



Some questions to think about when considering a school for your child

1. Do you feel comfortable and welcome in the school?
2. Does the staff appear interested in you and your child?
3. How much knowledge does the staff have about special educational needs?
4. How much knowledge or experience does the staff have with Down syndrome? If little or none, do they seem willing to learn?
5. What is the atmosphere of the school like?
6. What is the admissions policy of the school? (Is priority given for local pupils or siblings of existing pupils?)
7. What are the other policies of the school like? (Special needs policy, behaviour policy etc.?)
8. What provisions does the school make for pupils with special educational needs?
9. What size is the school? What is the pupil teacher ratio?
10. How many of each class level is there? Are there multi-level classes?
11. What are the transport arrangements?
12. How are parents involved in the life of the school? (Is there an association or committee, or can parents volunteer to help out on occasion?)
13. How does the school communicate with parents and give them feedback about their child? (Notes, diary, newsletter, reports, meetings, etc.)
14. Will my child be included in all aspects of school life, including tours and extra-curricular activities?
15. Are there any programmes at the school to support social Inclusion and development of all children (a buddy system? Friendship club? Social skills programme, etc.?)
16. Is there an active anti-bullying policy and strategy at the school?
17. What kind of facilities and resources does the school have? (hall, sports equipment, music resources, computers, play areas, etc.)
18. Does the school emphasise children's strengths, and celebrate small successes, diversity and Individual difference?
19. How much opportunity will your child have to work and interact with their typical peers?
20. How is learning support and resource teaching organised within the school? (Small group or individual withdrawal, or extra support within the regular classroom?)

21. If the school you are considering is a special school – where will your child meet and engage with their typically developing peers?
22. If the school you are considering is a mainstream school - where will your child meet and engage with other children with Down syndrome and other special needs?
23. If the school is a special school – exactly what ‘special’ resources, do they have to offer?
24. If the school is a mainstream school – how much will give your child be actually and genuinely included?

Note: It's not a case that all schools will be able to or need to meet all these criteria, but finding out the answers to some or all of these questions will give you a better sense of the school, and help you to make an informed decision.