

## Information when choosing a Secondary School when your child has Special Needs and/or disabilities.

The transition from primary to secondary school is important in the lives of children and their families, yet research has shown that transitions can be stressful for children, that continuity of curriculum between primary and secondary school may suffer during transition and that some vulnerable children need intervention prior to transition.

**If your child does not have an EHC Plan**, you should apply for your place in the usual way (see [www.bexley.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.bexley.gov.uk/admissions)).

Visit the Bexley 'Local Offer' website for a list of all the SEND education provisions in Bexley. Also read the 'My Guides' on SEN Support and EHC Plans if appropriate. Please speak to your SENCO, Head Teacher or contact the IASS (see Bexley's Local Offer for details) if you have any concerns.

**If your child has an EHC Plan**, secondary schools should be discussed at the Year 5 annual review (Transfer Review). You are entitled to attend and contribute to the discussion, as can any professionals who work with or support your child e.g. EHC Plan case Officer, Class Teacher, Health or Social Care Workers, Therapists and Educational Psychologist etc.

By December of Year 5 you should receive a proposed statement. You should also receive a list of state mainstream and special schools; however, this list will not include any independent or out of borough schools. You will need to do some research and we suggest making individual appointments with schools/SENCO's to ask questions and look around.

You will have an opportunity to decide on your preferred choice of school, which the LA will consider alongside any other evidence. You should receive a final statement by February of Year 6 naming the LA's final allocation of school. You can discuss the statement and the named school with the LA at any time.

If you are unhappy with any decisions they will try to resolve the issues. You also have the right to appeal the decision. You can contact Bexley IASS (Independent Advice and Support Service) if you need help with this.

### So that's the official process, what do I need to think about for?

Make a list of possible schools; consider transport, travel and other sibling's schools (if appropriate) but most importantly, the needs of your child. Personal recommendation is a good way to whittle down to a shortlist, so ask around for feedback. If you are a parent/carer member of Bexley Voice, you will be able to access our private Facebook group, where parents can give first-hand experience of a wide range of school options. You will need to do some research and we suggest making private appointments with schools/SENCO's to ask questions and look around.

When you have your shortlist, go to the open evenings/days. You can find out the dates on the schools websites. If possible take your child with you (or ask for an appointment when you can bring your child to see the school). You may feel it best

## Information when choosing a Secondary School when your child has Special Needs and/or disabilities.

to go alone for the first visit and go back to any schools you feel may be suitable with your child.

**Before you go;** take a moment to think about what you and your child have found helpful in the past; and what might become a problem at a new school.

- Don't be afraid to ask questions (bring a friend/advisor with you if it will help). If this is difficult at the open visiting sessions, make an appointment with the SENCo to go through your questions.
- You may find it helpful to make notes during the visit.
- Contact the school after the visit, if you have forget something.
- If a school does not meet all your requirements at the initial visit, don't forget that it may be possible to get some things changed, if you decide that this is the school that can best meet your child's needs.
- **Don't ignore your "gut reaction"** It is often harder to change attitudes than to make other adaptations, so a positive "can do" attitude goes a long way!

We've set out below a few things you might want to consider;

### Special Needs Provision

- Review the school's SEN Policy (this should be available on their website).
- Find out the name of the SENCO/Head of Learning Support.
- Find out the size of the SEN team (what's the ratio to the number of children?)
- Ask to meet the SENCO when visiting the school, or arrange a separate appointment.
- Ask the school what experience it has of supporting children with the same/similar needs to your child and how they worked with them?
- Ask how the SENCO communicates information to ensure all teachers teaching your child will know his/her needs?
- Ask about extra support provided by outside agencies i.e. Educational Psychology, Speech & Language and the SEN Support Team? How is this delivered, where and when?
- Ask what practical additional facilities or equipment can be made available to support SEND children?
- Fids out what the transition arrangements are for SEND children – Yr 6 Visits, virtual tours, attending summer clubs?

### Class Size and Environment – some questions to ask

- What is the average class size, particularly in Year 7.
- What is the ratio of staff to children?
- What additional support can be given from within the school's resources?
- How will the layout of the school meet your child's needs, ie: stairs/placement of toilets/routes to classrooms.

## **Information when choosing a Secondary School when your child has Special Needs and/or disabilities.**

- Is the school calm, both in the classrooms and around the school? Are there quiet places they can access at breaks etc to rest or calm down?
- Are the classrooms bright and interesting? This may or may not be helpful for your child depending on their needs.
- How do the school ensure all children are included in all school activities, including school journeys and trips?
- How does the school deal with bullying?

### **Curriculum – some questions to ask**

- Is there a separate SEN unit or are all children supported within the main school structure?
- Are children set by ability in curriculum subjects or are classes of mixed ability?
- If a provision, how often do the children access the main school?
- How is the curriculum differentiated for the different needs of the pupils?
- How are parents supported and encouraged to support their child with particular subjects?
- What do the school offer in terms of examinations/qualifications and Post 16 options?

### **Additional activities – some questions to ask**

- What lunchtime activities and clubs are available and are they inclusive?
- What After School Clubs/Sport Clubs are available, are they inclusive and is there a cost?
- What support is available to those with SEND at the Homework club?

### **Partnership with Parents – some questions to ask**

- Are pupils supported to ensure they write details in the Homework Diary/Contact Book?
- How often are formal Parent's Evenings held?
- How regularly can parents meet with the Senco/teaching staff to review and develop your child's education?
- Who would be your point of contact at the school if you needed to contact them to discuss your child? Can you have direct SEN department email/telephone contact without having to go via reception?