



If you would like more information on any of these materials, or support from a Parent Partner (Independent Parental Supporter), please contact:

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Starting school or moving on to another school

a guide for parent/carers of children with additional or special educational needs



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Starting school or moving up to another school

a guide for parent/carers of children with additional or special educational needs

This leaflet will help you to know what to expect and what you need to do when your child is starting school for the first time or moving on to another school.

Contact information for most of the people you may need is at the back of this leaflet.

Choosing the right school for your child

☺ How will I know which schools are available?

Plymouth City Council, the Local Education Authority (LEA) for Plymouth, or any local school, will be able to provide you with a booklet about the schools in Plymouth. The booklet, called "Starting School in Plymouth", contains information about how the admissions process works. It will also tell you the date when you need to get your application in for a place. The application form is in the booklet too. The City Council's Schools Admissions Team will be happy to explain things in more detail and answer any questions.

If you wish to consider schools in a neighbouring LEA, then you will need to ask that LEA for its own booklet as well.



☺ Can I look around the schools?

If you can, you should try to visit all the schools that you and your child are interested in as early as possible. This will give you plenty of time to make up your mind. Some schools will have open days, and all schools will be happy to make an appointment for you and your child to visit – just telephone the school office to arrange this, telling them that you would like to look around.



☺ Is there any information I can read before visiting a school?

All schools can give you a copy of:

- the school prospectus or brochure
- the most recent Governors' Annual Report to Parents
- their SEN policy
- other policies, such as their behaviour or bullying policy
- their home-school agreement
- the OFSTED Inspection report (also available at www.ofsted.gov.uk)

☺ Who should I speak to at the schools?

It is always best to try to arrange to meet the Head of the school and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) during your visit. You can then talk to them about your child's particular special educational needs (SEN).

☺ What if I don't know what to ask the schools?

Headteachers are used to talking to parents about children coming into their schools, but you will need to ask them about how they will help with your child's particular needs. There is a list to help you with this at the back of the leaflet. Plymouth Parent Partnership Service will be happy to help you make a list of questions for your particular child before visiting a school. We can also arrange for a Parent Partner to go along with you for support if you would find this helpful.

Starting school for the first time

See the section “Choosing the right school for your child”.

☺ Will the school know about my child’s special educational needs?

If your child has attended an Early Years setting (pre-school, playgroup etc) regularly and has been receiving help there for special educational needs, then this information will be passed on to your child’s new school before they start there. This will help the school to plan for your child’s arrival and to ensure that everything is in place.

The help provided at school may not be the same as they were receiving at pre-school, but it should still be appropriate to your child’s needs.

If your child has not been attending an Early Years setting, then you will need to take any reports and paperwork about your child with you to the school of your choice and tell the school why you think that your child has special educational needs. This will help the staff to plan for your child’s arrival.

☺ How will I know how my child is getting on, once at the school?

Once your child is attending school, you will be able to keep in regular touch with staff, so that you know how your child is progressing. If you have any concerns you can speak to your child’s teachers or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) at the school. You can also contact the Parent Partnership Service.

The school will invite you to take part in decisions about the kind of things that your child particularly needs help with and the targets that he/she will be aiming for. It is also very helpful to let staff know if you have any concerns about progress, or if anything is happening at home that could affect how your child may behave.

☺ Will the school have the money to pay for the extra help that my child needs?

Almost all children with SEN are educated in a local mainstream school. All schools have funds to provide the additional and different help which children with SEN need. A leaflet is available from Plymouth Parent Partnership Service or the Plymouth City Council’s education service about this.

☺ What if I think that my child needs to go to a special school?

For a very small number of children, who have very complex, long-term difficulties, a special school may be appropriate. Other professionals involved with your child, such as the Educational Psychologist, will be able to talk to you about this. If you think that this may be right for your child, you should contact the SEN Team at the LEA to discuss this. All children at special schools will have a Statement of Special Educational Need. If this may be appropriate for your child you will be able to visit those special schools that may be suitable.

☺ How will I know if my child can go to my preferred school?

If your child is starting secondary school, the City Council’s School Admission Team will write to you before your child is due to start the new school.

If your child is starting primary school, either the head teacher of the school or the City Council’s School Admission Team will write to you before your child is due to start at the new school. This will depend on which system the City Council puts in place for admissions in 2005/6.

If you have any queries about this, you can contact them.

There is also an appeals process, if your child does not get a place at the school you prefer.



Moving up from one school to another

Your child's current school will give you a copy of the Plymouth City Council booklet that gives details of all the appropriate schools in Plymouth. The school or City Council will send you this booklet called "The Next Step" in the September of your child's last year at the school.

See the section "Choosing the right school for your child".

☺ Will the school know about my child's special educational needs?

Once you have been notified that your child has a place at a school for the next September, your child's current school will send details of your child's special educational needs to the new school. This will help the school to plan for your child's arrival and to ensure that everything is in place.

☺ Will my child receive the same help at their next school?

The help provided at your child's next school may not be the same, but it should still be appropriate to your child's needs. As children get older they are expected to be more independent. This is part of growing up. All new pupils are given help to adjust to the way in which the new school works. If your child's special educational needs make this more difficult, then additional help will be given.

☺ How will I know how my child is getting on, once at the school?

Once your child is attending the school, you will be able to keep in regular touch with staff, so that you know how your child is progressing. If you have any concerns you can speak to your child's teachers or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator at the school. You can also contact the Parent Partnership Service.

The school will invite you to take part in decisions about the kind of things that your child particularly needs help with and the targets that he/she will be aiming for. It is also very helpful to let staff know if you have any concerns about progress, or if anything is happening at home that may affect how your child may behave.

Things to find out about when visiting a school

- How many children would be in my child's class/group?
- How many attend the school as a whole? And would there be times when all the children are together for lunch/play etc?
- What is the atmosphere like here, is it noisy or quiet? Are children running around everywhere? Is it a happy place?
- Do the school welcome children with difficulties like my child?
- How would my child be helped to settle in school and to make friends?
- What is the school's policy on special educational needs?
- What experience do staff have in dealing with children with similar problems?
- What kind of help will my child receive?
- Who is the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and how will they be involved with my child's education?
- What will the school do to make sure that all the staff know about my child's individual needs?
- How would my child be helped to communicate with adults at the school?
- How would my child be helped to communicate with the other children?
- How are the children encouraged to help each other?
- How would my child be helped and encouraged to take part in all activities?
- How will the school ensure that my child feels that he/she belongs and is involved?
- How does the school help children to feel good about themselves?
- How does the school deal with bullying?
- How does the school encourage parents to be involved and make them feel welcome?
- How will I be kept up to date with my child's progress and who will I talk to about this?
- How will I be contacted quickly if concerns arise?
- How does the school prepare children for the next stage in their education?