**Checklist for Visiting Schools**(With thanks to the Autism Education Trust – Parent’s guide to finding the right school: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources>)

Choosing the most appropriate school for your child can be a difficult process, especially when your child has Special Educational Needs. It is always a good idea to visit the schools you are considering, this information sheet will give you some ideas about the sort of questions you might want to ask and things to consider and look out for.

**Before you visit**

It might be a good idea to get hold of the following documents before your visit.

* **The school prospectus**

All schools have to produce a prospectus, you can usually access this on the school’s website or phone the school and ask them for a copy before your visit.

* **Any school policies you are interested in i.e. Special Educational Needs Policy, Behaviour Policy etc.**

Reading through school policies should give you an idea of what the school is like and will also help you think of any questions you might want to ask or anything you would like to find out more about.

* **The school’s latest OFSTED Report**

This can be found on the OFSTED website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).   
This will give you an overall picture of the school.

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**Things to consider**

* When would you like to visit? It is better to arrange a visit during school hours when children will be in the school.
* Will you be taking your child with you? It might be a good idea to arrange for someone to look after your child if possible. You could always arrange a further visit with your child at a later date.
* If possible, you may want to visit the school with someone else with whom you can discuss the visit later on, e.g. a friend or relative.
* Arrangements; is the school easy to get to?
* If possible, try to arrange to meet the staff who would be involved with your child, i.e. the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), teachers and teaching assistants.
* Do you want a guided tour of the school?
* Will you have the opportunity to talk to other parents who have children at the school?

**During the visit**

Some questions that you might want to ask during the visit:

* What is the general structure and timetable for the school day?
* How many children will be in your child’s class?
* How many members of staff would be in your child’s class?
* How does the school support children with Special Educational Needs?
* Does the school have experience of teaching children with similar Special Educational Needs to your child?
* How does the school feel about 1:1 support?
* Are all areas of the school accessible to your child? Are any adaptations required?
* How will your child be supported outside of lesson time? What are the arrangements for playtimes/breaks and lunchtimes?
* What extra activities does the school provide at lunchtime and after school?
* How does the school deal with difficult behaviour?
* How is bullying dealt with at school?
* How does the school help children to mix and make friends?
* How does the school involve parents in their children’s learning?
* How does the school communicate with parents?
* How would parents contact individual teachers or teaching assistants? When can parents talk to their child’s teacher?
* What opportunities are there for parents to get involved with the school and other parents?
* What will you have to provide for your child? For example, uniform, stationery, money for trips, events and extra activities etc.
* Is the school happy for you to telephone them with any subsequent questions or to make a second visit before you make your mind up?

**After the visit**

A picture containing text, clipart

Description automatically generatedOnce you have visited the school, it is important to take time to reflect on what you have seen and heard. It is a good idea to discuss your thoughts and feelings with someone else.

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**Things to consider..**

* Did you feel welcome at the school?
* Did the children seem happy, friendly and involved in their school work?
* Do you think that your child would be happy at the school?
* Did the school answer all your questions? If not, were they happy for you to get back in touch at a later date?
* Did the school seem appealing and well organised? e.g. was the children’s work on display in the corridors and reception?
* Was the outdoor space interesting and cared for? Did it look like somewhere that your child would enjoy spending time?

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|  | **School information** | **Parent’s comments** |
| **Will the school develop a**  **pupil profile for my child**  **stating their strengths,**  **interests and needs?** |  |  |
| **Will all school staff**  **who teach and support**  **my child be aware of**  **their needs?** |  |  |
| **How will the school**  **enable my child’s views**  **and preferences to be**  **taken into account?** |  |  |
| **Does the school use visual supports to make learning activities and the structure of the school day more**  **predictable for children**  **with additional needs?** |  |  |

**About your child**

**Working together with the school**

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|  | **School information** | **Parent’s comments** |
| **Does the school have a**  **named person responsible**  **for children with additional needs?** |  |  |
| **Does the school help**  **children develop**  **relationships with**  **other children?** |  |  |
| **Has the school got a**  **good system for sharing key information about children with additional needs with**  **other staff?** |  |  |
| **Does the school create**  **more opportunities for**  **parents to meet with the**  **staff, if requested?** |  |  |
| **Does the school have**  **staff with knowledge and skills in the education of**  **children with additional needs?** |  |  |

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|  | **School information** | **Parent’s comments** |
| **Does the school make**  **adjustments to how**  **lessons are taught for**  **children with additional needs?** |  |  |
| **Does the school promote**  **children’s social and**  **emotional well-being**  **as well as their**  **academic progress?** |  |  |
| **Does the school help**  **children with additional needs with**  **life skills? (eg cooking,**  **travel, self-care skills)** |  |  |
| **Has the school created**  **structured break and**  **lunch time activities for**  **children with additional needs?** |  |  |

**Supporting your child at school**

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|  | **School information** | **Parent’s comments** |
| **How does the school**  **assess sensory issues for children with additional needs?** |  |  |
| **Has the school made**  **adjustments to the sensory environment for children with additional needs?** |  |  |
| **Has the school got a safe**  **haven or quiet area for**  **children to spend time in,**  **where needed?** |  |  |
| **How will the school**  **prepare my child for**  **transition to another**  **activity, class or to their**  **next school?** |  |  |