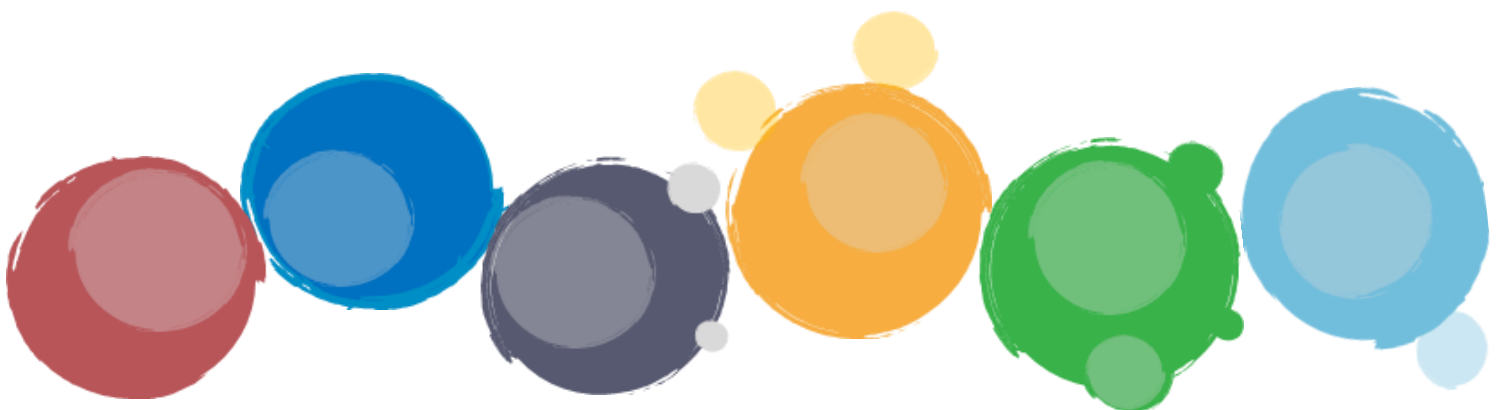




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H E R T F O R D S H I R E

Choosing a school for your child



Introduction

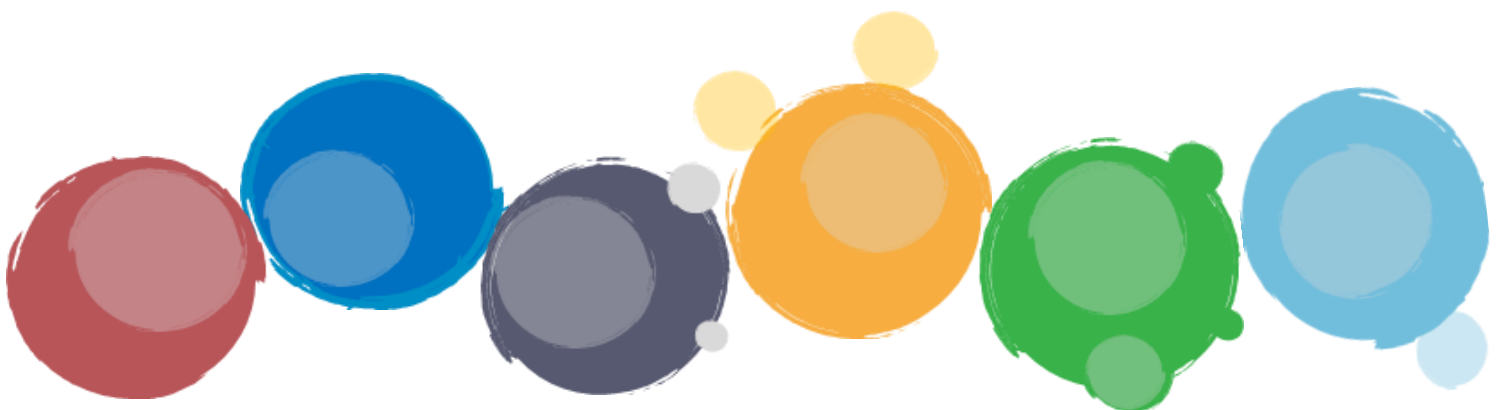
Choosing a school can be one of the biggest decisions you as a parent make, particularly when your child has SEN and/or disabilities (SEND). This year, this has been made an even more difficult decision with you as parents not being able to visit the schools. Many schools in Hertfordshire are hosting virtual tours of their schools to try and give parents making this decision an insight on what they have to offer.

SENDIASS are often asked 'which school would be best for my child'. We are unable to recommend schools, as every child is unique and therefore their experiences will be different.

There are a number of different types of school: mainstream and special, and those which are maintained by the local authority and those which are not. Most children with SEND will go to a local mainstream school.

The process of choosing a school will be different depending on whether your child has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or not.

You know your child better than anyone and are best placed to make this decision. Gathering information, discussing your thoughts with others and feeling well informed can help you feel better prepared to make the right decision for your child.



Types of School

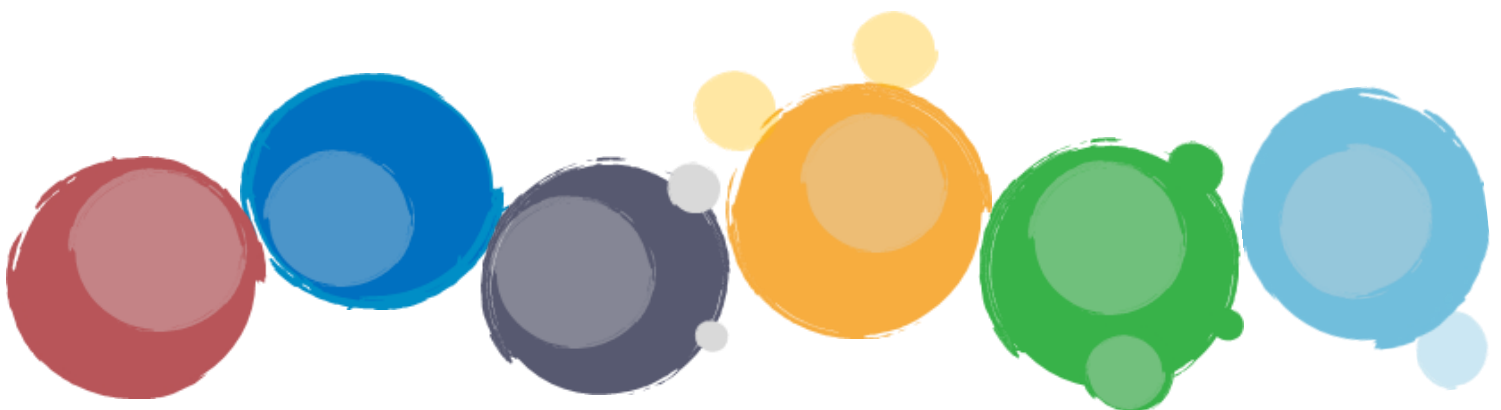
The types of settings available are:

- [Maintained schools](#) or nursery (which includes mainstream or special school)
- [Academy](#) (includes mainstream and special)
- [Sixth form and FE colleges](#)
- [Non-maintained special school](#)
- [Section 41 school](#)
- [Independent Schools](#) – A school that is neither financed or controlled by the government or local authorities.
- [Elective Home Education](#) – Some parents may choose to home educate their child. If you choose to electively home educate this means that the LA no longer has a legal duty to secure any special educational provision as specified in their EHC plan. The responsibility becomes that of the parent.

Read more about the '[types of schools and other settings](#)'

Read more about home schooling and '[education otherwise](#)'.

Read about [home schooling](#) on Hertfordshire's Local Offer webpages.



Mainstream Schools

A mainstream school is a maintained school or academy. All mainstream schools cater for children with and without additional needs. Schools must identify which children need extra help and must put that in place. They are required to use their *best endeavours* to ensure children are not disadvantaged by their disability or SEN.

Your child must not be denied a mainstream place on the basis of it being unsuitable, or that their needs or disabilities are too great or complex.

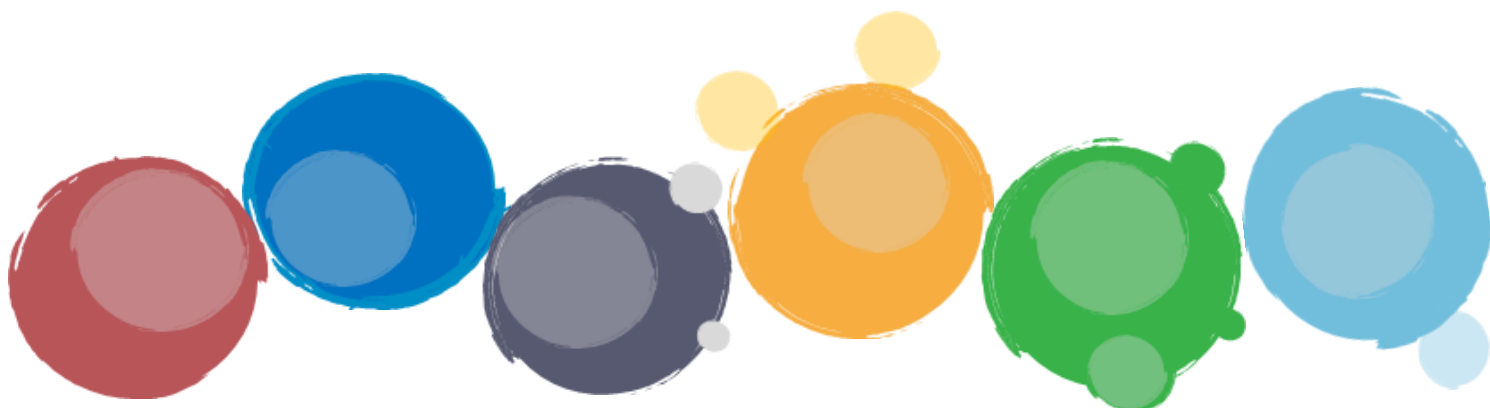
The SEND Code of Practice says (paragraph 1.27):

“The School Admissions Code of Practice requires children and young people with SEN to be treated fairly. Admissions authorities:

- **must** consider applications from parents of children who have SEN but do not have an EHC plan on the basis of the school’s published admissions criteria as part of normal admissions procedures
- **must not** refuse to admit a child who has SEN but does not have an EHC plan because they do not feel able to cater for those needs
- **must not** refuse to admit a child on the grounds that they do not have an EHC plan.”

How do I apply for a mainstream school place?

Read more about mainstream schools in your area and how to apply for a place on [Hertfordshire’s Admissions and Transport](#) webpages.



SEN Support in Mainstream Schools

The **SEND Code of Practice** states:

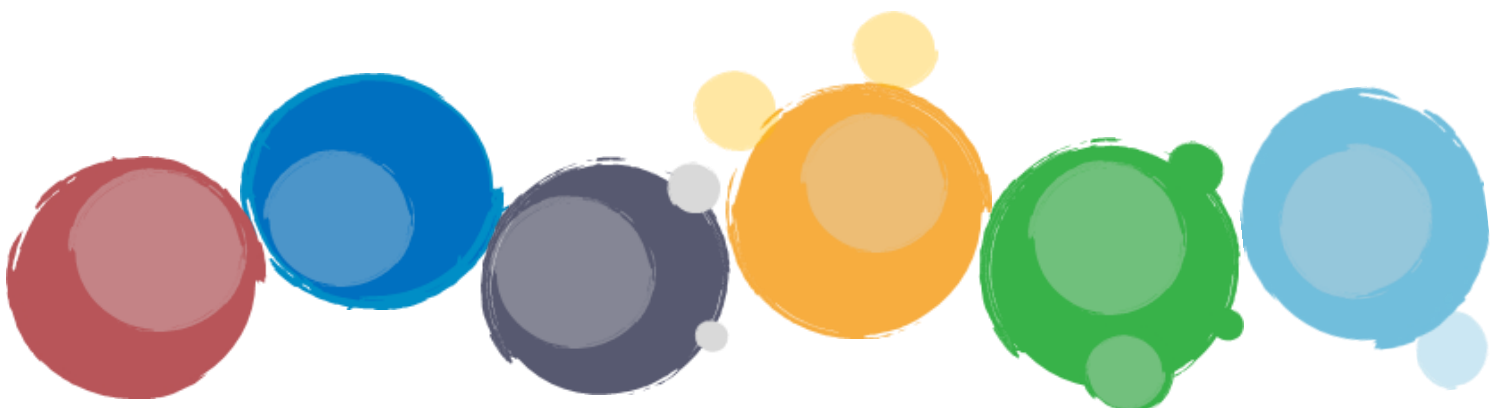
When a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place

(Paragraph 6.44)

The purpose of SEN support is to help children and young people achieve the or learning objectives set for the by the school in conjunction with parents and CYP themselves. This support should take place in a four-part cycle which is called the graduated approach.

You can find out more about SEN support by:

- Looking at the **SEN information report** on your setting's website
- Talking to a teacher or the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) at the school
- Looking at the [Hertfordshire Local Offer](#) website
- Reading **Chapter 6** of the [SEND Code of Practice](#)



Special Schools

An **Education Health and Care Plan is required for your child to attend a special school.** You will be able to request a particular school when you receive a draft EHC plan or an amendment Notice. This may be when you receive the EHC plan for the first time, the EHC plan is being amended after an annual review, or if the EHC plan is being amended at another time, for example a phased transfer.

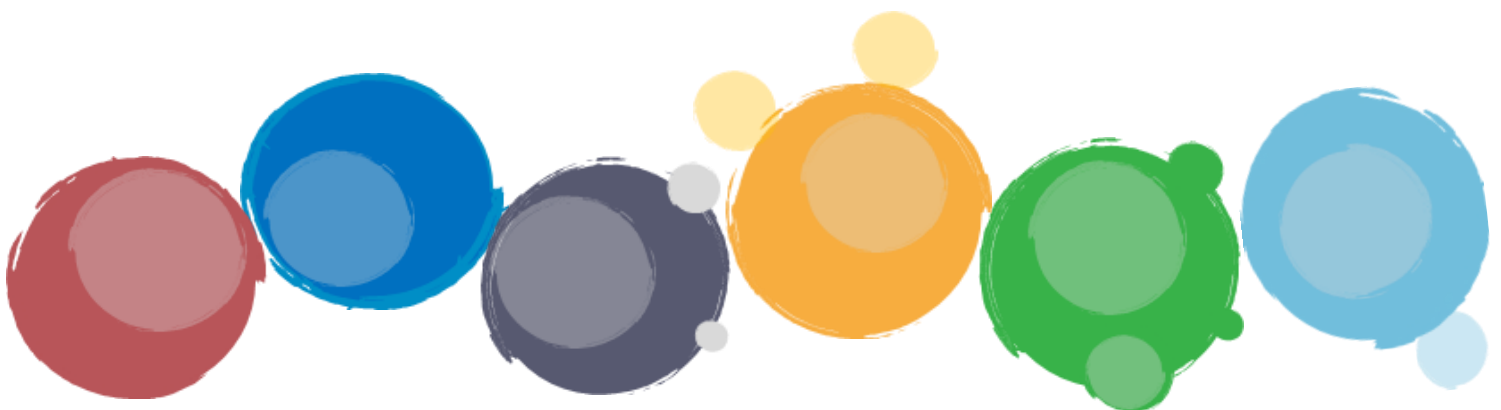
A special school **provides an education for children with a special educational needs or disability.** There are many different types, but essentially, they all educate children whose needs cannot be met within a mainstream setting.

Special schools have a higher staff ratio and smaller class sizes, due to the additional needs of the pupils and most teachers within a special school are specialists in their area.

Special Schools in Hertfordshire include:

- Learning Difficulties
- Severe Learning Difficulties
- Social Emotional and Mental Health
- Hearing Impairment
- Physical Impairment

Further information on requesting a special school in Hertfordshire can be found [here](#).



Top Tips

#1: Make a **list of all the things that are important to you and your child**. This will help you to ask the right questions.

#2: Look at the school's website for their **SEN Information SEN policy, governors' annual report on SEN, school prospectus, behaviour and anti-bullying policies**. You can also review the **accessibility plan** and **medical needs policy**

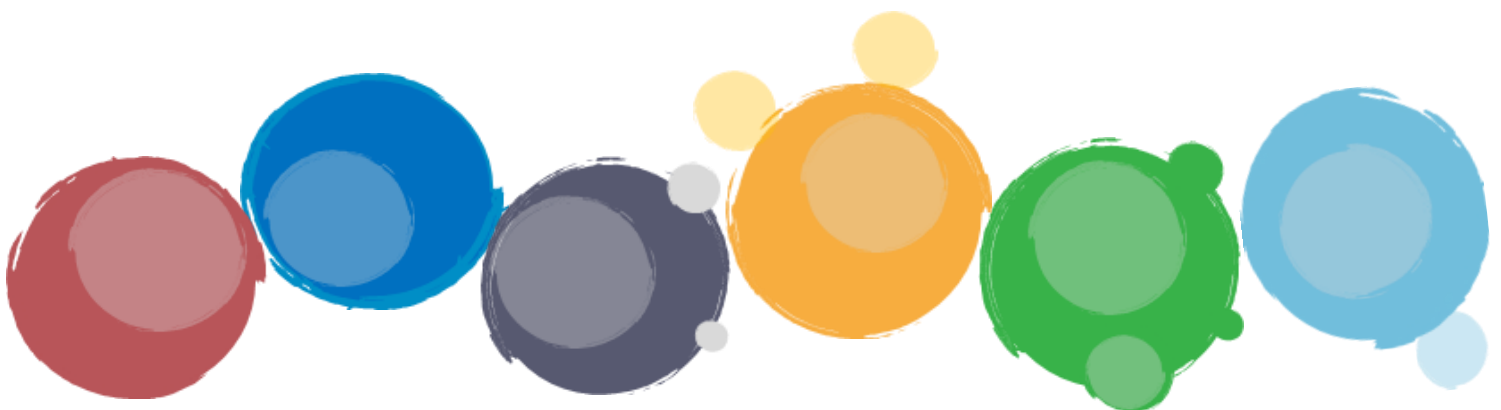
#3: Read the **OFSTED report** which are produced by a team of school inspectors to assess how a school is performing against a range of predetermined targets.

#4: Gather **up to date information about your child**, such as reports from professionals or a copy of their EHCP

#5: Try to look around the school to look at the environment and **talk to members of staff including the SENCo**

#6: **Visit at least two schools** so that you have something to compare and **ask questions** when visiting the school

#7: **Compare each school** you have chosen.



Questions you may wish to consider

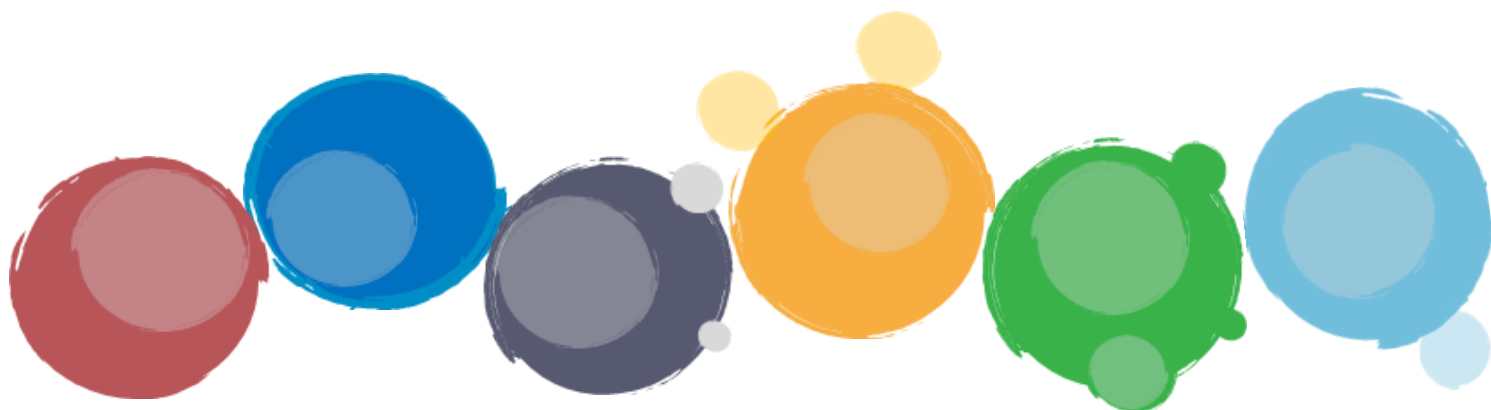
It's a good idea to take part in the virtual tours of potential schools for your child, so you can have a look at the environment. You may also get the opportunity to meet some of the staff.

Prepare any relevant information about your child that you may want to discuss at the tour or after it with a member of staff. This could be information such as your child's Individual learning plan, EHC plan or any specialist reports. If you are going to attend the virtual tour, it may not be possible to have an in-depth discussion, so you may want to make an appointment to speak with the school

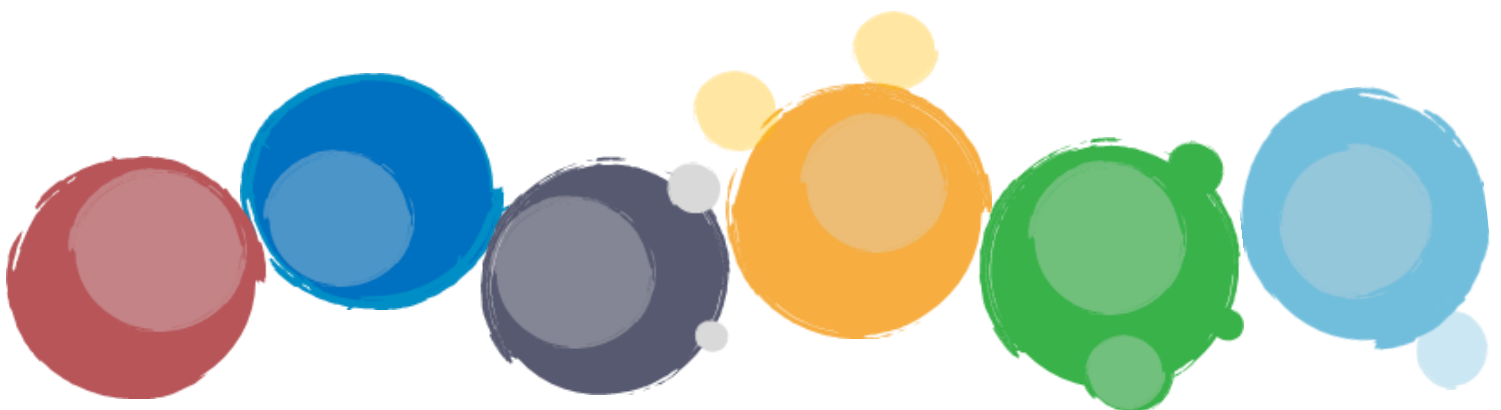
You can also request a separate discussion with the SENCO, where you can discuss your child's individual needs in more detail. During COVID a visit may not be possible, however schools are offering alternative methods such zoom calls.

Things you may want to think about asking:

- How SEN provision is organised in the school
- How teaching is organised, what are the class sizes, group and individual work
- How are teaching assistants used
- Whether the school has any experience of children with similar needs and how they were supported
- The support you could expect for your child—share previous examples or how you help your child at home



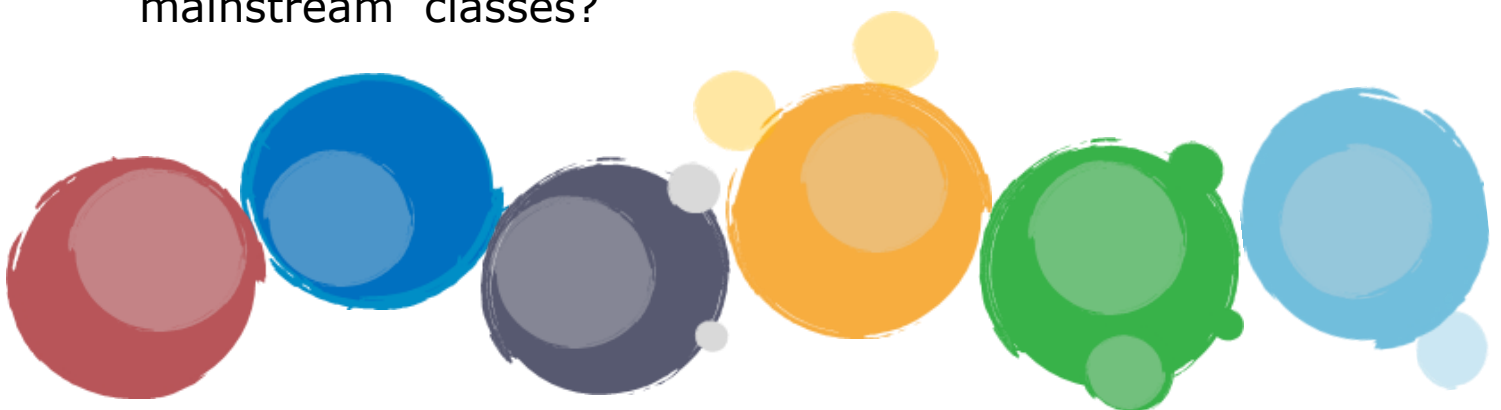
- How the school communicates feedback and progress to parents
- What processes are in place between teachers and the SENCo to track individual pupil progress
- If your child requires any external support such as therapies, how does the school manage this within their timetable?
- What does the transition into the school look like?
- What support is in place at breaktimes to support your child? How does the school encourage friendship between peers?
- How is behaviour managed at the school?



Questions you may wish to consider—Special Schools

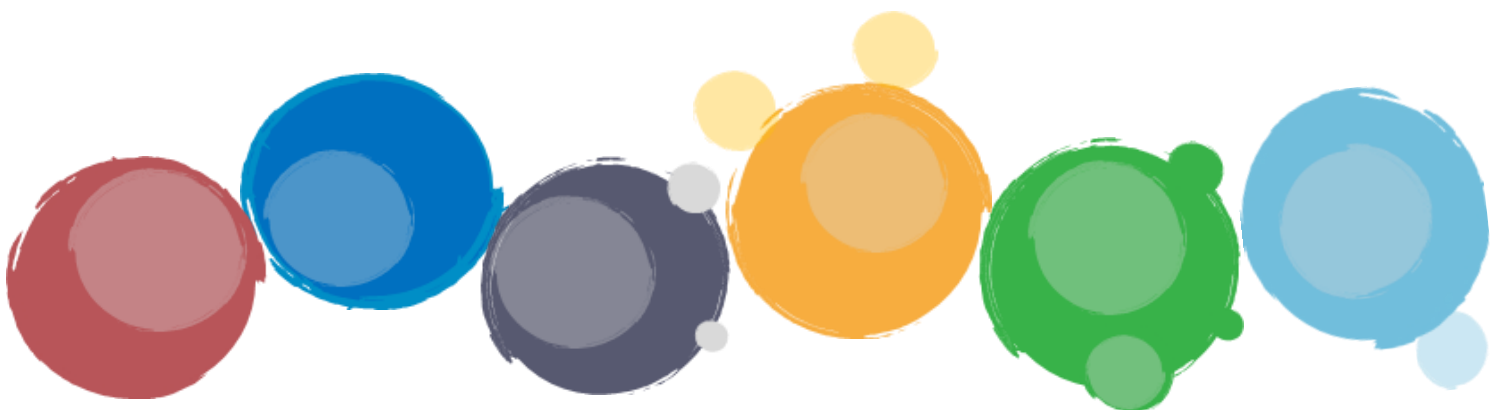
In addition to the previous questions, you may want to ask further questions if the setting you are looking at is a special school.

- Is there a suitable peer group for your child?
- Can older children gain national qualifications? If not, what other options do the school have?
- Will your child be able to attend work experience? How will this be supported?
- Therapies - are there therapists on site? Are therapies delivered on an individual or group basis? Is this by therapists or therapy assistants? How is the therapy integrated into the curriculum?
- Is there medical support on site – what will this look like for your child?
- What alternative communication methods are used, for example Makaton/PECS? Which staff are trained in these?
- Is assistive technology available for children who need it?
- Does the school have specialist facilities, such as a hydrotherapy pool or sensory room or any other relevant facility your child requires access to?
- Are there links with mainstream schools? If looking at a special unit, how much time would your child spend in mainstream classes?



Useful information & resources

- You can find further information about services and support in the local area on Hertfordshire's [Local Offer](#).
- [Admissions and Transport](#)
- [HPCI](#)
- [CONTACT](#)
- [IPSEA](#)



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information, advice and support please
contact us:***



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Monday - Thursday: 9:30am - 3pm

Friday: 9:30am - 2pm

