



**Information Advice  
& Support Service**

# Checklist for visiting schools

**Are you looking at schools for your child?**

## Written information about schools

Schools must have a guide - the school prospectus - to give to interested parents. By law this must include information about the admission of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

## Other information you can ask for:

- Behaviour Policy - should mention
- bullying and include racial and sexual harassment.
- Anti-bullying Policy (either separately or as part of the Behaviour Policy)
- Home-school agreement.
- Inspectors' (OFSTED) reports written on the school.
- Special Educational Needs Policy.
- Accessibility plans.
- Sex Education Policy.

- Race Equality Policy.
- Performance (league) tables.
- Work schemes and syllabuses.
- Religious education syllabus.

[www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables](http://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables)

should provide profiles for all schools in England, eg tables of pupils' achievements at each individual school. You can ask the school for a printed copy of this information if it is not available on the website.

### Before you visit a school

It is usually best to make the first visit to a school without your child if possible. It can be very confusing for your child to be taken to visit several schools in turn. Once you have picked out two or three schools, you can take your child to visit those with you and see how they feel about each school. Try to visit during school hours so that you can see the school at work. It can be difficult to arrange to see staff at short notice, so have several dates and times to suggest and be prepared to wait two or three weeks before your visit can be arranged. Each school has a teacher who is responsible for arranging the support for children with special educational needs. This is the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator or SENCO. It may be helpful to discuss your child's needs with the SENCO when you visit the school, and you should ask to do this when you arrange the visit.

### About the school in general

Staff should have a positive attitude towards the children, be willing to make the most of children's strengths and support them with their difficulties. Parents should be treated as partners,

working together with school staff and valued for their contribution. School governors have some responsibility for how the school meets the children's needs. Is the school easy to get to from your home? Are all areas of the school accessible if your child has mobility difficulties eg. is a wheelchair user? How are parents involved in school life? How many children would be in your child's class? Do the school governors visit during the school day? Are parents aware of who the school governors are?

### How the school includes children with special educational needs. Things to look for on your visit

What is done to make sure that pupils and staff know that everyone has different needs? How will the school communicate with you about your child's progress? Do children feel safe in the school? How does the school deal with bullying? Do you feel welcome? Are the classrooms, corridors and outside areas clean and tidy? Are the children generally orderly and under control? Do the children look happy and interested in their work? Are displays interesting? Does the work displayed include examples of all abilities? Is there evidence that the school celebrates different cultures.