

# Parents and carers' guide to finding a school for your child with visual or hearing impairment



**Westminster SEND Local Offer**



**Kensington and Chelsea SEND Local Offer**



**Hammersmith and Fulham SEND Local Offer**



## Introduction

This resource is for parents and carers of children with sensory loss transitioning from primary to secondary school.

This resource has **checklist templates** which you can use to support students with sensory loss through transition.

It also includes young people's experiences of transition and their views about how professionals can support them.



## How do I find a school which suits my child?

Educational provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities is delivered in a range of settings.

It could be provided in:

- a mainstream school
- a special school
- a school or a unit which specialises in hearing/visual impairment

The setting your child will attend is generally dependent on the complexity of their needs. You will find detailed information under **SEND Local Offer** (please see the cover of this leaflet, you can scan the QR code with your smartphone camera).

The evidence shows that it is always better for a child to remain in a **local community**. The out of borough highly specialist placements can only be appropriate in exceptional situations when there is absolute certainty and evidence that the needs of the child cannot be met locally.

Always include your child in making decision about his/her new school



## Top tips



### Look for information about the school

- You can go to **school's website**, look at the **school brochure/prospectus** and **SEN Information Report**.
- Check the information about schools/setting on SEN Local Offer.
- Talk to **family, friends, other parents and professionals** to gain a broader view from their experience or knowledge of the school.



### Visit the school

- You can attend **open days** or contact the school directly to arrange a visit during normal school hours (some schools might be able to accommodate it).
- You may want to visit the school with a friend, relative or professional who knows your child well.
- **Visit several schools** so that you can compare what support is available.



### Ask for help

- Your child's Teacher of Deaf (ToD) /Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) will be able to give you unbiased advice which is informative but does not provide any recommendation. They will also support with questions parents can ask schools (checklists) They can help staff at the setting to understand your child's needs.
- Speak to your Key worker.
- Contact Parents Participation Group for advice.



### Plan for transition early

- Secondary transfer discussion should be an integral part of Year 5 Annual Review. The student should attend review whenever possible. The Review should involve professionals supporting the young person e.g. advisory teachers, speech and language therapists or occupational therapists.

## Working in partnership

Working together with your child and relevant professionals is crucial in making sure the transition goes smoothly. Speak to your **SEN Key worker** and your child's **Teacher of Deaf (ToD) / Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVI)**.

Trust your instincts. You know your child best and if your observations and discussions with staff make you feel confident, then it is likely the school will be a good school for your child. You can use the checklist inside to help you decide how well a school might be able to meet your child's needs.



It is important to remain positive about the new school to alleviate your child's anxieties.



## School might ask your support to prepare a transition pack

Transition pack might include information about:

- **Transition workbook** - addresses differences between primary and secondary school, and new experiences with a step-by-step approach
- **Personal Profile/Pupil Passport** - written by pupil (with LSA/ parent/ teacher support), includes all the information new staff should know about the pupil

## What else can I do?

- Familiarise child with new uniform, school bag, planner etc.
- Practise the journey to school
- Visit the school with your child
- Establish links with a contact person at the school
- Share relevant info
- Help school to prepare (please see the list of questions)


## In the new school, your child might need a support with:

- Friendship groups
- The new environment - maps, locker, school bells, lunch areas, uniforms
- New expectations - break/ lunch times, transition between classes
- New vocabulary - 'tutor group', 'head of year', subject-specific vocabulary
- Key people - mentor, form tutor, SENCO, who/ how to ask for help
- Quiet area allocated area for stress management
- The timetable - how to use it
- Systems for organization - diary, checklists for materials and books
- Homework - expectations and explanations
- Using and looking after specialist equipment

## Questions you might want to ask the school during your visit:

Question	Notes	Action needed
Will my child have access to a specialist teacher? (ToD or QTVI)? How often?		
Who can be a trusted adult (a-go-to person) at the new school?		
How will other teachers know about my child needs?		
How can we ensure smooth transfer of necessary equipment (this might include radio aid system, speech-to-text-reporters/palantypists/specialist software/Braille keyboard etc.)?		
Does the school have any buddy system for children with sensory impairment?		
Do teachers have access to a specialist training (hearing/visual impairment awareness)?		
Will the school offer any support to raise awareness amongst students of communication difficulties that people with sensory loss may face in everyday life?		
How does the school communicate with the primary setting to ensure smooth transition?		
Does the school have a “chill out” space for an individual to withdraw when needed?		
Are there any other children with sensory loss who could be a role model?		
Does the school promote children’s social and emotional well-being as well as their academic progress?		

## Example of Pupil Passport (parental contribution)

<b>Name:</b>	<b>My ToD/QTVI is .....</b> (contact details)
	
<b>Level of deafness/visual impairment</b>	
<b>What this means in practice?</b>	
<b>(For deaf children) Communication</b>	
<b>Communication preferences</b> [Explain how your child prefers to communicate (e.g. speech, lip-reading, sign language, Makaton or a mixture of methods).]	
<b>Technology</b>	
[Explain what technology your child uses, if any (e.g. hearing aids, cochlear implants, Braille keyboard).] <b>Tips on dealing with technology</b> [Give tips on what staff needs to do to help your child use their technology safely and effectively. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• where spare batteries are kept, and who knows how to change them</li><li>• how important it is not to let hearing technology get wet</li><li>• where their radio aid is kept and how to use it</li><li>• how to check the equipment is working and if a battery needs replacing.]</li></ul>	
<b>What is challenging and what might help</b>	
[Give details of anything people can do that will make a positive difference to your child and help them to access all aspects of school life. Try to be as specific and detailed as possible. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does your child need to sit near the front of a group?</li><li>• Do they need regular breaks?</li><li>• Do they need support to join in games?</li><li>• Include your ToD/QTVI's Teaching Strategies, positioning advice and advice about adapting physical environment</li></ul>	
<b>Staying safe</b>	
[What do people need to know to keep your child safe? When appropriate, provide a risk assessment] For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does your child ever run away or wander off if not supervised? Will they hear a fire alarm or a shouted warning of danger?]</li><li>• Do they lose their balance easily and so fall over/get knocked over a lot?</li><li>• Do they need to be extra careful not to hit their head because of their implant/s?</li></ul>	
<b>What's important</b>	
[Give details of what people, things and activities are most important to your child. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does your child have any particular routines? Can they cope with changes to routine?</li><li>• Do they have a favourite object that they find comforting?</li><li>• Are there any people/places/things they're very interested in?</li></ul>	

### **Additional information**

Use this space to give information about your child that hasn't fitted in any of the other sections. For example, what's it like for your child on the days when their hearing technology fails? What's the best way to calm your child down if they get upset?

Perhaps your child might like to add something in here about themselves and/or how they feel about their deafness/visual impairment.]

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