

This leaflet aims to help parents and carers of children who have a statement of special educational needs decide which school they would like the Local Authority to name in Part 4 of their child's statement.

Where can my child go to school?

Many children with statements of special educational needs are able to attend a mainstream school. It is the school's responsibility to make sure they understand how they can help your child to learn and provide appropriate support.

The SEN Code of Practice 2001 states that parents of children who have a statement may express a preference for the maintained school they wish their child to attend. This means a mainstream school or special school which is funded by the state.

In Northamptonshire, some schools have a designated special provision (DSP) which provides extra resources within a mainstream school. Pupils receive specialist help because each DSP caters for pupils with a particular type of special need.

How will I know which schools to consider?

A list of all maintained schools in your local area will be sent to you with your child's proposed statement. You can also ask for more information about the special schools and designated provisions in Northamptonshire.

You can ask to visit any school you think might be suitable for your child.

Non-maintained and independent schools

The local authority must also send you a list of non-maintained special schools and independent schools approved by the Secretary of State. It is important to remember that local authorities are expected to provide places for children in mainstream schools or within special provision within the authority wherever possible and have a duty to use resources effectively. If you ask the local authority to seek a place for your child at a non-maintained or independent school, they must consider your wishes carefully before they make a final decision. However, if there is a suitable state school, the local authority has no legal duty to spend public money on a place for your child at a non-maintained or special school.

How do I decide?

You will probably want to visit schools that you think might be suitable and may wish to take your child with you. You might find it helpful to consider the following points before you go:

- Do you want to visit the school when the children are in class?
- Would you like to meet the special needs co-ordinator?
- What information could you take that would help the school to understand your child's needs?
- Would you like to read some information about the school before you go? For example:
 - the school prospectus
 - the Special Educational Needs Policy
 - the Behaviour Policy
 - the latest OFSTED inspection report
 - the Equal Opportunities Policy.

What Questions should I ask?

You should try to find out as much information as possible about how the school would help your child and how they would involve you.

- Does the school have experience of helping children with similar difficulties to those of my child?
- How are children supervised at break time?
- How does the school make sure that all pupils are able to take part in school trips and other extra-curricular activities?
- If my child needs medication, who would be responsible for storing and administering it?
- How is bullying dealt with?
- How are pupils able to have their views heard?
- How will school arrange the support that my child needs?
- How does school make sure that all the staff, who will be working with my child, understand his or her special educational needs?
- How many children would be in my child's class or tutor group?
- How will I be involved in my child's education?
- How does the school ensure that there is good communication between home and school?

Some things to look out for:

- When you arrive are you made to feel welcome?
- Are the classrooms bright and interesting?
- Do the children seem happy and busy?
- Is pupils' work displayed attractively?
- Is everyone treated with respect?
- Does the school look well cared for and are you confident that it is a safe place for you child?
- Are the toilets accessible to your child?
- Would your child be able to access the whole school?
- What does your child think about the school?

Finally. It is important to keep an open mind and consider several possibilities whilst trying to decide on a school. Talk to people who know your child before making up your mind.

If you would like more help, ask any of the people currently working with your child. They won't be able to tell you which school to choose but they will be able to talk about the things that are likely to help you child to learn and be happy. Or, if it would help you to discuss matters with someone independent of the situation, contact SN-IP, below:-

 **SN-IP** www.snipnorthants.org

Special Needs - Informed Parents

Springfield, Cliftonville,
Northampton, NN1 5BE
Tel: 01604 636111

or Fairlawn Centre, Spring Gardens
Wellingborough, NN8 2AA
Tel: 01933 271673

Fax: 01604 630283

e-mail: contact@snipnorthants.org

This information can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.