



Choosing a Primary School for Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) without an Education, Health Care (EHC) Plan

This information sheet will give you:

- Basic information on the law when choosing a primary school.
- Information on how to apply for a primary school; and,
- Questions you may want to ask and points to consider when deciding on the primary school you would prefer your child to go to.

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

There are two ways to apply for primary school:

- Applying for a primary school place for the first time, when your child is moving from nursery to reception year.
- In-year transfer, when your child is already attending, or has a place at, a primary school.

Applying for a reception place

You will need to complete an application form through Wandsworth Pupil Services.

All mainstream primary schools, including maintained/state schools, academies and free schools, have their own admission criteria. You can find these in the [Choose a Wandsworth Primary School brochure](#)

The booklet also explains:

- How you can apply for a place.
- How to apply for a mainstream school in neighboring boroughs.
- The deadline for completing the application form.
- When you are told of the reception place offered to your child, usually 1 March of the year your child will be moving to reception.

Please note:

If you would like your child to attend the reception class at the school they are already attending for nursery, you will still need to apply for a reception class place at the school. The booklet provides more information about this.



In-year admissions

If you are new to the borough or country, or want your child to change school, you may need to complete an in-year admission form.

If you require a place in a Wandsworth primary school after the school year has begun, for example because you have moved into the borough from another borough or country, you will need to complete an in-year admission to a primary school application form.

Please note:

You should contact [Wandsworth Admissions Service](#), to find out about the availability of places in the primary schools in which you are interested. 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.

If your child already has a school place in a Wandsworth school

If your child already has a place in a Wandsworth school but you want them to transfer to a different Wandsworth school, you should discuss this with the Headteacher of their current school before making an application.

Please note:

If you decide to change the school, you should first find out if there are places available at other local schools by contacting the school or the [Wandsworth Admissions Service](#). You will also need to obtain an [In-year admissions and transfers form](#) from your child's current school. The form has a section which must be completed by the school.

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 is not toilet trained.

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, 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 are set up by sponsors from business, faith, or voluntary groups in partnership with the Department for Education. They receive money directly from Government but are not maintained by the LA.
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 will admit children with or without EHC plans.

Deciding on and visiting primary schools

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

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

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
The same school their sibling or siblings attend, for example brother or sister.	
Your local school.	

Before visiting schools

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Make a list of schools you want to know more about.	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Look at the school's admission criteria. Will your child 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 about how they support children with SEN.	
Read the school's disability, behaviour, bullying, administering medicines, and equal opportunities 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?	
Do you want someone else to visit with you, for example a relative or a friend?	
Do you want a guided tour of the school or a meeting with the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or Inclusion Manager?	
The SENCO is responsible for organising SEN provision for children in the school and consulting with parents about their children's SEN.	
You can contact the school to arrange a visit during a school open day or evening, or to make an appointment to visit.	
If the school has a specialist SEN resource base or unit, check if you will also be given a tour of this during the open morning or evening. If not, could you book a separate time to visit the base or unit?	

Your child

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Are there questions your child wants to ask about the schools?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
What are your child's strengths and how will the school build on these?	
What does your child enjoy at school and will the school offer this to them?	
What support will your child need in school?	
Could you ask everyone working with or advising about your child's education what kind of support they feel your child will need at primary school?	
If your child has had an assessment of their needs and a report is available, you may want to take this to share with the SENCO at the school you are visiting.	
What is the distance from your house to the school?	
Will you be able to walk to school or need to use public transport with your child?	
Will you need travel assistance from the council? For more information about travel assistance, please contact WIASS.	

The visit: class and school environment

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Were the school corridors and classrooms calm? How were children supported to move around the school?	
What were the acoustics, or sound quality, like? How noisy was the school or classes?	
Was there enough space in classrooms, including on or between tables, for small group activities or a quieter area?	
Were the school or classroom space and equipment clearly organised?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Was the school accessible for your child's physical needs, for example wheelchair access, lifts, wide doors, or ramps?	
Was there a place for movement breaks, specific small groups such as social skills, and movement at breaktimes?	
Was the main entrance, reception area and all exits secure?	
Were there visuals that would help your child, for example symbols, now and next boards or visual timetables?	
What was the size of the school? Were distances between areas and the layout easy to manage?	
Where did children have lunch or spend breaktime?	
What was the size of the hall or playground?	
Were there quiet areas and calming or sensory rooms?	
Anything else?	

SEN provision and support at school

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Were there other children who have similar needs to your child? How are the school supporting them?	
What specialist SEN approaches does the school use?	
What expertise does the school already have in meeting children's SEND, for example hearing impairment, visual impairment, autism, ADHD, or dyslexia?	
How does the schoolwork with support services, for example Wandsworth ASD Advisory Service or	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Literacy and Numeracy Support Service, to meet the needs of children with SEND?	
Are there other professionals based at, or coming into, school, such as a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, or educational psychologist? How do they work with the school?	
What additional SEN provision or support does the school already offer, for example social skills groups, nurture groups, learning mentors or play therapy?	
Does the school have a buddy or mentoring system?	
What training have school staff received on SEND?	
What teaching methods and strategies are used to help children's learning in class?	
How does the school differentiate the work to support children within class?	
Does the school use small group or individual teaching?	
Will your child miss certain lessons for specific SEN interventions or support?	
How do teaching or learning assistants support children in school and class?	
Are teaching or learning assistants subject-related, for example numeracy or literacy, or can they support specific children?	
Will other school staff be involved in supporting your child?	
How do class teachers and teaching assistants work together?	
How does the school make adjustments your child will require, for example movement breaks, assembly, PE or leaving five minutes before the end of a lesson for transition?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Will your child be assessed when they start at school?	
What assessments are used for children with SEN, for example reading, writing and numeracy?	
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 primary school

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How will the school get to know your child and prepare for their admission into reception class?	
Will your child have staggered entry, for example building up to full time over a couple of weeks?	
Will staff visit your child in their nursery class and/or at home?	

School organisation

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
What time does school start and finish?	
Is there a breakfast club?	
Are there any after-school clubs, for example homework, sports, dance, or art?	
How many children are there per class?	
How many children are there in the school?	
Do children go into the same playground at the same time?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Do children learn a foreign language or British Sign Language (BSL)?	
What supervision, or adult support, is there at lunchtime and breaktime?	
Can children have packed lunches, or does the school restrict the type of food children can bring in, for example nut-free food?	
How will the school include your child on school trips?	
Anything else?	

Communication between staff

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How does the SENCO oversee your child's SEN provision in school?	
How will all staff be informed about your child's SEN, outcomes, and provision, for example through SEN information from their nursery school/class, pupil profile/passport, or discussion with the SENCO?	
Who advises teaching staff on the best ways to teach your child?	
How will teaching staff, class teachers and teaching assistants feedback on your child's SEN progress and needs?	
Anything else?	

Communication between staff and children

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Were the children happy and/or interested in what they were doing?	
Were you and your child made to feel welcome?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How did staff and children engage with each other?	

Supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing and behaviour

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How does the school ensure that all children are welcome and differences are respected?	
How does the school adapt its discipline policy to take a child's SEN into account?	
How is positive behaviour praised?	
How do the behaviour lead and SENCO work together to support behaviour?	
Are all staff told about potential triggers for difficult behaviour?	
What plans are in place if behaviour happens?	
How does the school manage difficult behaviour?	
What space or room is available for a child to have time out or to calm down?	
Anything else?	

Home-school communication.

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How will the school communicate relevant information and encourage you to communicate with them?	
Who is the best person for you to communicate with about your child's SEN, learning and behaviour, for example the class teacher or SENCO?	
When can you talk to, or contact, the class teacher and other staff working with your child?	
How are parents involved in their child's learning?	



Questions and points to consider	Your notes
How will you be told if there are concerns about your child's progress?	
Does the school hold parent coffee mornings or workshops?	

After the visit

Questions and points to consider	Your notes
Did you feel welcome at the school?	
Would your child be happy in this school?	
Did you get answers to all your questions? If you still have questions, you can contact the school again.	

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: wiaass@wandsworth.gov.uk**

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