**Choosing Your School of Preference**
Advice for Parents when Visiting Schools

West Sussex
SEND Information
Advice & Support
Service

SEND IAS services are not in a position to recommend a school for your child. That is a decision that rightly must be left to parents, as you know your child best. However there are a number of questions you might want to ask when visiting a school that may help you to choose a school of preference when you receive your EHC Plan or are going through the process of transitioning schools.

You may want to select appropriate questions from the list below to ask in all the schools you visit, in order to build up a picture of what is available and compare one with another.

**Questions you could ask at school:**

- Please can I have a copy of your school's SEN Information report? - this will explain how the individual school manages the provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- Are there any spaces in my child's year group?
- What is the average class size in my child's year?
- Do you have many pupils with special educational needs/EHC Plans?
- Do parents automatically receive copies of the child's inclusion plans and information on their child's general progress?
- How regularly is the child's inclusion plan reviewed? Would I be involved in the review of my child's plan?
- How is support for children with special needs organised?
- How is the curriculum adapted to meet the needs of children with special educational needs?
- How does the school ensure children with special needs/disabilities are fully included in school life?
- Are there opportunities for parents to come into school to discuss their child's progress?
- I have particular needs myself which are …… how will you be able to help me take part in my child's education? (if applicable)
- Have you/your staff had experience of working with children with similar needs to my child?
- What is the structure and timetable for the school day?
- How do the school manage challenging behaviour? (If applicable)
- Are all areas of the school accessible to my child? Are adaptations required? (if applicable)
- What clubs or activities might the pupil get involved in (eg. supported homework, after-school clubs, specific activity groups, etc.)
- How does the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) 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).
- Ask for a school prospectus/governors report.

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## Additional questions you could ask at a special school:

- Does the school cater for Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) / Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) or both?
- What special equipment / therapies are available for my child's particular needs?
- How is each child's support co-ordinated/arranged?
- What is the staff/pupil ratio in each class?
- Have any of your children returned to mainstream education?
- Have the Learning Support Assistants (LSA) had experience of working with children with similar needs to my child?

## Things schools might ask you:

- Child's name, date of birth and address.
- The name of the school your child currently attends.
- Is your child on SEN support, going through an EHC Needs assessment or does he/she have a statement/EHC Plan?
- Does your child currently have an Inclusion Plan?
- Is your child involved with any other agencies/therapies?
- What are your child's needs?
- What are your (or your child's) aspirations for the future?
- What sort of support is your child receiving at the moment?
- Why are you thinking of changing schools?

## Questions you may want to ask yourself after the visit:

- What kind of a welcome did I/we receive at the school?
- Is the peer group appropriate for my/our child? This can be important in a Special School.
- Did the school seem confident that they could meet my/our child's needs?
- Did the school answer all of my/our questions to my/our satisfaction?
- Did I/we have a general positive or negative "gut instinct" about the school?