



Choosing a school for a child who has special educational needs (SEN)

Useful things to think about



In partnership with



Most children with special educational needs can be taught in mainstream schools. If your child has more severe or complex needs you may want to consider a specialist school or a school with an additionally resourced provision.

Whether your child is starting school for the first time, transferring to secondary school or moving schools for any other reason, there are a number of things you might want to think about when you are looking at schools to help you make your decision.

How do I choose a school?

Finding a school that will suit your child. You should:

- Visit at least two schools so that you have something to compare
- Start with schools that are local to you
- Read the latest Ofsted report and ParentView feedback
- Read the school's SEN Information Report (this should be on their website)
- Try to keep an open mind until you have looked at all the possibilities and spoken to the professionals involved with your child

Remember, your own experiences of school may affect the way you see the school so try to put these feelings aside and look at the school from your child's perspective.

How do I find a school?

To find a list of schools in Bromley, visit www.bromley.gov.uk/schools.

To find a list of schools outside of Bromley, visit www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables.

What happens if my child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan?

If your child has an EHC plan, the law says that you have the right to “express a preference” for the school you wish your son or daughter to attend.

If your child is already at school, in Year 1 (for infant schools) or Year 5 (junior and primary schools) and Year 10 (secondary schools) an Annual Review meeting should include discussions about which type of school your child should go to for the next stage of their education.

You will be asked to tell the Council your preference for a school and they will then take your views into account when decisions are being made about which school can best meet your child’s needs. Generally, the Council will always consult your local school to see if they are a suitable for your child.

Before naming a school in an EHC plan, the Council must consult with the governing body of the school and allow them 15 days to respond. Sometimes a school will state that it cannot meet the needs of a pupil or refuse to take a child for a variety of reasons. The Council should take account of a school’s views, but the Council has the final say on whether or not to name a school in an EHC plan. In most cases they do not need the agreement of the school, but there are some exceptions to this.

If the Council does not agree to name your preferred school, you may have the right to mediation or to appeal. The IPSEA website (www.ipsea.org.uk) provides general information about the process as well as detailed information about mediation and EHC appeals.

For more information about your options, please contact us and we can talk you through your possible next steps.

What happens if my child does not have an EHC plan or if they are going through the EHC needs assessment process?

If your child has SEN and does not have an EHC plan, or you are going through the EHC needs assessment process, you must apply in the usual way (online) for Primary and Secondary school admissions, or Infant to Junior transfer. To do this, visit www.bromley.gov.uk/schools.

If you don't apply for a place through the admissions system and your child does not get an EHC Plan you may miss out on a place at one of your preferred schools.

Before visiting a school

These actions can be useful to do before you visit a school:

-  Make a checklist of all the things that are important to your child and you. This will help you to ask the right questions.
-  Arrange to meet with the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (Senco).
-  If your child is transferring to secondary school you may like to meet the Head of Year 7 or Head of Key Stage 3.
-  Look up the school's:
 - most recent Ofsted report (www.ofsted.gov.uk)
 - SEND Information report on their website
-  Decide if you want to take someone with you – perhaps your partner, relative or a friend who knows your child well.
-  Take any relevant information about your child, such as any assessments, educational psychology advice and copies of Individual Education Plans or school reports.

Some questions you might find useful to consider when choosing a school

This is not a definitive list, you may have other questions you wish to ask, but you might like to use these ideas as a starting point.

Before you visit the school, make your own list, or add to this one, and take it with you so that you can discuss your child's needs as fully as possible with the school.

Take a notebook or paper with you when you visit because you may wish to make some notes on the school's answers to your questions.

Moving to the new school

1. How will the move to the new school be planned?
2. What is the school's policy regarding communication with your child's current school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (Senco) and class teacher?
3. If your child currently has Teaching Assistant (TA) support, how will the new school ensure that TA support is in place when your child starts the new school?
4. Will your child be able to visit the school on induction days? If your child's current school is not a feeder school and there are no arrangements in place for group visits, can special arrangements be made for your child?

Getting to school

1. How will your child travel to and from school?
2. Can you walk your child to school?
3. If your child has an EHC plan you can apply for SEN transport, but this is not guaranteed.

Teaching and learning

1. How will the school ensure that your child is able to access the curriculum as fully as possible?
2. Consider your child's difficulties and strengths. What is your child good at and will they have the opportunity to develop their interests in the new school?
3. Will the school include your child on day and residential trips? Will your child be able to access any after school activities and lunchtime clubs?
4. Does the teaching staff who would be working with your child have relevant specialist training or the opportunity to access necessary training?
5. Are there any other children in the school with similar Special Educational Needs (SEN) to those of your child? If so, has their placement been successful?
6. Does your child require any specialist resources? If so, can the school provide them?
7. What size class would your child be placed in?
8. Does the school set or stream pupils?
9. How does the Senco communicate information about individual pupils to teachers? This is especially important at secondary school where a pupil might be taught by 13-14 different teachers in a week

Managing the school day

1. If your child needs help with things like collecting lunch at lunch time or changing for PE, how will the school provide this help?
2. Does your child need any therapy, such as Speech Therapy or Physiotherapy? If so, how would this happen?
3. Will your child be able to get around the building easily?
4. Do the classes change for every lesson? If so, does your child need help getting from one to another? What can the school offer if they do?

School policies

1. What are the school policies on:
 - a. Bullying?
 - b. Discipline?
 - c. Uniform?
 - d. Homework?
 - e. Any other policies?
2. If you have any particular concerns, for example that your child may be bullied, ask how the school would deal with this.
3. Is there a Home-School agreement?
4. What is the school's behaviour policy? How does it apply it to children with SEND? If your child has behaviour difficulties, how would the school respond to this?
5. What policy does the school have for contact with parents? Do parents have open access to school staff or are there special arrangements for making appointments? How does the school involve parents in school life?
6. Look at the school website. There will be a lot of useful information there including all of the school policies.

General issues

1. Look at the other children – are they happy, do they get on well with each other?
2. Do you feel that you are made welcome? Do staff seem interested in you and your child?
3. Do you think that your child would be happy here?
4. If your child has any particular religious or cultural needs, would they be met?
5. Do the classrooms look like places where children can learn?
6. Are the displays current and interesting and do they seem to include pupils of all abilities?

After the visit

1. You could make a list of all the things you were happy with and those that you were not.
2. Keep this list and use it for comparing with any other schools that you look at.
3. You might like to discuss your feelings about new schools with a friend or with us.

Get in touch with us



Email us on iass@bromley.gov.uk
or choiceservice@bromley.gov.uk for our Choice Service



Alternatively, you can text us on 07834 106 347

Call us on 020 8461 7630

Monday to Friday 9.30am - 1pm and 2pm - 4pm

or visit www.bromleyiass.org.uk

