



Choosing a School for a child with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

One of the questions we are most frequently asked is "How do I know that I'm choosing the right school for my child?"

This question is usually closely followed by "Can you recommend a school?"

As an impartial service, we are not in a position to recommend specific schools; we don't know your child. However, what we can do, is talk to you about your child, what their Primary area of Need is and direct you to where you will find the relevant information to help you make an informed choice.

When making decisions about the suitability of a School, the LA must take account of your preference as a parent, in accordance with Section 9 of The Education Act 1996:

Pupils to be educated in accordance with parents' wishes.

"In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure."

Types of School and Education Providers

Mainstream schools are local, maintained primary and secondary schools or church-aided schools and include academies and free schools. In law, ALL children have a right to be educated in a mainstream school.

Resourced Provision: Frequently known as a 'base' some mainstream schools have special units attached to cater for children with particular types of need. This is based upon the four broad areas of need -

- Communication & Interaction
- Cognition and learning - Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) or Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) such as Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dyspraxia.
- Sensory & Physical
- Social, Emotional & Mental Health

These specialist settings are designed to meet the needs of children, who will benefit from opportunities to attend mainstream classes and have social contact with their peers in mainstream schools - 'the best of both worlds' if you like...

To achieve their educational outcomes, they also require regular, additional and/or specialist support in small groups. Your child will need an EHCP to be considered for a place in a Resourced Provision.

Maintained special schools are state-funded schools for children with more complex needs that cannot be met in mainstream. Your child will need an EHCP to be considered for a place.

Non-maintained special schools are special schools (local or outside of the Borough) are run privately or by charities, some of which are residential. A small number of children with an EHCP may go to one of these schools, where it has been established that no local school can meet their needs. In the case of this type of school, the onus is on the parents to prove that no other school can meet their child's needs.



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Section 41 schools are non-maintained, special schools that have opted to be bound by the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2015. If your child has an EHCP, you can express a preference for him/her to attend a Section 41 school.

A Non-maintained or Independent School is an independent school that is not dependent upon national or local government for financing its operation and is instead operated by tuition charges, gifts, and perhaps the investment yield of an endowment.

How do I find a school that will suit my child?

The Local Offer (Wirral) gives children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families information to help them find the right help and support in their area. This includes information about the different types of Schools and the areas of SEND that they cater for.

Hints and Tips

- Think about your child's needs and what matters to you most about a school.
- Try to keep an open mind until you have looked at all the possibilities and spoken to the professionals involved with your child.
- You may know someone who has had a bad experience in a particular School. That may not be because it is a bad School - not everywhere is for everyone!
- Collect information - The School Prospectus and latest OFSTED Report will be published on their website.
- Arrange to meet with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo).

Why is it important to express a preference for a school for a child an EHCP?

You have the right to express a preference for the school you wish your child to attend. This is known as a request to *consult* Schools.

The way in which the LA will do this is by sending a copy of your Child or YP's EHC Plan. The School will then provide a written feedback response and advise as to whether or not they feel they can meet needs.

If your preference is for a mainstream school (not a special school) for your child, the LA must agree, unless the school is: 'unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs of the child', or your child's attendance at the school 'would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others, or the efficient use of resources'.

If you do not know which school you prefer and are happy to await the outcome of the process, you should let the LA know that too, by contacting your child's EHCP Coordinator.