

LEWISHAM PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN WITHOUT STATEMENTS

This information sheet had been produced to help you when choosing a secondary school for your child.

We know the move to secondary school can be a stressful time for any child and parent. But the anxiety may be higher for parents and children with Special Educational Needs and/or a disability. This information sheet will give you a few ideas on what you need to do to help this process go smoothly and hopefully go some way to reducing the anxiety.

Choosing a school

Choosing a secondary school for your child to attend can be a daunting and difficult decision. For parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disability the decision can be even more difficult as there are so many other things to consider.

Only you as parent can make the decision about which school you would like your child to attend but having the right information can really help in making that choice.

Start Early – Yr 5

It is important that you start gathering information and putting together a profile of your child's needs. This will help you to identify what are the most important factors for you and your child when choosing a secondary school. It will also form a basis for the information that you might want to discuss with staff when visiting schools. Speak to other professionals involved in your child's education about any support that your child currently receives and what support they think your child might need when they move to Secondary School.

Visiting schools

Most Secondary Schools will have Open Days/Evenings when you will have a chance to visit the school and find out what they can offer your child. These are normally held in September/October.

These Open Days are for general admissions and therefore you might not have the chance to discuss your own child or speak to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

After attending the Open Days it is important that you visits schools again and meet the SENCO, so that you can discuss your child's individual needs and whether or not the school would be suitable for your child. Make a checklist of all the things which would be important to you and your child. We have provided a checklist at the back of this information sheet. You should not let the experiences of other people you know influence your decision.

What worked for another child might not be suitable for your child and because another child had a bad experience does not mean that it will be the same for your child.

Schools cannot refuse your child admission because they have Special Needs.

When you visit schools be sure to take notes about what you see and write down anything that you think would benefit your child if attending that school. If you take notes you will have something to refer back to when you have visited all the schools of your choice.

Admission to Secondary School –Common Application Form

When your child goes into Year 6 you will receive an admissions booklet about Secondary Schools in Lewisham and a Common Application Form. You will have an opportunity to list 6 schools, in order of preference, that you would like your child to attend.

It is important to remember that although you can state a preference this does not necessarily mean that you will be allocated a place at the school of your choice and your child will still be subject to the normal admissions procedures for each school. Also please try to choose 6 different options. Any less limits your chances.

You can provide further information about your child at this stage that you feel would support an application to the schools of your choice, this can be done on the form you receive or you can attach further information if necessary. You can also submit any supporting evidence that you have from professionals involved in your child's education that you feel would be useful. Do not worry about including too much information – it is better that you include everything you feel is important rather than worry later on that you haven't included the relevant information.

Faith Schools

If you would like your child to attend a faith school you will need to complete an admissions form specifically for that school and also name the school on the LA admissions forms, this is because each faith school processes its own admissions to Year 7 but the LA will coordinate all of the admissions and let you know which school your child has been allocated a place at.

Academies

To gain a place at an Academy school you need to apply directly to the academy and to the authority via your preference form.

Filling in the Common Application Form – Supporting Evidence

There might be a social or medical reason why you want your child to attend a specific school and schools will often allocate places to children based on social or medical reasons. You should first check that admissions criteria for a specific school. If they do provide a number of places for children with social or medical reasons and you feel your child needs a place due to this you should complete the admissions form stating why you feel your child should be allocated a place and provide supporting evidence from professionals involved with your child.

What happens next?

Once the Local Authority has received all the admissions forms they will begin processing them based on the admissions criteria for each school.

The Local Authority will then write to you in March of the year your child is due to transfer to Secondary School informing you of the school your child has been allocated a place at.

Missed the deadline?

If your application is late (after the October deadline) but you have a good reason, please call the Admissions team in the Local Authority on 020 8314 8282 to let them know and get the form in as quickly as possible. No matter how late your form is it will always be considered but your chances of receiving your preferred schools are greatly reduced.

Always return your preference form.

Appeals procedure

If you are not happy about the school your child has been allocated you can appeal against this decision.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) produced a booklet called Primary and Secondary School Admissions and Appeals: A Guide for Parents which can be obtained from Parent Partnership Service or directly from the DfE. Tel: 0845 602 2260

Planning your child's transition to their Secondary School

If your child is allocated a place at the school of your choice it is now important that you start planning your child's transition to this school and how this will be managed. Many schools provide a day when all children who will be transferring to this school will have the opportunity to visit for the day and meet staff prior to them starting in September. For most children this is enough but for children with Special Educational Needs this might not be enough to prepare them for the changes. It is important that you speak to the SENCO at your child's primary school about what support your child needs to prepare them for the transfer to secondary school. You might also want to ask the SENCO from your child's primary school to arrange a meeting with the SENCO from the new secondary school to discuss your child's needs further and what support they are going to need when they transfer to secondary school. You should attend this meeting as you will have important information to share with the secondary school SENCO and you should also ask for any other relevant people to be invited.

Following the meeting you might want to prepare a plan of action or agreed action for your child's transfer to secondary school including details about support to be provided and opportunities for your child to visit his/her new school before the transfer in September.

Checklist

(Use this for ideas, or draw up your own)

- How is the SEN provision organised in the school?
- What range of needs does the school meet? Can the school offer the provision your child needs? What kind of help would your child receive?
- Is the school's SEN support an important part of the school? Are there other professionals based in the school? (Eg therapists, outreach services)
- How much support does the school get from other professionals? Eg how often is the school visited by the speech therapist, educational psychologist or autism outreach service?
- If relevant to your child, ask about medical/personal hygiene support
- Will your child miss certain parts of the curriculum because of their special needs? How flexible will the school be with this? What lessons do students miss to receive extra help?
- What teaching methods are used? How long are the lessons and are support materials provided? Are there long periods of dictation or copying?
- How are tasks adapted for those children who may have difficulty concentrating or writing for long periods? Are there individual learning programmes?
- How much homework is expected? What happens if my child has trouble recording the homework or understanding what is to be done?
- What contact does the secondary school have with the primary school?
- Will the secondary school SENCO attend the year 6 annual review?
- What learning support and classroom assistance would be made available to your child and how often? If your child has Learning Support Assistant, what arrangements will be made for your child if the LSA is not in school?
- What specialist facilities, equipment and resources does the school use for SEN?
- What arrangements are made for school exams, tests and SATs? Does the school offer GCSEs or another programme of external examinations? Does the school make use of concessions for exams such as extra time or providing a laptop or scribe if needed?
- How many children have special needs similar to your child's? How many teachers there offer specialist support? If there is a larger number it will suggest that there is support available and that your child's difficulties will not be misunderstood or looked down on by staff or other students.
- How do SEN staff liaise with subject teachers and year tutors about individual children? What about lunchtime staff?
- How would other students be helped to understand your child's individual needs?
- How does the school's discipline system adapt to take account of the specific needs and difficulties of children? Is positive behaviour praised?
- What behaviour management programmes are in operation? Is there a planned programme to help build self-esteem? If so, what is it?
- Are all staff briefed on potential triggers for outbursts by children? What plans are in place if an incident occurs in class?
- Are there quiet areas where children can go if they become stressed or anxious? Are there distraction-free work areas?

- Is there a buddy system or peer support where an older child helps a younger child within the school?
- Is there a learning mentor system in the school that could be used for your child if they need it? How does it work?
- What is the school's policy on bullying? How are children taught to deal with bullying and teasing? If a child has behaviour difficulties, how would they respond to this?
- How does the school link with parents? How will the school communicate with you about your child and his/her progress? Eg do parents take part in drawing up and implementing Individual Educational Plans, are parents invited to reviews, is there a parents group or coffee morning?
- What extra activities are offered at lunch time or after school? What are the play or recreational facilities like? What are the supervision arrangements?
- Are there any after school activities/trips/holidays and how would your child access these?
- Does the school assess all children on admission to see what level they are at? How do they assess them? What do they do once they have the results?
- Are there any extra-curricular activities linked to SEN such as signing classes for non-hearing impaired children? How do they work to help communication between children with hearing impairments and those without?
- Does the school have links with any other school? In the case of a special school, is there a possibility of partial or full inclusion/reintegration with a local mainstream school?
- What ICT provision is available?
- Is there a member of staff who is trained...(eg deal with epileptic seizures, help your child during PE etc?)
- Are all areas of the school accessible to my child? If not, could adaptations be made or would other arrangements be necessary?
- What provision is made for special diets?
- What arrangements are made for giving medicines and inhalers? What happens if your child is ill in school time?
- If your child will need transport to school, ask for information on this
- What induction programme does the school have in the summer term before they start secondary? Could extra visits be arranged for your child? What could the school do to ease transition?
- Other things to consider –
 - Do you feel welcome?
 - Do the children look comfortable?
 - If your child has any particular religious needs, would they be met?
 - Do the classrooms look like places where children can learn?
 - Does the school look under control?
 - Does the school celebrate different cultures/religions?
 - Are the displays current and interesting and do they seem to include students of all abilities?
 - Do the staff seem interested in you and your child?

Further Contacts

Lewisham Admissions Team Tel: 020 8314 8282

School Admissions Code 2010 and **School Admissions Appeals Code** are available from:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmissions/a00195/current-codes-and-regulations

Primary and Secondary School Admissions and Appeals: A Guide for Parents, can be obtained from Parent Partnership Service or directly from the DfE. Tel: 0845 602 2260

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE): www.ace-ed.org.uk

Advice line: 0808 800 5793.

Parent Partnership Service: Independent information, advice and support for parents of children with Special Educational Needs. Contact details below