

Starting school checklist

Source: National Deaf Children's Society

Information to collect before visiting a school

This part of the checklist focuses on the information you may want to gather before visiting any school. You can contact the school and ask them to send you their information pack or school prospectus. You may be able to download this information from the school website.

Also ask if the school has an open day that you can attend. This is useful for a first visit. It is also worth making a second visit during a normal school day, so check with the school what kind of day you will be visiting on.

General information		
	Asked for	Received
Information pack/ Prospectus		
Annual report to parents		
Religious policy		
Behaviour policy		
Bullying policy		
Communication policy (This will probably only be available from schools with units or specialist schools for deaf children)		
Name of Principal: Name of school: Address: Phone: Email: Website:		
Name of the school's special educational needs co-ordinator		

If you need an interpreter for your visit to the school, discuss this with them before you go so that the school can make arrangements.

Information to collect during a school visit

General information

Number of children at the school	
Number of children in the class your child will join	
Number of children identified as having special educational needs	
Are there other deaf children in the school?	
Number of support staff and the qualifications they have.	
What deaf awareness training have staff received?	
What is the cost of a place in the mainstream school for my child?	
How often are parent days or evenings?	
How often do parents receive written reports?	
How does the school communicate with parents on day-to-day matters?	
What after-school care is available?	
What sports are on offer?	
What support is offered at sports events and at after-school care?	
Does the school have outings?	
What support will be given to my child on outings?	
How will my child be included in all school activities, including any after-school activities?	

Facilities and environment

Have any of the classrooms been adapted for deaf children?	
Are there any carpets and curtains in classrooms?	
Are any of the ceilings very high?	
Is there treatment to the surfaces of walls and ceilings to reduce echoing?	
Is there good lighting?	
How are deaf children included in assemblies and how are classes arranged for assemblies?	
Is there a loop system or sound field system for assemblies and are speakers advised on how to use FM systems?	
Does the school have any specialisations, such as technology or languages?	

Technology

How often will hearing aids, cochlear implants processors and FM systems be checked?	
Who will be responsible for checking hearing aids, cochlear implants and FM systems?	
What training do staff receive on available technology?	

Are the following available?

	Tick if 'Yes'	In which areas of the school?
Digital television and captions		
Interactive whiteboard		

Soundfield system		
Fire alarm with a visual warning, such as flashing lights?		

Social and emotional support

Will other students have any deaf awareness training?	
Do staff supervising at playtime have any sign language qualifications or deaf awareness skills?	
How is bullying monitored on a day-to-day basis?	
What arrangements can be made for my child to meet confidentially with a mentor or counsellor?	

Full integration in a mainstream school

What training do mainstream staff receive on the needs of deaf children?	
How often do mainstream staff receive training?	
What training will mainstream staff receive on the specific needs of my child?	
Have mainstreamed staff received any deaf awareness training?	
If mainstream staff have received deaf awareness training, when will it be updated, how often, and who gives the training?	
What level of support will my child receive when they are mainstream classes and who will provide this support?	

Are students asked how they would like to be supported or is the support the same for every deaf student?	
Are there other deaf students or adults in the school? If not, will my child meet deaf pupils or adults regularly?	
What results have previous deaf students attained ?	
Where have past deaf students moved on to (TAFE, university or work)?	

Units and specialist schools for deaf children

What communication approach does the school or unit follow?	
My child's home language is not English. What can the school do to provide full information?	
How many deaf children is the school or unit funded for?	
How many deaf children are there at present?	
How many teachers are there in the unit?	
Are all the teachers qualified teachers of the deaf?	
How many support assistants are there?	
What percentage of time will be spent in the unit and how is this decided?	
What percentage of time will be spent in mainstream classes and how is it decided?	
What size group will my child be in when in the unit?	
What size group will my child be in when in the mainstream class?	

Is training in sign language offered to parents and, if so, how often?	
What level of deaf awareness training do teachers and support staff have?	
For parents needing interpreters. Who would interpret for parents' evenings and the annual review of my child's IEP and who is responsible for organising this?	
What is the cost of a place in the unit or specialist school placement?	

Notes

Advantages of school
Disadvantages of school
What we liked and didn't like about the school and staff