

Questions parents and caregivers may ask when enrolling a student with high needs

1. What success stories does the school have about working with previous students with special needs?

Schools should be able to indicate, without identifying students, examples of how students with special needs have been supported at the school. In particular schools should be able to comment on how they have helped children with special needs learn, and not just participate.

2. To what extent will my child be in a mainstream class?

Parents should understand what sort of learning arrangement will be used for their child. Mainstream learning is generally beneficial, but there may be special programmes that will benefit your particular child.

3. How will staff know how to identify and meet the social and educational needs of my child?

Schools should be able to explain to you the sorts of tests and processes they use to understand your child's learning and social abilities. From this basis it should be possible to understand how your child has progressed.

4. What support processes will the school use to ensure that my child is achieving?

Schools should be able to discuss the people, in addition to the classroom teacher, who are available to support your child's learning. This could include speechlanguage therapists, physiotherapists, teacher-aides and so on.

5. What training do staff have in dealing with the medical issues of my child?

Your child may need to have a particular medicine, diet and so on that requires specialist knowledge and understanding. While this may not currently be available, parents can expect that the school will source appropriate training for staff. In general it is good practice to talk to a school well in advance of your start date to ensure that they can be as well prepared as possible.

6. What will happen if my child's teacher or teacher-aide is away sick?

Parents should not have to look after their child at home if a staff member is unable to attend school. Contingency plans should operate to ensure that your child's needs are catered for.

7. What opportunities will there be for me to work with staff to identify and support the strengths and development areas of my child?

Schools should include parents and caregivers in learning plans for their child. This will help to identify important abilities and interests your child has and approaches that have been successful at home and/or in previous settings. The most common formal planning tool is called an IEP – Individual Education Plan. As a parent you can expect to be included in any IEP for your child.

Education Review Office Including Students With High Needs

June 2010

30

8. Are the goals set for my child's IEP SMART? (Specific, measurable, attributable, realistic and time-bound)

If your child has an IEP it is important that the goals set are somehow measurable. There needs to be a clear sense of progress possible over time. It also needs to be clear who is responsible for supporting your child and the goals must be realistic, ie something that is possible for your child to do, that they can't already achieve.

9. What sort of communication can I expect from the classroom teacher about my

child's progress?

Classroom teachers will be expected to make less formal reports to you about your child's day to day progress. There may be a notebook or homework diary which can be used to communicate with your child's teacher or teachers. There may also be occasional informal meetings with your child's teacher when you pick them up from school. In a secondary setting you could ring your child's form teacher.

10. What extra-curricula opportunities will be available to my child?

You can expect that your child can participate in sports, cultural events and school camps. Some schools ask parents to help pay for the cost of additional teacher aides when children with high needs go on camps.

11. What policies and processes does the school have to limit bullying?

Schools should have a plan for how they will deal with bullying at the school. See ERO's report: *Safe Schools: Strategies To Prevent Bullying*, May 2007 to understand the types of processes schools should have in place.

12. How will the school support the cultural identity of my child?

It is important that a child with high needs continues to make links to their culture. Depending on the background of your child this may include participation in school cultural groups. It will also involve the sorts of topics learnt in the curriculum, for instance the study of languages, history and society.

13. How does the school know that it is effective at including other students with special needs?

The school's Board should have carried out a self review of its performance with special needs pupils. The information from this review should be accessible to you as a parent. The findings of this review could form the basis of further questions.

From ERO report July 2010

<http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Including-Students-with-High-Needs-June-2010>