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Wolverhampton Information, Advice and Support Service

Choosing a School

Looking at prospective schools can be a stressful time, particularly when a child has additional needs as there is a lot to think about. Most children and young people have their needs met in a mainstream school within the city. Some may go to a special school or a school out of city which offers a breadth of options. Therefore, visiting schools is important; it helps you and your family to make an informed decision.

It is important to keep an open mind and put to one side any preconceived ideas about a particular school you want your child to attend. This could all change once you actually visit.

Using the following guidelines may help you to make the right decision for your child. Young people may find this useful too when considering further education.

It is important to read this information alongside the Local Authority's admissions guidance <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/education-and-schools/school-admissions>

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan any change in school will be managed by the Local Authority's SEND Statutory Assessment and Review Team (SENSTART).

Where to start

Each school must publish a SEN Information Report which details its approach to supporting the progress of pupils with SEN, including:

- A clear description of the types of SEN the school provides for
- How pupils with SEN are identified and how needs are assessed
- The name and contact details of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)
- How pupils with SEN are taught
- How the curriculum and learning environment is adapted

You will find a list of local schools, early years and post 16 settings on **Wolverhampton Local Offer** website.

You may wish to visit a number of schools before deciding on your options.

Perhaps when you have a shortlist you may wish to have a second visit with your child. As well as attending open days, you can arrange a visit directly with the school. Visiting a school during the normal school day will help you get a feel for the school. Ask to meet with the SENCo to find out about the support your child could receive.

Things to think about

- My child's particular strengths
- What my child likes to do
- Specific worries or concerns
- How medical needs are met and who may be involved e.g., school nurse
- Transport to and from school
- How many pupils attend the school and how many classes are in each year group
- Size of school and how my child will get around

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- Friendship groups and opportunities to make friends
- The support available during playground and unstructured times e.g., break and lunchtime
- Lunchtime arrangements
- Extra-curricular activities and support for pupils to access activities

Questions to consider

- What experience do school staff have of working with children with similar disabilities or needs as my child?
- How will staff be informed about my child’s needs? How often? How will this happen each year?
- Does the school have a specialism or extra facilities for SEN?
- How accessible is the school site? e.g., changing/toilet facilities, stairs, lockers
- Will my child’s support be from the same people? What happens if my child’s teacher or support staff is absent?
- How will school communicate with me?
- How will school ensure my child’s views and wishes are heard on how best to support them?
- What about pastoral care? e.g., behaviour expectations, anti-bullying, peer support
- What subjects will my child study?
- What are the homework expectations?
- How will my child be fully included in all school activities including clubs and trips?
- Any other specific questions relating to your child’s needs e.g., administration of medicines, particular therapies, programmes and interventions

Preparing for the move

Liaison and careful planning should take place to ensure a smooth transfer to the new school/setting.

It is important that a transition plan is agreed with you detailing what needs to happen. The plan may include:

- A point of contact at the new school/setting
- Photographs to help your child become familiar with the new setting
- A map of the school
- A timetable in advance of the starting date (where possible)
- It may be beneficial to have regular meetings with the current and new school/setting to ensure that everyone is fully prepared for the move
- You may also want your child to have extra visits (known as transition visits) to help reassure them and familiarise with the new environment

Our **Transition Tips factsheet** has further advice on preparing for transition.

Please contact us if you require further information, advice or support.

Telephone: 01902 556945

Email: ias.service@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Complete our contact form at: <https://wolvesiass.org/contact-us/index.html>

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