

Education

Primary school

Starting school

Most children who have Down's syndrome attend their local mainstream primary school along with brothers and sisters and other children from their community.

Before your child starts, make sure they have plenty of opportunity to visit the new school and if possible meet their new teacher and support assistant. It can help to take some pictures of the school and the staff so you can talk about it during the holidays, perhaps making a book to share with your child. If you can get information about timetable and routines, build that in too.

Extra help in school

The vast majority of children who have Down's syndrome will need more help than is normally available from the school's existing resources. They will therefore require an Education, Health and Care Plan in England, or an Individual Development Plan in Wales, specifying the help they must have.

Children who have Down's syndrome often have a pattern of specific learning strengths and challenges. This is known as the 'learning profile'. We offer training about the learning profile and about how to educate children in early years and primary settings.

The school has a duty to adapt the curriculum as necessary for children who have additional needs. This could mean using more hands on visual teaching or providing adapted work within the same topic.

Your child's support in school will be overseen by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) or additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCo). Day to day help will generally be provided by a teaching assistant (TA), also sometimes called learning support assistant (LSA). Your child's class teacher is responsible for planning learning and in teaching all children within their class.

Children who have Down's syndrome will require speech and language therapy to help with their speech language and communication. Please visit the speech, language and communication area of our website to read about the role of the speech and language therapist for primary age children who have Down's syndrome.

Working with the school

It is vital for parents and school to work together to ensure that children who have Down's syndrome make the best possible progress. Some ways you might like to do this are:

- Schedule regular catch-up meetings with your child's class teacher
- Have a home school book to share information. This is important if your child does not have sufficiently developed language to tell you about what's going on at school. Make sure that the home school book is used to communicate what your child has done well.
- Use a conversation diary. This is very much about what is important to the child. It will have on each page a sentence in the first person about something the child has enjoyed that day with a picture. This can then prompt conversation at home about the child's day. In return you can share information with the school about what your child has enjoyed at the weekend.

There will be a formal review of your child's EHCP or IDP once a year and more frequent target setting throughout the year.

Thinking about secondary school

You should start thinking about the move to secondary school as soon as your child goes into year 5. This will give you the chance to visit schools and ask questions well before you have to make a decision. For some of the questions you may want to ask, please see our factsheet on secondary schools.

An increasing number of children who have Down's syndrome are moving on to mainstream secondary schools.

Further help and information

The Information Team at the DSA is happy to answer your education related queries.

Please call the helpline on 0333 1212 300 or email info@downs-syndrome.org.uk

We also offer several online training events that may be of interest. Visit our website for all the details or email training@downs-syndrome.org.uk

[SEN Magazine Issue 80 January/February 2016 Helping children with Down's syndrome to learn](#)

In this article, Gillian Bird provides a useful guide to help teachers understand the learning profile associated with Down's syndrome.

From other organisations

Find your local information, advice and support service for special educational needs and disability on the [Information, Advice and Support Services Network \(IASS\) network website](#).

This was previously called Parent Partnership.

Contact us

t. 0333 1212 300

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