



# HILLINGDON

## LONDON

## Hillingdon SEND Service

SEND phase transfer admissions Guidance



Hillingdon **SEND**  
and **AP** Partnership

## Introduction

Dear Parent/Carer/Young Person

The Local Authority recognises that transitioning into a new setting can be difficult/an anxious time for families, therefore we have created a booklet to help guide you through the SEND admissions process.

This Booklet provides you with relevant information about how Hillingdon SEND Service's admission process works for children transitioning into Reception, Junior and secondary placements, also known as phase transfer. The booklet also provides you with information on how to record your preferences and the key dates for the process the SEND Service make to ensure your child has an appropriate next setting.

Hillingdon has a wide range of mainstreams and academies, specialist resource provisions and special schools. We have an inclusivity commitment with schools in borough, in which we stand by the following;

*Every child has a right to an appropriate and efficient education in his or her local mainstream school. The right to an inclusive education has been explicitly stated in Article 24 (Education) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006).*

Every state funded school is allocated financial resources and can access specialist advice to support them to meet the needs of the pupils within their settings. Hillingdon SEND Service recognises that whilst most children/young people with and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can have their needs met within a mainstream setting, some children/young people may require support in a more specialist setting.

Hillingdon has a range of specialist resource provisions (SRPs) which are within mainstream schools supporting children and young people with particular special educational needs. More information on where these are located can be found on our Local Offer. In addition, Hillingdon SEND Service work with specialist-maintained settings and academies to which we can place students based on special educational need.

When your child had their Annual Review meeting you may have been advised on what type of school provision would best suit their needs. Before you submit your preferences, it is important to visit any potential schools and speak to their staff, do your research, to help you make an informed decision. You can also speak to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) from your child's current school who will be able to help you with this.

I hope this booklet provides the guidance you need, however if you require further help or advice please contact your child's SEND Officer the Hillingdon SEND Service SENDIAS service, and our Local Offer.

### Does this process apply to me/us?

This booklet is all those who have an Education, Health and Care Plan approaching a Key Stage transfer

- Starting school (reception) in September 2026
- Your child is in an infant school transitioning to a junior school in 2026 (it does not apply to year 2 in a primary school as this is not considered a natural transition point)
- Your child is starting secondary school in September 2026.

There will be many children who are starting or changing schools but do not yet have an EHCP. You should follow this process only if your child currently has an EHCP. If they are undergoing assessment please follow the mainstream admissions process and your child's education setting will be considered when the EHCP is agreed.

Even if your child is at an all through school (**primary to secondary**), it is important that you complete the preference form even if you wish for them to remain at their current school for the next key stage. This is so that we can ensure all children remain at a school that can best meet their needs, and that all families have an opportunity to change schools should they wish to do so. If you wish for your child to remain at their current school, please put this as your first preference when you submit the consultation form.

## Things to consider

- At your child's Annual Review meeting, you should discuss the type of provision that will best meet your child's needs for the next key stage. The SENCO at your child's current school/nursery can support you with this.
- You are invited to complete the preference form for children with an EHCP, **even if you wish for your child to remain at their current school**. This form is shared with schools and families between April and May 2025, and we request these are returned by the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025.
- You will be able to submit up to two school preferences which can include independent or non-maintained schools, schools outside of Hillingdon borough and Hillingdon maintained schools, specialist resource provisions and academies (both specialist and mainstream).
- If you are choosing an SRP/Unit within a school this **must** be specified on the preference form. If not specified, the LA will assume your preference is for the mainstream school.
- We will contact each of your preferred schools for a view on whether they can meet your child's needs, along with your **nearest appropriate school** as recommended by the Local Authority.

A school place will be allocated to your child in accordance to the SEND Code of Practice (2015):

- The school is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or SEN
- The placement would be compatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom your child would be educated, and
- The placement would be compatible with the efficient use of resources.

**If your child is currently in a mainstream school setting, and you are requesting a special school placement for the next key stage, the Local Authority would need to satisfy itself that this type of provision is appropriate in order to demonstrate that such a placement would be an efficient use of resources.**

You will be given the opportunity to make representations and to discuss any queries you have with your EHC Co-Ordinator about the school allocated or the content of the EHCP.

## **How do I choose a school?**

It is important to note that the Local Authority will send all supporting paperwork and amended plan to the preferences supplied and nearest appropriate settings to gain a view on whether they can meet the needs stipulated in Section B and the provision in Section F of the EHCP. The Local Authority will approach the nearest appropriate setting for a view even if this is not one of your preferences.

The Local Authority understands choosing a school is a big decision, therefore we recommend that you:

- Visit any schools that you believe offer the type of provision that will meet your child's special educational needs within the EHCP.
- Look at the school websites to find their policies, especially their SEND policy and key stage results.
- Read the latest Ofsted reports, which can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- Consider the travel arrangements to and from school. It is important to note that your child will normally only be eligible for travel assistance if they are attending the nearest appropriate education provider, unless otherwise agreed and stipulated within the EHCP. There is more information regarding Travel Assistance in this guidance.
- Discuss your preferences with your child's current SENCO or other professionals.

## **How does Hillingdon SEND Service determine what the nearest appropriate school is?**

Every child will have a nearest mainstream school. This is the school which is closest to your home address by straight line distance. If there is evidence that your child requires the support provided in a special school or specialist provision, then the nearest appropriate specialist provision / school to your child's home address will also be calculated. The word 'appropriate' in this definition refers to the arrangement type of the school or specialist provision, for example Autism.

If none of the preferences you submit are for your child's nearest appropriate school, then the Local Authority will also approach the nearest appropriate school asking for a view on whether they can meet your child's needs. This will be used for the purposes of deciding whether your child is eligible for travel assistance and to determine whether placing your

child at your preference school reflects efficient use of resources for the Local Authority. Wherever possible you will still be offered your preference school over nearest appropriate, however this may affect your child's eligibility for travel assistance.

### **Expressing a preference for a state-funded school outside Hillingdon**

You can express a preference for schools outside Hillingdon that are academies or are maintained by another Local Authority. You should find out as much about the school as you can, in the same way you would for a Hillingdon school. We would also encourage you to discuss your request with your SEND Officer and SENCO.

Hillingdon SEND Service is not responsible for admissions to schools that are maintained by another Local Authority; however we will make a placement consultation to that school/local authority on your child's behalf.

### **Expressing a preference for an independent school:**

You have the right to express a preference for any independent school which has been approved for this purpose by the Secretary of State. The Government has a published list of approved independent special schools and colleges.

You may also make representation for a place at another independent or non-maintained school that is not on the Secretary of State's list above. We will consider your request and have regard to the general principle that children should be educated in accordance with their parents' wishes, but we are not under the same duty as with schools named in the list cited above.

The Local Authority will consider your preference for an independent or non-maintained school but will also consider maintained schools. In line with the SEND Code of Practice, any decision about whether to place a child at an independent or non-maintained school will be made with consideration of the Local Authority's efficient use of resources.

If you express a preference for an independent or non-maintained school, they may wish to invite your child for a visit or assessment in order to decide whether they would be able to meet your child's needs. Please note that this does not guarantee that your child will be offered a place at the school or agreed by the Local Authority.

### **Child's home address:**

When you complete the preference form, the address you supply for your child must be their current permanent place of residence, usually the parents' address.

- If the parents do not live together, the address is where the child spends most of their time. If there is equal shared custody of the child, it is left to the parents to decide which address to use.
- You should not use a business, relative's or carer/childminder's address.
- We will not accept a temporary address if the main carer of the child still owns or rents a property that has previously been used as a home address, nor if we believe it has been used to obtain a school place when an alternative address is still available to that child.
- A preference form can only be submitted from one address, and only one preference per child can be submitted.
- If you move house during the admissions process please inform your SEND Officer as soon as possible, with proof of your new address.

### **Looked After & Previously Looked After Children:**

When submitting your preference/s online, you will need to state whether or not your child is Looked After or Previously Looked After. Please see below for definitions.

Looked after children are those who are registered as being in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by a local authority in accordance with section 22 of the Children Act 1989(a) at the time a preference for a school is expressed, for example, children who are fostered or living in a children's home.

Previously looked after children are those who have previously been in the care of a local authority in accordance with Section 22 of the Children Act 1989(a) and who have left that care through adoption, a child arrangement order (in accordance with section 8 of the Children Act 1989 and as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014) or special guardianship order (in accordance with section 14A of the Children Act 1989).

## **How places are allocated**

School places are allocated in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014, which requires the Local Authority to take into account the child's special educational needs, parental preference and the formal view of the schools requested before making a decision.

Places will be allocated based on parents' preference wherever possible, unless:

- The school is unsuitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude or SEN
- The placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom your child would be educated, and
- The placement would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources.

If there are more preferences than the setting can accommodate, then places will be allocated on an individual needs led basis.

## **How will we notify you of your next Placement**

The Local Authority will send you a finalised EHCP by the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026 naming a setting in Section I for September 2026. This will be via email, so please ensure we have your up-to-date contact information.

If you disagree with your child's EHCP, you have the right to request independent mediation and subsequently appeal to a SEND tribunal. Details of this process will be provided to you with the final EHCP.

## **Travelling to the new setting**

All children/young people may be entitled to free transport to their nearest appropriate education setting if their home is over the statutory walking distance\*. However, if the child/young person's SEND means they are not able to walk (accompanied by an adult if necessary) the distance, for example, they are wheelchair users, they may be granted free transport on medical grounds (supporting medical evidence would be required).

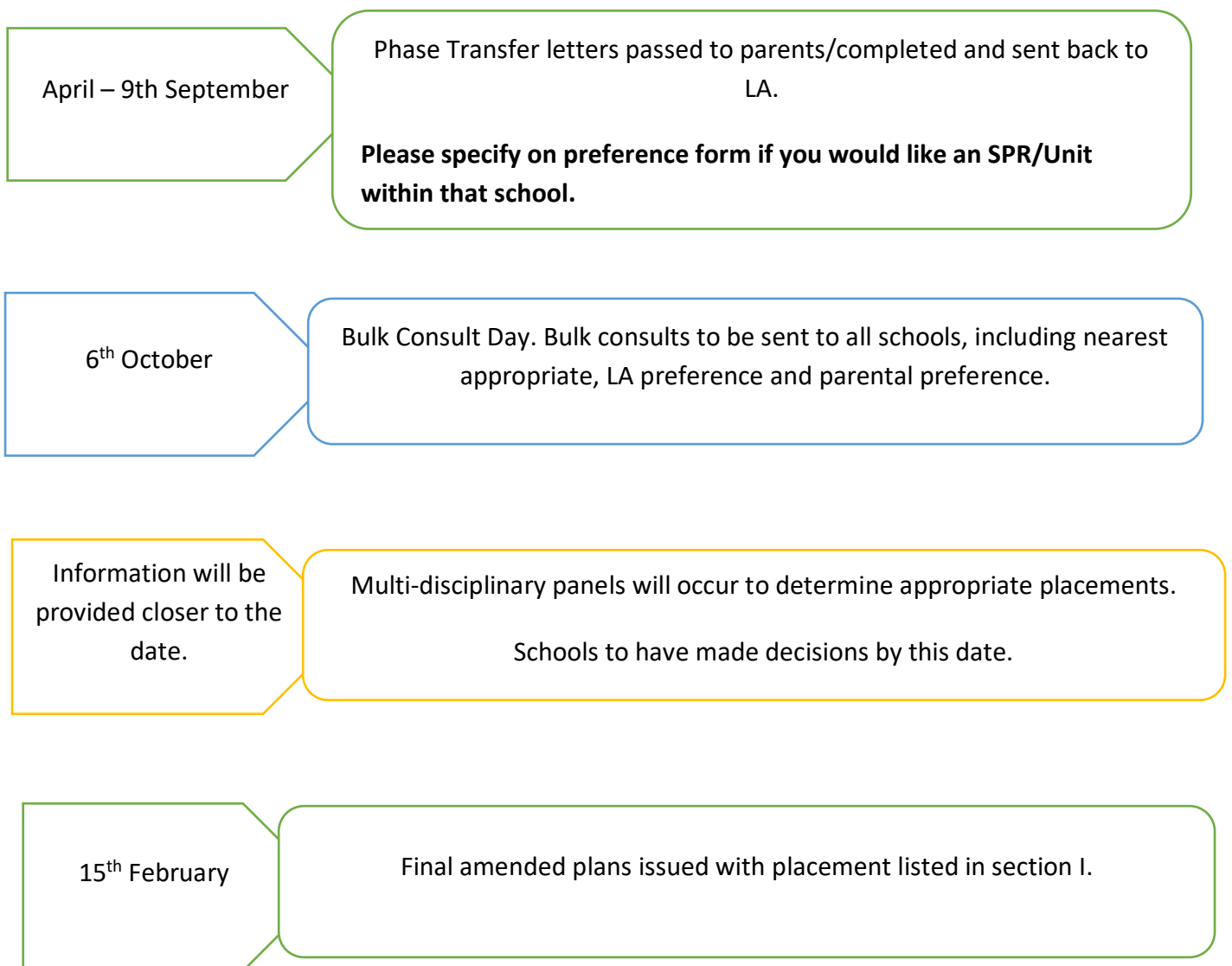
\* Statutory walking distance is 2 miles for a child aged 7 and under, 3 miles for a child aged 8 and over.

For those children/young people who are allocated a place at a preferred education setting which is not the nearest one, parents will be responsible for funding and arranging suitable transport.

The decision as to whether a student with an EHC Plan is entitled to home to school transport is made by the Hillingdon transport team when a school place is allocated.

[https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/media/6606/Home-to-school-travel-assistance-policy-for-5-to-16-year-olds/pdf/SEND 5-16 Travel Assistance Policy London Borough of Hillingdon.pdf?m=1644311642093](https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/media/6606/Home-to-school-travel-assistance-policy-for-5-to-16-year-olds/pdf/SEND_5-16_Travel_Assistance_Policy_London_Borough_of_Hillingdon.pdf?m=1644311642093)

### Timeline for Phase Transfer 2026



## **FAQ**

### **If your child has SEND but does not have an EHCP**

If your child does not have an EHCP, but does have SEND, then you should apply for a mainstream school place through the Local Authority's Admissions and Transport Team. In line with legislation, mainstream schools are required to make reasonable adaptations to meet your child's SEND and to support them to fulfil their academic and wider potential. Further details of how to apply through the Admissions and Transport team can be found on the mainstream admissions page.

If your child does not currently have an EHCP, but is going through a statutory assessment process, please apply in the way described in the above paragraph, but also speak to your SEND Officer for advice.

### **Can I appeal against the decision not to offer the school I requested?**

If your child is not given a place at your requested school, you do have a right of appeal to an independent special educational needs and disability (SEND) tribunal after your child's final EHCP has been issued. Further information about this process will be given to you at the time.

### **Can I move my child to another school other than at the usual age of transfer?**

If you are thinking about changing your child's school, you should consider this decision very carefully, bearing in mind that other schools may be full and that the upheaval may be damaging to your child's progress.

You should make sure that you discuss any concerns with your child's current head teacher, class teacher or special educational needs coordinator to try to sort out any issues of concern and to consider a referral to external specialist support services.

We would also encourage you to discuss the situation with your SEND Officer.