



Choosing A Secondary School for Children without an Education, Health Care (EHC) Plan

This information sheet will give you:

Basic information on the law when choosing a secondary school; information on how to apply for a secondary school; and questions you may want to ask and points to consider when deciding on the secondary school you would prefer your child or young person to go to.

How to apply for a secondary school and the law if your child has SEN and does not have an EHC plan

There are two ways to apply for a secondary school place:

- Applying for a Year 7 secondary school place, when your child is moving from primary school to secondary school.
- In-year transfer, when your child is already attending, or has a place at, a secondary school and you want to request a different school.

Applying for a Year 7 secondary school place

You will need to complete an application form via Wandsworth Council's [Secondary school admissions](#), page.

You should check the application deadline carefully and make sure the form is submitted on time.

All mainstream secondary schools, including maintained/state schools, academies and free schools, have their own admission criteria. You can find these via the [Choose a Wandsworth Secondary School](#) booklet.

The booklet also explains:

- How you can apply for a secondary school place.
- How to apply for a mainstream secondary school in a neighboring borough.
- The deadline for completing the application form.
- When you will be told the secondary school place offered to your child, usually 1st March of the year your child will be moving to secondary school.
- What to do if you are not offered your preferred school.

Please note:

If your child has SEN but does not have an EHC plan, you still apply through the usual school admissions process. You can include information about your child's SEN when speaking to schools, but the application itself is made through the admissions process.



In-year admissions

If you are new to the borough or country or want your child to change secondary school after the school year has begun, you may need to complete an [In-year admissions and transfers form](#).

Please note:

You should contact the Pupil Services section to find out about the availability of places in the secondary schools you are interested in. If your child already has a place in a Wandsworth school, you should discuss the possible move with the Headteacher of your child's current school before making an application.

The law

It is unlawful for an admission authority, such as the LA or school governing body, to refuse admission to your child if they have SEN but do not have an EHC plan because:

- They have challenging behaviour, except in limited circumstances.
- It believes your child requires an EHC Needs Assessment, additional support and/or an EHC plan.
- Your child's needs may require reasonable adjustments or SEN support.

For information on the law and school admissions for children without EHC plans, please visit the [Childlawadvice](#) website.

Types of schools

Type of school	What this means
Mainstream schools	Schools which provide an education for all children and young people, including those with SEN and disabilities.
Maintained/state schools	Schools funded by the Local Authority, including community, foundation and voluntary aided schools.
Academies/free schools	State-funded independent schools. They receive money directly from Government but are not maintained by the LA.
SEN units/resource bases	Some mainstream secondary schools have specialist resource bases or units for young people with types of SEN. Schools can explain how places are allocated and what support is available.



Type of school	What this means
Independent schools	Fee-paying schools that are not funded by the LA or Government. Some are run by charities and are “not for profit”; others are private “for-profit” schools.
Non-maintained schools	Charitable foundations that are “not for profit”. These types of schools may admit children and young people with or without EHC plans.

Deciding on and visiting secondary schools

Visiting a secondary school is usually the best way to find out if it is the right one for your child or young person. The checklist below includes questions you may want to consider, where relevant, before, during and after visiting schools.

Checklist: what type of secondary school would you like your child to go to?

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
The same school that their friends or sibling attend, if this is important to them.	
Your local secondary school.	
A school with subjects, clubs, pastoral support or SEN support that may suit your child.	
A school with a specialist SEN resource base or unit, if this may be relevant.	

Before visiting schools

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Make a list of schools you want to know more about.	
Look at the school’s admission criteria. Is your child likely to meet the school’s admission criteria?	
Read the school’s SEN policy or Special Educational Needs (SEN) Information Report.	
All maintained schools, academies and free schools must publish information on their website	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
about how they support children and young people with SEN.	
Read the school's behaviour, bullying, disability, equal opportunities and administering medicines policies, which should be on the school's website.	
Check Ofsted information on SEN: www.ofsted.gov.uk	
Will your child want to visit with you, or would you prefer to visit first and then visit again with your child?	
Would your child like to prepare questions before the open evening or school visit?	
Do you want someone else to visit with you, for example a relative, friend or professional supporting your child?	
Do you want a guided tour of the school or a meeting with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or Inclusion Manager?	
If the school has a specialist SEN resource base or unit, check if you can also visit this or speak with the staff who manage it.	
Would it help to share key information about your child's SEN with the SENCO before or after the visit?	

Your child or young person

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
What does your child want to know about the schools?	
What are your child's strengths and interests, and how will the school build on these?	
What subjects, clubs, activities or support would help your child settle and take part in school life?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
What support will your child need in lessons, at break and lunchtime, and around the school building?	
Could you ask people who know your child well, such as primary school staff or professionals, what support they feel your child may need at secondary school?	
If your child has had an assessment and a report is available, would you like to share this with the SENCO at the school you are visiting?	
How will your child get to and from school each day?	
What is the journey like at the start and end of the school day?	
Will your child need support to build independence, confidence or routines for travelling to school?	

The visit: school environment

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Were the corridors, classrooms and shared areas well organised and easy to move around?	
How busy and noisy were lesson changeovers, lunch and breaktimes?	
Were there quieter spaces or supervised areas available for pupils who may need them?	
Was the school accessible for your child's physical needs, for example lifts, ramps, wide doors or accessible toilets?	
Were there clear signs, maps, colour-coded areas or other visuals that would help your child find their way around?	
How are pupils supported to move safely between lessons?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
What is the lunchtime arrangement like, including dining spaces, queues and supervision?	
What is the size of the school site, and would your child find the layout manageable?	
Anything else?	

SEN provision and support at school

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Are there other pupils with similar needs to your child? How does the school support them?	
What specialist SEN approaches does the school use?	
What expertise does the school already have in meeting children and young people's SEND, for example autism, ADHD, dyslexia, speech and language needs, hearing impairment or visual impairment?	
How does the schoolwork with support services and outside professionals to meet the needs of pupils with SEND?	
Are there professionals based at, or coming into, school, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, counsellors or educational psychologists?	
What additional SEN provision or support does the school already offer, for example literacy support, social skills groups, mentoring, nurture groups, homework clubs or pastoral support?	
Does the school have a buddy, mentoring or key adult system for pupils who need it?	
What training have school staff received on SEND?	
What teaching methods and strategies are used to support pupils' learning in class?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How does the school adapt work to support pupils within lessons?	
Does the school use small group or individual teaching?	
Will your child miss certain lessons for specific SEN interventions or support?	
How do teaching assistants or learning support assistants support pupils in lessons and around school?	
How do subject teachers, form tutors, pastoral staff and the SENCO work together?	
How does the school make reasonable adjustments your child may require?	
Will your child be assessed when they start at school?	
How will the school assess, plan, do and review your child's needs and progress?	
What would happen if your child were not making enough progress?	
Anything else?	

Moving into secondary school

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How will the secondary school get to know your child before they start?	
What transition support is offered for pupils with SEN?	
Will secondary school staff speak with your child's primary school before they start?	
Will there be extra visits, a summer school, a transition booklet, map, timetable or named adult for pupils who need this?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How will the school help pupils learn new routines, move between lessons and manage homework?	
How will your child know who to go to if they need help?	

School organisation

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
What time does school start and finish?	
How is the school day organised, including tutor time, lessons, breaks and lunch?	
How many pupils are there in each class or teaching group?	
How many pupils are there in the year group and in the school?	
How are pupils grouped for subjects?	
What subjects will your child study in Year 7?	
What homework is set and how is it recorded?	
Are there homework clubs, breakfast clubs, lunchtime clubs or after-school clubs?	
What supervision is there at lunchtime, breaktime and before or after school?	
How will the school include your child on school trips and activities?	
Anything else?	

Communication between staff

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How does the SENCO oversee your child's SEN support in school?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How will all staff be informed about your child's SEN, strengths, needs and support strategies?	
Will information be shared through a pupil profile, passport, support plan or other document?	
Who advises subject teachers on the best ways to support your child?	
How will subject teachers, form tutors, teaching assistants and pastoral staff feedback on your child's progress and needs?	
Anything else?	

Communication between staff and pupils

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Did staff explain things clearly to pupils during the visit?	
Were pupils shown how to ask for help?	
How does the school make sure pupils know who they can speak to if they are worried, stuck or need support?	
Were you and your child made to feel welcome?	
Anything else?	

Supporting social, emotional wellbeing and behaviour

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How does the school ensure that all pupils are welcome and differences are respected?	
How does the school adapt its behaviour policy to take a pupil's SEN into account?	
How is positive behaviour recognised?	
How do pastoral staff, the behaviour lead and the SENCO work together?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Are staff informed about possible triggers or early signs that a pupil may need support?	
What support plans are used if difficulties happen?	
How does the school manage bullying or friendship difficulties?	
What spaces or support are available if a pupil needs time out, quiet time or help to regulate?	
Anything else?	

Home-school communication

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How will the school communicate relevant information and encourage you and your child to communicate with them?	
Who is the best person for you to contact about your child's SEN, learning, wellbeing or behaviour?	
When can you speak to, or contact, the form tutor, SENCO, pastoral lead or other staff working with your child?	
How are parents and carers involved in their child's learning and SEN support?	
How will you be told if there are concerns about your child's progress, attendance, wellbeing or behaviour?	
Does the school hold parent coffee mornings, SEN workshops or information events?	
Anything else?	

After the visit

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Did you and your child feel welcome at the school?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Could your child see themselves being happy and supported in this school?	
Did you get answers to all your questions?	
If you still have questions, can you contact the school again or ask to speak to the SENCO?	
What did your child like most and least about the school?	
What information do you still need before deciding your preferences?	

Contact WIASS

If you want to talk to somebody about choosing a school and/or have any questions about this sheet, please contact WIASS. **Helpline: 020 8871 8065** (24-hour answering message). **Email: wiass@wandsworth.gov.uk**

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