

Moving on to Secondary School

- School transitions series



Please note: 'child' = 'child or young person'

All parents find deciding on the right secondary school for their child difficult. However, as a parent with a child who has SEND (Special Educational Needs and/or Disability) this can be especially challenging. The transition between primary and secondary school can often be more stressful for pupils with SEND, but being informed and prepared for the transition process can help.

As the person who knows your child best you will be aware of the best time to start to prepare your child for the move to secondary school. However, usually from the start of year 6 (Yr 6), teachers are preparing children in their class for the year ahead and will talk to them about the transition into secondary school.

Visiting prospective secondary schools

Think about the support your child receives at their primary school and how this helps them. You can ask the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at the secondary schools how they would be able to deliver the same or similar help. However, it is important for you to remember that provision is often delivered differently in secondary school due to having subject-specific tutors and support assistants.

Most secondary schools will hold an open evening for parents and children who are making decisions about schools, to look around and speak to teachers. Make a point of speaking to the SENCo if you can and if not, make a separate appointment to meet with them on another occasion.

Keep an open mind when visiting the schools and make sure to ask any questions you think might be key in your decision on whether to send your child there. Make a list of any questions you or your child may have and write down the answers you are given.

After your visit, consider: Do I have a clear idea of how this school puts in additional support for children with SEN and how will this fit with what my child needs? Compare what you have learned with information from other schools you are visiting.

For those without EHCPs

For year 6 children who do not have Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) you will need to decide on your secondary school preferences for your child and complete an online application form in the Autumn term of Yr6 (application deadline is 31st October). You will know which school your child will go to in the Spring term (March) of Yr6. See the county council website for more information on the [secondary admissions process](https://tinyurl.com/3bv6x6cuv) (Link: <https://tinyurl.com/3bv6x6cuv>). You have until the end of October to apply for your school preferences.

If there are any Local Authority Support Services currently involved (such as the Learning & Behaviour Advisory Team or the Autism & Social Communication Team), make sure you speak to your child's current school to ensure there is a plan in place to share this information with the new secondary school, once known.

For those with EHCPs

If your child has an EHCP, discussions about future schools will firstly take place at the year 5 annual review. This is a chance for you to talk about any worries that you or your child may have about secondary education.

You should complete the annual review (AR) paperwork before the meeting, ask the SENCO to send it if they have not. Check that the SENCO of the new school is invited to the Yr6 AR.

For the Annual Reviews, make sure your child's EHC plan accurately reflects your child's current needs and the provision to be made to meet them. Make your decision early about the school you prefer if you can, as this will allow plenty of time for plans to be made and to be put in place. Your child's EHCP will be amended by the 15th February of the year of transfer (i.e. year 6).

The SEN Team (SENAT) has special Transition Advisory Teachers to assist with planning for Yr6 to Yr7 transfers for pupils with EHCPs, so do speak to your SEND officer or school SENCo to find out how they can be involved.

Once a secondary school has been offered...

Your child's current school will share information about your child with the new school and bring any concerns you, your child or they have to their attention.

All children will have the chance to visit their new school during the summer term, and if your child needs more visits and support (known as enhanced transition), the schools can arrange for this to happen. If child has sensory difficulties, needs help with school routines, or support at a particular time, this should be discussed and arranged.

Schools can call on Local Authority specialist services or teams to give advice or provide resources to help with school transfer. **Schools can also:**

- answer any questions that you or your child might have.
- help your child to make a transition journal.
- explain about using a school planner/ homework diary.
- provide information on timetables and important members of staff (preferably before the end of the summer term in year 6).
- invite your child to summer school or holiday activities at the secondary school if they provide them.
- plan to make reasonable adjustments to enable your child to be fully included in school without disadvantage or discrimination.



What should I do to prepare my child during the summer holidays?

Use the time before the move to familiarise your child with the journey to school and any travel arrangements that have been made.

If your child has taken pictures or made maps during their visits to their new school, you can spend a little time together during the summer holiday looking at them and talking about them, so that they are more confident of where they need to go.

Make sure you are aware of the policies of the new school, for example the special needs policy, uniform policy or the behaviour policy.

Finally, it is naturally an anxious time but be positive! If your child sees that you are worried, they may worry too. Share any good experiences of your own time at secondary school and identify some positive and exciting things for them to look forward to in their new school.

Service Statement

The role of the SENDIAS service is to ensure all parents, children and young people have access to impartial information, advice and support so they can make informed decisions related to their situation. Any information that is shared with the service is in confidence unless permission has been obtained to share this with any individuals, services and agencies that may be able to help in the circumstances. For more detail, view our [policies and privacy notice](#) on our website.

How to contact us: Tel: 0330 222 8555 / Email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk or cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk (up to age 25) / Website: www.westsussexsendias.org

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