

Guide for Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs Choosing a Nursery School

Sandwell Family Information Service • 0121 569 4914

Sandwell Family Information Service is operated by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. We offer free, impartial and confidential information to parents and carers on all aspects of childcare and on a wide range of family services available locally in Sandwell and also regional and national services.

Sandwell Family Information Service is committed to providing accessible information. Please tell us what you require and we will consider with you how to meet your needs.

How to Contact us

Call the Sandwell Family Information Service 0121 569 4914
Between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Thursday
and 8.30am and 4.30pm Friday.

We operate an answer machine service for out of office hours

On the web

www.sandwell.gov.uk/familyinfo
Email: family_information@sandwell.gov.uk

Make an appointment to visit us at:

Sandwell Family Information Service, Training and Development Centre,
Popes Lane, Oldbury, B69 4PJ

We are also out and about across Sandwell at community events and venues.
Look out for us in your local area.



Choosing A Nursery School : Guidance for Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs



Choosing a nursery for your child will involve thinking about your child's personality and their needs as well as your family's needs. As well as the usual questions you would ask about a nursery, there will be extra information you will want to find out about, to make sure that the setting you choose can meet your child's individual and special needs.

Finding out about schools in your area

What are the options for your child? You may want to consider local mainstream nurseries, mainstream nurseries that have experience in working with children that have similar needs to your child, voluntary or independent nurseries or a special school nursery. Most children with special educational needs will have their needs met at their local mainstream school, but some children need more specialist provision for some or all of their school life. Many ordinary mainstream schools are able to make provision for children with particular needs e.g. access for physically disabled pupils or special teaching for pupils with hearing or sight difficulties. Special schools usually take pupils with a particular type of special need.

To find what is available for your child, you can contact the Local Authority or the Family Information Service, or ask your Educational Psychologist or Pre-School Development Worker. The Local Authority Special Educational Needs Section will also be able to tell you about special schools in your area.



Visiting schools

You can arrange to visit any nurseries that you are considering, by contacting the Head Teacher or Teacher in charge of the Nursery. The Head Teacher may not be able to talk about your own child's needs, but they should be able to answer any general questions you may have.

What to look for when you visit

Before you visit take some time to think about what is important for your child and then you can look for this on your visit.

- How welcoming does the school feel? Are the Head Teacher and the staff friendly and welcoming?
- Do the children seem calm, safe and happy? Would my child be calm, safe and happy here?

- How do the staff respond to children and manage behaviour? Do they listen, talk and interact at the children's level? Would my child respond well to this type of approach?
- Is the environment clean, attractive and does it represent the children and their achievements?
- Is the nursery safe and secure? Would my child be safe here?
- Does the nursery seem well equipped and stimulating? Are there good play spaces indoors and outdoors? Are there facilities for physical play and education? Is there good use of Information Technology equipment to aid children's learning? Would this be right for my child?
- What specialist provision is there in the school? E.g. speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy? Is this what my child needs?
- What provision is there for children's medical and health needs? Are there adequate changing facilities and places for children to rest? Would this be needed for my child?



Questions to ask

You may want to ask questions to find out more. Some of the things you might want to ask about could include:

- How are children's special needs met in the classroom, for example support for language or physical skills? How much individual help do children get? How do nursery staff plan and deliver individual learning programmes and how do they monitor children's progress? You will need to think about the level of individual help and support that your child is likely to need and consider whether what this nursery can offer would be right for your child.
- What access is there to specialist support and advice e.g. Speech and Language Therapist, Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, Educational Psychologist, Specialist Teacher for Hearing or Visual Impairment? Ask yourself whether your child would get the type of specialist support and advice he or she needs.
- How does the nursery help children to learn the routine and understand what is happening? e.g. by using picture cues, having a regular daily routine? Ask yourself if this would be what your child needs to help them to settle in and get on in the nursery.
- How do children get to and from school? Special schools make transport arrangements for children.
- How are parents involved in the nursery? How does the school communicate with parents about how the child is getting on and day to day happenings that parents need to know about? This will be particularly important if you are not able to take and fetch your child each day, or if your child has a communication difficulty and some nurseries will use a home-school diary, for instance. Does the school welcome parents coming in to school? Are there parent's meetings and information sessions for parents?

- Are there any extended school facilities e.g. after school clubs and childcare?
- What training and experience do staff have in working with children with different special educational needs? Ask yourself if they have the right experience and training to work with your child and meet her/his needs or are they keen to learn?
- What arrangements are made for transition in to the nursery? If children need it, can there be a gradual transition and how are parents involved in this? Ask yourself what would be right for your child.
- Do children move from the nursery into the school? What arrangements are made for this?

If you want to find out more you can ask to see the schools Policy on Special Educational Needs.



Making Your Decision

After you have visited the nurseries you are considering, you will need some time to think about what you have seen and heard before making your decision. You will probably want to talk this through with other members of the family and friends. Professionals who are involved with your child will be happy to talk about what you have seen and what your child's needs are, but remember that they are not able to recommend a named school or tell you where they think is best.

A nursery may seem to provide a really good environment for learning, but it may not necessarily be right for your child. You will want to think about what is important for your child as an individual and things that are important to you as a family e.g. how important is it you that there are extended school facilities or opportunities for you to be involved in the school?

When you have made your decision you will need to contact the Head Teacher of the school you would like and let your Educational Psychologist know, so that they can inform the Local Authority and put arrangements in place for your child to start.

Further Information

You can find more information about choosing a school from websites such as www.direct.gov.uk
www.askmencap.info