

Choosing a secondary school – some points to consider

Finding out as much as you can will help you to make an informed decision about which schools to apply to. Ask yourself what you - and your child - need from a school. Consider looking at the school's website which may give you a fuller picture of what the school is like.

What type of school will best suit your child's' needs?

- Think about your child's personality.
- Consider your family's needs
- Would you prefer a school which offers after-school care?
- What lunchtime and after school clubs are offered?
- All children are different, and you may find that the school with the best reputation is not necessarily the best choice for your child
- Talk to other parents about their experiences, especially those who already have children at secondary school.

Which school does your child prefer?

- Find out what matters to them. You might not agree, but it's important to talk about where they would like to go.
- Where are their friends going? Starting a new school can be daunting, and having one or two close friends there can help.

Does your child need special attention?

- If your child is very bright, shows particular patterns of behaviour or has special needs, it's important to find a school that will be able to give them the necessary support.

Does your child have specific interests?

- If they are keen on sport or a specific subject (like maths, languages, art or music) you may want to consider how the school can help to develop their interests.
- You might consider what languages/sports etc. are offered
- While all state schools follow the National Curriculum, some specialise in a particular subject.

What extended services does the school offer?

- Such as breakfast clubs or after-school activities.
- Check school prospectuses for information about extended services, and what they cost.

Visit the school

- Tour the school, meet staff and have a look at children's work.
- Ask yourself
 - how welcoming the school feels, and whether you are impressed by the children's work on display
 - is the school well equipped - find out where pupils do sport, and what computer facilities are available
 - how your child will get to school – think about safe routes, transport and the length of the journey (it's worth

- remembering that children can get tired on long journeys, and winter mornings and evenings can be dark and cold)
- find out what pastoral care the school can give
 - whether the school has a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) – the PTA may be able to give you more information about the school and advice on admissions

School performance data and Ofsted reports

- You might also like to read individual school prospectuses, achievement and attainment data and the latest school reports from Ofsted.

It's important to get your child's application form in on time. If you require any help completing the form please contact your primary school's parent support worker.

This information was put together with reference to *DirectGov* website - www.direct.gov.uk (accessed on 2 October 2009) and *Parentline Plus* website - www.parentlineplus.org.uk (accessed on 2 October 2009)