



Applying for a Secondary School Place 2021. Advice for Social Workers

Choosing a secondary school can be a daunting process for any family. For our children in care, choosing the right school is essential to promoting their academic progress and social/emotional well-being.

Identifying Potential Schools

If a meeting to discuss secondary school options has not already taken place, a meeting with the child, social worker, carer and parents (if appropriate) should be held to discuss options. This could coincide with the autumn term PEP. Do remember that the best school for a child in care is not necessarily their local school. We advise identifying at least three schools taking into account:

- The child's voice. Views from the child about what they would like from secondary school and the reasons for these views should be gathered. This does not mean the child should get to choose their own school (in fact they should not, it is the parent who chooses where to apply and they should exercise critical judgement!), but the child's views should be given due consideration.
- The school's [Ofsted rating](#). This should be either good or outstanding. Schools' ratings did not change during covid and so it is also important to look at any monitoring visit reports because they may highlight significant safeguarding issues that would ordinarily mean a school would be placed in special measures, for example. Pay particular attention to any comments on vulnerable learners as these will be applicable to our children in care.
- The experience of the Virtual School when working with the school.

Visiting Potential Schools

If possible, the child, social worker, carers and parents (as appropriate) should visit all identified schools to get a 'feel' for them. Many schools will be holding in-person tours this year but a virtual tour may be offered.

It is important to speak to as many staff as possible, not just those with an overt inclusion role, as this can indicate to you the actual culture of the school that the child is likely to experience. Ask about:

- Extra-curricular activities
- Pastoral support
- Interventions to promote academic progress

Virtual School Support

Statutory Guidance is clear that the Virtual School should be consulted to avoid choosing a school that is unlikely to meet the child's needs. We can be contacted via virtualschool@northnorthants.gov.uk or 01604 365 912.

In partnership with



West
Northamptonshire
Council



North
Northamptonshire
Council

Where do I go to apply?

Applications need to be submitted to the LA where the child is ordinarily resident. So:

If the child is ordinarily resident in North Northants (either lives in North Northants, or is on an ICO to North Northants), apply to [North Northants](#).

If the child is ordinarily resident in West Northants (either lives in West Northants, or is on an ICO to West Northants), apply to [West Northants](#).

If the child is ordinarily resident in a different county, you will need to contact the School Admissions team of that authority for application details.

What if my Year 6 child has an EHC plan?

There is a separate process for children with EHC plans. You should not apply for a secondary school place through the school admissions round. The LA that maintains the plan will write to you in October asking for the parents' school preference. A prompt response is necessary, particularly if the child requires a special school, where places are very limited. If the LA indicates it will not grant the parental preference, please contact the Virtual School for advice.

Important Dates

The deadline for secondary school applications is **Sunday 31st October at 5:00pm**. Councils will send offers of school places on 1st March the next year.

NB *Any applications made after 31st October at 5pm will be treated as a late application. The child will therefore only be allocated a school place after all other children in the county, including after any appeals have been heard.*