

ASD OUTREACH SERVICE GUIDANCE FOR VISITING SCHOOLS (adapted from the National Autistic Society website)

A. BEFORE THE VISIT

Prepare for a school visit by deciding which features are crucial to you:

This could include:

- approachable staff, preferably with an understanding of autism
- knowledge of strategies that can be used and the understanding that they should be used flexibly and vary, depending on what is best for an individual autistic pupil
- a clear behaviour policy
- good communication among staff and with parents
- willingness to teach autism awareness and acceptance.

B. ON THE DAY OF THE VISIT

Some suggested tips when visiting a school:

- Try to speak to some of the class teachers and assistants as well as the person showing you round (usually the head teacher).
- Make sure you talk with the SENCo and ask questions about their school local offer and how they support children with an ASD in their school
- Ask if you can see pupils in the playground as well as during lessons. This way you can find out how involved the staff are in the children's play, what activities are available and whether there are any potential bullying spots.

- Ask about training they have had in supporting children with an ASD, and how recently they have had this, some schools may have undertaken an accreditation programme as well in supporting children with an ASD
- Ask about how the school use support services in their schools, such as the ASD Outreach service, Educational Psychology service, and CAMHS In reach services (if this is appropriate for your child)
- Ask to see an example of the paperwork they use, such as such as an example personal education plan.
- Think about taking your child with you to visit at least the school, once you have a good idea that you have found the right one for them. Pre-schoolers won't have been to a school before and it may be the first opportunity you get to see how they will cope. We realise that taking your child may be stressful and make evaluating the school difficult, but most schools will want to meet prospective pupils.
- Take someone with you, your partner or friend, so you can discuss with the after what you have seen and heard
- If you can, talk to other parents. Ask questions about their experience of talking with teachers and other staff and having their concerns addressed.

C. MAKE A SHORTLIST

Try and narrow your choice down to just two or three schools, where you can see your child being happy and you feel that you can communicate effectively with the school.

It's better to have more than one chosen school, in case your child is unable to get a place at their first choice. You should also try to be open-minded about the future, if the school doesn't suit your child you have the option of moving them at a later date. Although change can be difficult for autistic children, this does not necessarily mean that it should always be avoided as learning to handle change is a part of growing up.