

Choosing a School

There are many factors to be taken into consideration in selecting a suitable school for your child. Amongst these may be the school's geographical location in relation to your home, the ease of access, the presence of siblings or friends, the ethos or religious affiliations of the school, its reputation and results. The admissions policy of the Local Education Authority also needs to be followed.

Parents of a child with Special Educational Needs will be particularly concerned that the school should be able to provide support for their child.

All schools have an obligation to identify and make provision for children with Special Educational Needs. This requirement is enshrined both in law and the National Curriculum and should be detailed in the school's S.E.N. Policy.

Each school should have one member of staff designated as S.E.N. Co-ordinator, (SENCo) who is likely to have specialist training in the subject, although amongst individual teachers, the knowledge and experience of children with S.E.N. may vary.

Each Local Authority should have some system of support for schools in assessing and meeting the needs of children with S.E.N.

Practical steps to be taken in choosing a school might include

- asking the Local Authority for information about their Admissions Policy and the location of schools in your area;
- asking other parents in your locality about their experience of the various schools in the neighbourhood;
- arranging to visit local schools with your child, to 'get a feel' of the school for yourselves;
- asking for a copy of the school's S.E.N. Policy, which should be considered carefully, in addition to the usual School Prospectus;
- questioning the Headteacher about the number of children on the S.E.N. Register and the likelihood of special help for your child;
- checking the school's OFSTED report for evidence on S.E.N. provision and support for individuals;
- comparing the school's profile and numbers of children on the S.E.N. Register with those of other similar schools;
- comparing the school's SATs results and Value Added scores with those of other similar schools, e.g. each LA publishes data on the Achievement of pupils with S.E.N. for every school and these are public documents.

No school is perfect, but they usually strive to do their best for the pupils in their care and are willing to work with parents in helping their children. If approached with respect, they are even willing to learn from parents about an unfamiliar condition like Selective Mutism.

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