

# Choosing the right secondary school for children with ADHD

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



## Choosing the right secondary school

### What to consider

- Is the school committed to inclusive practice? Has it been highlighted by the Local Education Authority as a lead school in this area? The attitude of the Head and Senior Management Team of the school with regards to ADHD is also important to understanding how your child will be supported.
- Visiting the Special Educational Needs department and finding out how the school supports students with ADHD e.g. organisational skills, differentiation of class work, homework and non-structured time.
- Whether there are teachers experienced in supporting children with ADHD with their organisational and other study skills, especially in Year 7, but also beyond.

### Questions to ask

- What contact does the school have with external agencies?
- Are there other children with ADHD in the school?
- What are the school's arrangements for supporting children with ADHD?
- Does the school try to help traditional learners in the school to understand ADHD, and why some of their peers may need more flexibility?
- 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?
- Who does the parent contact if they have information they wish to pass on?
- What arrangements are there if the child needs to take medication?
- How does the school find out if the child has not taken medication as expected, and what do they do?

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## Where do I find this information out?

- Talk to your child's 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.
- Talk to friends or other parents who have had older siblings move to secondary school – what are their experiences of the school? Do they know of anyone whose child has ADHD or other additional needs that goes to that school?
- Look at the secondary school's website – they should include a prospectus and other information which will be useful.
- Review online policies on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, anti-bullying and behaviour to get a sense of the school's approaches.
- All schools will have open evenings/days – make sure you attend and ask questions about anything you are unsure of.

- Call or write to the Head, and/or the SENCO, at the secondary school to ask for a separate meeting so you can ask any questions that are unanswered. This will also give you the opportunity to discuss your child's specific needs.
- Make sure you understand your Local Education Authority's school selection process; children with ADHD normally have high priority.

**Be organised and make sure you start your research when your child is coming towards the end of the summer term in Year 5.**

\*This article has been adapted from an original resource by Fintan O'Regan (MA, PGCE, BSc, Hons), Behaviour and Management Consultant and former Headteacher of the Centre Academy School, Battersea, London.