



Choosing a Secondary School for Children with SEND

City of London
Early Years and Education Team

Transitioning to a Secondary School

Guidance for families with children with SEN

Moving to secondary school is an important and rewarding experience for a young person as they grow older. It can also be a challenge if a young person needs some extra support, so we have prepared some ideas for you to think about.

These will include ideas about how to involve your child, what schools are available, how to get there and planning a visit and questions to ask.

The Application Process

The application process will depend on the level of support your child is receiving.

If your child is receiving SEN school-based support, but is not on an EHC plan, you will need to apply for secondary schools through the school's admission process. You will find a helpful video guide here: https://www.fis.cityoflondon.gov.uk/education-and-schools/school-admissions.

For a more detailed guide, our school admissions booklets can be found here: http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/schooladmission

If your child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, you do not apply for secondary school through the school admissions process. Instead, your SEND Caseworker at the City of London (City) Local Authority (LA) will contact you for your school preference at the beginning of the Autumn term of year 6 and will then consult with the school for a placement for your child.

Your child's EHC plan must be amended to name a secondary school in Section I by the 15th of February. This ensures plenty of time to prepare for the transition to the new school.

Most children with an EHC plan will attend a local maintained mainstream school, but if you are considering a mainstream school with a specialist unit, or a special school placement, we will consider this at your child's year 5 annual review meeting and your SEND Caseworker will give you details about the schools which may be able to meet your child's needs.

Choosing a Secondary School

There are no maintained secondary schools in the City, therefore children and young people that live in the City attend secondary schools outside of the City. Every LA is required to have a SEND local offer website which publishes the list of schools within their area. You will be able to find information about schools on the local offer. Schools also hold open days during September and October. This information will help you to consider which school is best for your child.

For Tower Hamlets schools:
https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/education_and_learning/schools/secondary_schools.aspx

For Hackney schools:
https://education.hackney.gov.uk/search/schools?for=&type%5Bss%5D=ss

For Islington schools:
https://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/results.page?familychannelnew=2_2

For Southwark schools:
https://www.southwark.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-admissions/secondary-admissions/types-secondary-schools-southwark

For Westminster schools:
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/children-and-families/education/school-admissions/starting-secondary-school-september-2027

For Camden schools:
https://www.camden.gov.uk/secondary-school-admissions?inheritRedirect=true

For Hammersmith & Fulham schools:
https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/children-and-young-people/schools-and-colleges/school-admissions/transfer-secondary-school-2022

The following academies list some priority places for City residents as part of their admissions policy

- City of London Academy Islington: 10 places
- City of London Academy Southwark: 30 places
- The City Academy, Hackney: 9 places

For children not on an EHCP: All three Academies require all children to complete a reasoning test as part of their fair banding process. Your child must sit this test in order to be offered a place at the academy.

Fair banding tests

There is no passing or failing these tests. Pupils are tested, grouped into 'bands' according to their abilities. The school will then offer places to an equal number of pupils in each band.
For more information, download a copy of the City of London's secondary transfer booklet.
https://www.fis.cityoflondon.gov.uk/education-and-schools/school-admissions

Travel Assistance

If you are worried that your child may not be able to travel to and from school independently due to their SEND, the City can consider providing travel assistance. This can include travel training, reimbursement of petrol costs, a personal travel budget for transport, and a shared taxi with a Passenger Assistant.
For further details on travel assistance, please refer to the City of London School Transport Policy:
https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/education-and-learning/schools/education-and-policies

Website:
www.towerhamletsandcitysendias.com

Further Help and Support

If you would like impartial advice and support on secondary school choices, please contact the Tower Hamlets and City of London SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).

Telephone: 020 7364 6489

Email: towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Website: www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com

Types of School Available

There are various types of school available for your child to attend.

Mainstream Schools	Schools which provide an education for all children including those with SEN and a disability.
Maintained (state) Schools	Schools that are funded by the local authority (LA) which includes community, foundation and voluntary aided schools
Academies/Free Schools	School's which 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.
SEN units/resource bases	These are attached to mainstream schools and usually provide support for children with certain types of SEN (for example, autism). Children will usually need an EHC plan to access this support.
Alternative Provision – Pupil Referral Unit's (PRU's) and vocational centres	Alternative provision is arranged for children that are unable to attend mainstream schools by either the school on roll or the LA. Pupil Referral Unit's (PRU's) and vocational centres are common types of alternative provision.
Special Schools	Schools that provide an education for children with SEN. Children will usually have an EHC Plan to go to one of these schools.
Independent Schools	Fee-paying schools that are not funded by LA or Government. These schools are run for profit. There are mainstream and special independent schools.
Non-Maintained Schools	These are run by charitable foundations and are not for profit. Some of these schools can be *Section 41 schools.

University technical colleges (UTC's) and Studio Schools	UTCs and Studio Schools offer pupils more than the traditional GCSE and A-level curriculum. University technical colleges specialise in subjects like engineering and construction - and teach these subjects along with business skills and using IT. Pupils study academic subjects as well as practical subjects leading to technical qualifications. The curriculum is designed by the university and employers, who also provide work experience for students. University technical colleges are sponsored by: • universities • employers • further education colleges Studio schools Studio schools are small schools (usually with around 300 pupils) teaching mainstream qualifications through project-based learning. This means working in realistic situations as well as learning academic subjects. Students work with local employers and a personal coach, and follow a curriculum designed to give them the skills and qualifications they need in work, or to take up further education.
Further Education (FE) Colleges	They provide courses that are educational, training and technical to prepare young people and adults for the workplace. FE colleges are mainly for young people aged 16+, but some offer courses for young people from aged 14.

Section 41 Schools	These are independent special schools which have been approved by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014 as schools which a parent or young person can request to be named in an EHC plan.

Further Help and Support

For further information on types of schools, please refer to the City of London Family Information Service website:

https://www.fis.cityoflondon.gov.uk/adults/types-of-schools

Questions to consider when choosing a Secondary School

Questions to consider before visiting your chosen schools

Your Child's Views	Your Notes
Your child's views on where they would like to go and what they would like from their school are really important so that you can ensure that they will be happy there. Here is a list of things you may wish to consider asking them about: • Would they like to go to the same school as their siblings, family members or friends? • If your child has a talent or a specialist subject they enjoy, you may wish to ask them whether they would like to attend a specialist school for subjects such as sports, IT, drama and music. Or does the school offer these as an extra-curricular activity? • Travel to and from school – travel time, public transport, walking, travel assistance etc. • Does your child have any questions that they would like you to find out about?	

Planning your visit

Things to consider	Your Notes
There is information for parents and carers published on schools' websites about how they meet the needs of their pupils. These can be lengthy documents; you do not need to worry about reading all of them in detail. You may wish to consider skimming them for key bits of information that is relevant to you and your child. Here is a list of documents for you to be aware of: • SEND/Inclusion Policy • SEND Information Report • Behaviour, bullying, mobile phones, administering medicines, and equal opportunities policies • Ofsted Report	

Classroom and school environment

Things to consider	Your Notes
When visiting the school, how you feel and what you see when walking around the school will help you to decide whether your child would feel comfortable there. • Does it feel calm and welcoming? • Is there plenty of space for group activities, but also quiet spaces? • If your child has physical needs, is the school accessible for them? (e.g., wheelchair ramps, wide doors, lifts) • What's the playground and break room like? Are there activities that your child would enjoy?	

SEN Support at the School

Things to consider	Your Notes
All schools will offer an open day/evening, but you could also request a meeting with the Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO)/Inclusion Manager for a conversation about how the school will meet your child's individual needs. If they can't offer an in-person meeting, they may be able to offer a virtual meeting. You do not need to know all the details about the type of support your child needs. Your child's SEN support plan or EHC plan will identify your child's needs and the support the school is putting in place. You can simply share with this with the secondary school, and they will be able to talk to you about what they can put in place for your child. You may wish to consider inviting someone along with you for support and guidance such as a family member, friend, or SENDIASS Advisor.	

Here are some questions you may like to ask. These will vary dependent on your child's needs and can be adapted. You do not need to worry about asking all of these - they are some suggestions which you may find helpful. • Are there any other children like my child attending the school? • Do children with SEND make good progress? • Are external services such as Educational Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy easily accessible? • If the school has a Resource base/unit: How many staff in the base/unit? How much time is spent in the resource base/mainstream classes? • For special schools and mainstream schools with a resource base/unit, how does the school support children and young people to transition into more mainstream learning and experiences? • Does the school have a buddy/mentoring system? A school counsellor? • How will the school monitor and review your child's progress?	

• Will your child need to miss certain subjects due to their additional support? How flexible is the school with this? • What support is available for tests and exams? • How will the school support your child to become more independent with their learning?	

Support for your child's social and emotional well-being and behaviour

Things to consider	Your Notes
Many children with SEND have difficulties managing their emotions and this can affect their behaviour. If this is your child, you may wish to find out from the secondary school how they will support your child. Here are some ideas for questions: • How is positive behaviour praised? • Is there a space or room available for children to have time out or to calm down? • How will your child's needs, how to support them and any potential triggers for behaviour be communicated to all staff? • How does the school discipline children and what types of behaviour would lead to exclusion? Are adjustments made to their discipline policy to take into account a child's SEN?	

Outcomes for Young People with SEN

Things to consider	Your Notes
Secondary school is five years and whilst year 11 when they leave school may seem like a long way off, you will need to find out how well young people with SEND do at their school and the types of next steps they go onto. • If your child is significantly behind their peers academically, you will want to ask the school whether they offer alternatives to GCSEs? • Where do most children with SEND go onto after year 11? i.e. employment, sixth form, college, apprenticeships. • Is there a Careers Counsellor at the school and how do they work with young people with SEND? • Does the school support young people with arranging work experience? • How does the school prepare young people with SEND for adult life?	

School Organisation

Things to consider	Your Notes
These are general school organisation questions that you will want to think about and will likely find out about on the school open day/evening. • What time does school start and finish? • Is there a breakfast club and after school clubs? • Does the school accept requests for your child to be in the same tutor group with a friend? • Do all children in the school share the same playground and lunch break? • How long are the lessons? Do children have far to move between lessons? • What subjects must children study? What other subjects do they offer? • How will the school include your child on school trips?	

Communication with You

Things to consider	Your Notes
From the start, it is suggested that you agree a line of communication with the school. For instance, you will want to know the best person is to contact about your child's learning and their contact details. You may want to find out how and when you can contact your child's subject teachers. How will they let you know if there have any concerns? The school may hold parent coffee mornings and workshops that you may want to find out about.	

After the Visit

Things to consider	Your Notes
After the visit, reflect and talk to your child about how you think it went. Did you both feel welcome? Do you and your child think that they would be happy there? Any questions you didn't get answers to, you can always contact the school for this.	