or disabilities?
- Are there other children in the school who have similar needs to your child?



It would be helpful for you to tell school about any medical needs that your child has (including any medication that they take). This information must be in the EHC Plan.

Communication between staff

- How will staff be told about your child's SEN and/or disability?
- Who advises staff on the best ways to teach your child?
- What support and training are available for all staff in the school?

Communication with parents/carers

- How will the school communicate relevant information and encourage you to communicate with them?
- When can you talk/get in contact with class teachers or other staff working with your child?
- How are parents/carers involved in their child's learning?
- How will you be told if there are concerns about your child's progress?
- Does the school hold parent/carer coffee mornings/workshops?

Supporting children with their social, emotional well-being and behaviour

- How does the school ensure that all pupils are welcome and that differences are respected?
- How does the school's discipline system adapt to take account of the specific SEN and/or disability of children?
- How is positive behaviour praised?
- Are all staff told on potential triggers for outbursts by children? What plans are in place if an incident occurs in and outside of a classroom?



- How does the school manage children's behaviour?
- How does the school deal with bullying?
- What space or room is available for a child to have time out or calm down?

Hopefully the answers to your questions will give you a good idea about how well each school you visit will include your child and meet their particular special educational needs and/or disability.

After the visit:

Discuss your thoughts and feelings with someone else and or contact the WIAS&S team.

Consider:

- Did you feel welcome at the school?
- Did the school answer all of your questions?
- Could you and or your child see themselves attending the school?
- Have you got any other questions that you would like to ask the school?

The final question is:

'Will my child be happy at this school?'

Contact us:

If you want to talk to somebody about school preferences or have any questions about this leaflet, please ring/email **WIAS&S** on:

- **Call back Service: 020 8871 8065 (24 hour answering message)**
Or
- **Advice Line: 020 8871 5237(Monday & Friday (10am -1pm), Wednesday (1.30-4.30pm))**
- wias@wandsworth.gov.uk



You can also call:

1. Pupil Services (for children without statements of SEN or EHC plan)
(020) 8871 7316

2. Special Needs Assessment Section (for children with an EHC Plan)
(020) 8871 8061

Types of schools:

Maintained (state) Schools:	These are funded by the local authority (LA) which includes community, foundation
Mainstream Schools:	These are schools which provide an education for all children including those with SEN.
SEN units/resource bases:	These are attached to mainstream schools and usually provide support for children with certain types of SEN (for example, autism) Usually children will need an EHC plan to access this support.
Special Schools:	These only provide education for pupils with SEN. Children will usually have an EHC Plan to go to one of these settings.
Academies/Free Schools	These are state-funded independent schools. They are set up by sponsors from business, faith, or voluntary groups in partnership with the Department for Education (DfE). They receive money directly from the Government but are not maintained by LA



<p>Independent Schools:</p>	<p>These are fee-paying schools that are not funded by LA or government) These are mostly run by charities (and therefore, “not for profit”) but there are some private “for-profit” owners</p>
<p>Non maintained schools(some of these school’s can be *Section 41 schools)</p>	<p>These are charitable foundations and are “not for profit”. This type of school will take a mixture of children and young people with or without EHC Plans</p>

Naming a school in an EHC Plan (Law):

A child’s parent or a young person (16 -25years old) has the right to request a particular school, college or other institution of the following type to be named in their EHC plan:

- Maintained nursery school
- Maintained school and any form of academy or free school (mainstream or special)
- Non-maintained special school
- Further education or sixth form college
- ***Section 41 schools/colleges:** Independent school or independent specialist colleges (where they have been approved for this purpose by the Secretary of State and published in a list available to all parents and young people)

If a child’s parent or a young person makes a request for a particular nursery, school or post-16 institution in these groups the local authority must comply with that preference and name the school or college in the EHC plan unless:

- It would be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or SEN of the child or young person, or
- The attendance of the child or young person there would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or
- The efficient use of resources

WIAS&S



Wandsworth Information, Advice & Support Service

Providing an Impartial Service to Children and Young People (aged 0-25)
with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities and their Parents or Carers

Please use this page for notes: