

Checklist for visiting colleges

A guide for young people with special educational needs and disabilities

Going to on to college is exciting. We want to help you choose the right college.

It is important that you:

- discuss this with your parents/carers
- discuss this with teachers and careers advisers
- look at college websites and brochures
- visit colleges you are interested in.

You can visit during open days, or your parents/carers or school may want to arrange another time to visit.

Here are some suggestions that may help you get the best out of a visit to a college:

Before you visit a college

- Discuss with those who help you at school, and your parents/carers, what support you may need at college.
- Think about what you would like to find out, the questions to ask and people to meet.
- Ask for and read the college's own brochure/prospectus or look at their website.
- Talk to careers staff about the best course for you, and what your longer term ambitions are.

Visiting the college

- You may want to arrange the visit at a time when young people will be in the college.
- Try to spend enough time in the college to allow you to make an informed decision.
- Think about how you will travel to and from the college.
- Try, if possible, to meet the staff who you will be with, eg tutors.
- Do ask the person showing you around any questions you have.

In the classroom

It may be helpful to explore:

- what will your timetable be?
- who will be supporting you?

- how will teachers and other staff keep in touch with your parents/carers?
- how will you and your parents/carers know how well you are doing?

External support

It may be helpful to explore where relevant:

- Will you continue to get support from other professionals, eg speech and language therapist, educational psychologist, occupational therapist, if you still need this?
- How will this fit in with your timetable, would you miss any classes?

The college in general

It may be helpful to explore:

- Does the college have any equipment you need?
- Will you need help at breaks or lunch?
- Whether any extra activities will be available after college.

College atmosphere - overall impressions

- Does the college feel welcoming?
- Try to imagine whether you would be happy in the college.
- Do young people seem well behaved/happy?
- If there is anything you do not understand or are not happy with don't be afraid to ask or speak about it.

After the visit

- Discuss your thoughts and feelings about the college.
- Was the course and the college what you expected?
- Are you confident that the college can meet your needs?
- You should ensure that you discuss your plans at school, so they can support you in making your college application.
- The school and college will liaise with the SEN team at Hampshire County Council to ensure that we can make your move on to college as easy as possible.

Residential colleges

Additional points to think about and questions to ask:

- Can you meet the people who will care for you?
- Visit the dormitory or bedroom you will use.
- What privacy will you have?
- Find out who to go to if you are worried or have a problem.

- What arrangements are there for you to telephone home or receive telephone calls?
- What arrangements are there if you need attention during the night?
- What are the bathroom facilities and routines?
- What arrangements are there for medical care?
- What opportunities will there be for you to join out of college activities, for example youth groups, sport, other leisure activities.
- Will you get the same opportunities to shop, cook, clean and relax as you would at home?
- If it is proposed that you remain at college over the weekend, what would be the range and programme of activities?

What help can the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) give?

If you have a question about special educational needs and/or disability, and are not sure who to ask, you can talk to SENDIASS about it. They are working with others to identify impartial information, advice and support services for young people.

Please contact them on **0808 164 5504**, email **info@hampshiresendiass.co.uk** or visit **www.hampshiresendiass.co.uk**.

How to find information about colleges

- **Hampshire Local Offer website** <https://fish.hants.gov.uk/localoffer>
- **The college website** - this is a very useful source of information which would usually include a statement about ethos and values, the college's admission policy, the college's special educational needs policy, links to Ofsted reports. Colleges may also include information about examination results and where young people go after they leave college.
- **The college prospectus** - this will contain a range of information about the college. You can request a copy from the college.
- **The college Ofsted report** - this is a detailed report from the Office for Standards in Education. They also produce summaries which give a useful overall picture of a college. You can access the latest Ofsted report from the college's website or from the Ofsted website at **www.ofsted.gov.uk**.
- **Government Education Statistics** - these are published by the Department for Education (DfE) and are available at **www.gov.uk/schools-colleges/data-collection**.

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