

Choosing the right secondary school for children with ADHD

Tips for helping your child to successfully transition from primary to secondary school

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Moving from primary to secondary school

Probably the greatest, and most important decision that a parent of a child with ADHD will take, is which secondary school can offer the level of understanding and continuity of structure for a successful primary school experience.



How to choose the right school for your child

Some of the issues that parents need to look at include the following:

1. The attitude of the Head and senior management team of the school with regards to ADHD. Is the school committed to inclusive practice? Have they been highlighted by the Local Education Authority as a lead school in this area?
2. Visit the Special Needs department and ask how the school deals with issues for students with ADHD e.g. organisational skills, differentiation of class work, homework and non-structured time.
3. What contact does the school have with external agencies?
4. Ask if there are other children with ADHD in the school.
5. What are the schools arrangements for supporting children with ADHD?
6. Are there teachers who are prepared to support children with ADHD with their organisational and other study skills, especially in Year Seven, but also beyond.
7. Does the school try and help traditional learners in the school to understand about ADHD, and why some of their peers may need more flexibility in management?
8. How will, and how often will, the school communicate with parents on learning and behaviour issues i.e. on a daily, weekly or monthly basis? Will this be by email, phone, text or face to face meetings?
9. Who does the parent contact if they have information they wish to pass on?
10. What arrangements are there if the child needs to take medication?
11. How does the school find out if a child has not taken medication as expected, and what do they do?

How do I find this information out?

1. Talk to your current primary school teacher or Head—they are a great source of information. Within your primary school there will also be a teacher, or the Head, who has a role called Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)—they will also give good advice.
2. Talk to friends and other parents who have had older siblings move to secondary school.
3. Look at the secondary school's website — they should include a prospectus and other information which will be useful.
4. All schools will have open evenings/days; make sure you attend and ask questions about anything you are unsure of.
5. Call or write to the Head, and or the SENCO at the secondary school and ask for a separate meeting so you can ask any questions that are unanswered.
6. Make sure you understand your Local Education Authority selection process; children with ADHD normally have high priority.
7. Be organised and make sure you start your research when your child is coming towards the end of the summer term in Year Five.