

# CHOOSING A PRIMARY SCHOOL

Choosing a primary school for your child is an exciting but sometimes daunting experience for parents.



You may be thinking  
where do we start?

What questions do we  
need to ask?

How do we know it is  
the right school?

**We recognise this at Adoption Tees Valley and have therefore produced this guide/checklist to try and help parents with the answer to some of these questions.**

**If you require further information, please contact Leanne Longstaff, Education Support Worker at Adoption Tees Valley.**

## When should my child start Primary School?

Date of birth	Starting school	When to apply?
01 Sept 2016 – 31 Aug 2017	Sept 2021	From 01 Sept 2020 – 15 Jan 2021
01 Sept 2017 – 31 Aug 2018	Sept 2022	From 01 Sept 2021 – 15 Jan 2022
01 Sept 2018 – 31 Aug 2019	Sept 2023	From 01 Sept 2022 – 15 Jan 2023
01 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020	Sept 2024	From 01 Sept 2023 – 15 Jan 2024

The above table is a guide, please check the exact dates with the Local Authority in which the school is located or the school itself.

How will I know which schools to apply for?

One of the best ways to see if a school would suit your child is to visit it. Ideally during the school day so you can see how the school operates on a daily basis and get a feel for the atmosphere of the school.

You may also find the OFSTED report useful however this will just provide you with a snapshot of the school and some of its strengths and weaknesses, but it may be several years out of date. Therefore read the report but don't just necessarily base your decision on this. What is classed as an Outstanding school academically may not always have a nurturing environment which is something that your child might need in order to thrive.

The most important part of the Ofsted report is the targets it sets for a school; these tell you about its weaknesses and the things it needs to improve upon most. Thus the report should be used as a guide but a visit is always highly recommended.

## School Admissions

Adopted children come under the category of Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) or as we like to call them 'Children who were in our care'.

They should therefore be given the highest priority in terms of school admission, even if the school is not in your local authority/catchment area. Please check with the schools admission criteria as some schools/academies can differ.

However, if the school is a distance from your home, you must consider the logistics of how you will transport your child to school every day.

When applying for a school place you will need to send a copy of the adoption certificate.

When your child starts school, remember to inform the school office that they will be eligible for Pupil Premium Plus. (See our website for more details)

## Parent checklist

Below are some suggestions of things to take into consideration when choosing/visiting a school.

- How would you describe the feel of the school – welcoming, friendly?
- How long has the Headteacher and other staff been there for, and what is the vision for the school?
- How does the school organise transition for the new starters?
- Does your child know any children within the school?
- Does the school have any other children that are adopted (previously looked after) or looked after?
- In what ways do the school use the pupil premium plus to support the children?
- What is the schools behaviour policy?
- How does the school deal with bullying?
- Has the school/ staff had any attachment and trauma training?



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- Does the school have a parent liaison member of staff?
  - How does the school communicate with parents and involve them in the life of the school?
  - Is there a school reward system? – recognition, rewards, praise and how often?
  - Is there a peer support / buddy system?
  - How does the school support more / less able pupils?
  - What facilities are available during play time?
  - What are the lunchtime arrangements? Are the pupils allowed to bring in packed lunches?
  - Does the school have breakfast/ afterschool club?
  - Is this a happy school and is it the right school for my child?

## Special Education Needs and Disability

From the 1st September 2014 it became statutory that all schools share and publish their Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) information on their own school website. This is referred to as an Information Report or SEND Support Offer.

If your child had Special Educational Needs, then it is advisable to have a meeting with Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) at the school.

### Parent checklist

Below are some suggestions of things to take into consideration when choosing/visiting a school. (They may not all be applicable to your child )

- What is the schools SEN policy?
- What is the school's inclusion policy?
- Is the schools behaviour policy adapted for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities including emotional?
- Do they promote time in rather than time out?
- What therapies are available within the school?
- How would school get to know your child before they start there?
- How would my child get to know the school, especially in the first few days?
- How are Special Educational Needs, like my child's met?
- Does school have experience of helping children with similar needs to my child?
- How close is the school to your home?
- How big is the school site and how many levels does the building have?
- Is it easy to get around the school, could your child get to all areas of the school easily?
- Are the classrooms self-contained or open plan?

- Are there quiet room/chillout/calm down rooms for the pupils to use or go to?
- Is there access to sensory equipment or facilities?
- Does your child need 1:1 work, if so where does this take place?
- How will teachers be informed about my child's SEN?
- What are the class sizes and how many members of staff are in the classroom?
- How does the lunchtime system work? Is there provision for them to go into lunch early (especially if they don't like noise and crowds)
- Is there any visual aids e.g. timetables around the school?
- Visual stimuli – Is the classroom an engaging environment?
- How is your child's medication needs met and by whom?