



## **Preparing for starting or moving school**

This leaflet has been put together to help you to prepare your child or young person with SEND as they begin their school life or as they move between phases of education or settings. It contains impartial information based on SEND legislation and Statutory Government Guidance on the duties on Local Authorities in supporting you and your child at these times as well as practical tips on things you may find helpful to adopt which are based on our experiences of working with families over the last 30 years. We do appreciate that there is no “one size fits all” so we hope you will find something you can take away that is appropriate for you.

The leaflet is separated into sections as outlined in the Index below:

<b>General information, advice and tips on moving school</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Preparing for starting school</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Preparing for moving onto secondary school</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Preparing for Post 16 education</b>	<b>Page 6</b>

## General information, advice and tips on moving school

- Schools across the UK have a legal duty to take positive steps to make sure that pupils with disabilities can participate in all aspects of school life. The SEND Code of Practice para 6.9 states that all schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 towards disabled children and young people. They **must** make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children, to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage. However, schools are not required to make reasonable adjustments where disadvantages may be caused by a physical feature but must have an accessibility strategy.
- All schools are required to publish their SEN policy on their website. You may wish to take a look to familiarise yourself with the school's approach to supporting pupils with SEND. The SEND Code of Practice para 6.2 states 'Every school is required to identify and address the SEN of the pupils they support. They must use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to meet child and young people's SEN'.
- If your child or young person has an education, health and care plan (EHCP) your local authority has a legal duty to amend the plan or statement by 15 February in the year of transition from primary to secondary school and by 31 March from Secondary school to post 16 provision, to include the name of their next school/setting
- Ensure staff receive any training needed before your child starts at school. This could be training listed in an EHCP.
- It's a good idea to share information early in the process. For example, if a child is moving from one school to another make sure their current school gives as much information about your child to the new school as soon as possible. This will help the new school plan for the child's start. Ensure the school have any professional reports that may help them in planning for your child's start at school and any adaptations that may need to be made. SEN Support should include planning and preparation for transition before a child moves into another setting or school. This can include a review of the SEN support being provided or the EHC plan. To support the transition, information should be shared by the current setting with the receiving setting or school. The current setting should agree with parents the information to be shared as part of this planning process.
- The current school could make a profile of the child to give to the new school to show needs and what adjustments have been made. Including any strategies that work and help the child.
- Become familiar with the school. To do this you might consider:
  - asking for another visit before your child starts if you are not invited for one.
  - asking for a meeting with the school SENCO so you can discuss your child's needs and the support they may require. If your child has an EHCP it would be a good chance to be able to ask questions about how the provision will be implemented.
  - asking for a tour for you and your child to see the school. If you are able to go to the school with your child it is a good opportunity to see how they react to the environment and to see

if you can notice any elements that they will enjoy and what parts they may find more challenging.

- Use visual supports – for example put the day they start school on the calendar, and you can count down to this date. You could print off pictures of the school routine, for example getting dressed in their uniform, the journey to school, dropping them off at the classroom. Get them used to these pictures and expectations.
- If your child needs any specialist equipment, make sure this is in place before your child starts.
- Remember that the Local Authority must have regard to you and your child's wishes and feelings throughout the transition process. This is an underlying principle of the Children and Families Act 2014.

## Preparing for starting school

- Ensure your child's setting has completed an up to date Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile for your child which can be sent to the school. This profile will include your child's progress in certain areas and will show your child's strengths and any areas where your child's progress is slower than expected. The SEND Code of Practice para 5.26 states that an EYFS profile is usually completed for children in the final term of the year which they turn five. It is particularly helpful for children with SEN and should inform plans for future learning and identify any additional needs support.
- If starting school, you could make a list of your child's needs, if you think any adaptations will be needed and any strategies that work well for your child.
- You may want to think about how you can prepare your child at home. Use stories to explain routines in school, for example lining up to go into school or for lunch time. The use of social stories for some children can work well. You could also ask the school if they could prepare a 'all about my school book' with pictures of your child's classroom, playground, hall and the teachers they will have at school whilst talking to them about this. Practice morning routine and journey before starting school.
- Keep in contact with the SENCO before your child starts and as they are transitioning into school. Suggest a home to school diary book. School can write notes to you regarding your child's learning behaviour and support. This will ensure communication is open between school and home.
- Throughout the transition process, young children need to feel secure and confident that their needs, wants, likes and dislikes will be understood. Create a child passport for your child. This can include a picture of your child and information about what they like and dislike. This can then be handed to the staff working with your child before they start to get to know your child.
- You could speak to the school about a phased start to school if you think this would benefit your child. For example, going part time for longer. This is something you can speak to the school about and remember that until your child turns 5, they do not legally have to be in school. However even if they are 5 the school must make reasonable adjustments to meet your child's needs. Equally your child has the right to full time education and the school should work with you to ensure that your child is able to access this.
- If your child has a group of friends in their early years setting that are going to the same school as your child is may be worth talking to the school about this to see if they can support your child being in the same class as some of these children to help support these friendships and to ease transition. 'Early years providers and schools should support children so that they are included in social groups and develop friendships. This is particularly important when children are transferring from one phase of education to another (for example from nursery to primary school)' DfE and DH (2015) SEN and disability code of practice: 0-25 years, para 8.6.

## Preparing for moving onto secondary school

In addition to the information in the general section at the start of this guide you might also wish to consider the following:

- Make social stories about moving around classrooms and making friends.
- Provide your child with a map of the school, colour code subject rooms and highlight rooms of importance i.e. lunch hall, toilets, tutor room. If you don't have one ask the school if they can provide you with one.
- Think about how you can make the timetable as easy as possible for your child to read. Speak to the school about any worries about your child being able to get to their different lessons and ensure adaptations are made if needed. Practice telling the time if this is a skill they may need.
- Make checklists for your child for each morning of the items they need to take to school that day based on their timetable.
- Organise peer support or speak to the school about a buddy system.
- Anxiety around starting a new school – introduce a worry book where your child can write down their worries and concerns. Teach them some relaxation methods. You could introduce a social story regarding feeling anxious about school and include the relaxation methods they could use when they feel this way.
- Speak to your child about any questions they have about starting school and make a list of these to ask when you visit the school or have a meeting with the SENCO.
- If your child has behavioural issues it is a good idea to look at the schools SEN policies on behaviour and explain to your child what is expected of them in the school. However, it is also important to speak to the school about these issues and that the school make allowances and adjustments where appropriate.
- Ensure you have a contact at the school who you can email directly or call with any queries or worries once your child has started at the school.

## Preparing for Post 16 Education

- Preparations for preparing for adulthood should start early and where a young person has an EHCP Local Authorities **must** ensure that the EHC plan review at Year 9, and every review thereafter, includes a focus on preparing for adulthood. Planning **must** be centred around the individual and explore the child and young person's aspirations and abilities, what they want to be able to do when they leave post-16 education or training and the support they need to achieve their ambition.
- Young People can legally leave school at the end of the school year in which they turn 16 (normally the end of year 11). However, all young people must be in some kind of education or training until the age of 18. This can be combined with paid or voluntary work.
- Consider all options for example staying at school, mainstream further educational colleges, specialist colleges, and other educational training options such as apprenticeships, traineeships, supported internships, individually tailored education, university and employment. You will be able to find details of these and the support available in your Local Authorities Local Offer pages.
- Young people entering post-16 education and training should be accessing provision which supports them to build on their achievements at school and which helps them progress towards adulthood'.
- Schools and colleges should work in partnership to provide opportunities such as taster courses, link programmes and mentoring which enable young people with SEN to familiarise themselves with the college environment and gain some experience of college life and study.
- Sen code of practice para 8.39 – 'Where young people have EHC plans, local authorities should consider the need to provide a full package of provision and support across education, health and care that covers five days a week, where that is appropriate to meet the young person's needs'. This could include things like volunteer work, work experience, life skills opportunities and training to enable them to develop and maintain friendships and support them to access facilities in the local community. This could also include health and care related activities.
- Look at the transport options available if transport will be needed and remember that free help to transport post 16 is not an automatic right.
- If your young person is anxious about the transition, there is a good app called Brain in Hand which is an autism support app and can help your young person with their self-confidence. Please find the link to more information here: <https://braininhand.co.uk/>.
- At age 16 your young person's views are taken into account more widely and they are able to express their preference of post-16 education or training. The SEND code of practice para 8.13 states 'As young people develop, and increasingly form their own views, they should be involved more and more closely in decisions about their own future.'

- Young people must be given access to independent support to make decisions and communicate their views, if they want this.
- If your son or daughter does not have the mental capacity to make a particular decision about their education, it is normally expected that you as their parent will do this on their behalf, except where a deputy has been appointed by the courts.
- Schools have a legal duty to provide impartial careers advice to all young people from at least Year 8 (13-14 years of age). This must be tailored to the needs of pupils with SEND. Schools should work with employers, housing agencies, disability organisations and arts and sports groups to help children understand what their options are as they get older.

**And moving on further:**

- If your child has an EHC plan this can continue beyond age 19 and in some cases up to age 25, although this is not automatic. The plan can continue as long as your son or daughter still has special educational needs, stays in some kind of education or training, and it is still necessary for the local authority to arrange the extra support they need in order to achieve the educational outcomes set out in their EHC plan.
- You can apply for an EHC up to any point before their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday if required.
- Think about if your young person is happy to live away from home, or would they prefer to study locally? If living away from home, are there good transport links? Think about whether transport would be affordable for a student wanting to visit home regularly. Also start travel training early.
- If your young person has an EHC plan this will automatically end if they progress to a level 4 course (degree level) at college or university, they leave education to take up paid employment or they leave education and no longer wish to return.
- Those doing a higher education course, whether at a university or at a college, can apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). This can be used to pay for extra support, equipment or travel costs. The student will need a letter from their GP that states when they were diagnosed and the impact that autism will have in their everyday life during their course. A simple letter from a GP stating their diagnosis or a diagnostic report is no longer acceptable.

Disclaimer: SEND and You has made all reasonable efforts to ensure that the information contained in this leaflet is accurate and up to date at the time of publication. It does not constitute legal advice and SEND and You cannot accept any responsibility for any loss or damage suffered as a consequence of any reliance placed upon it.