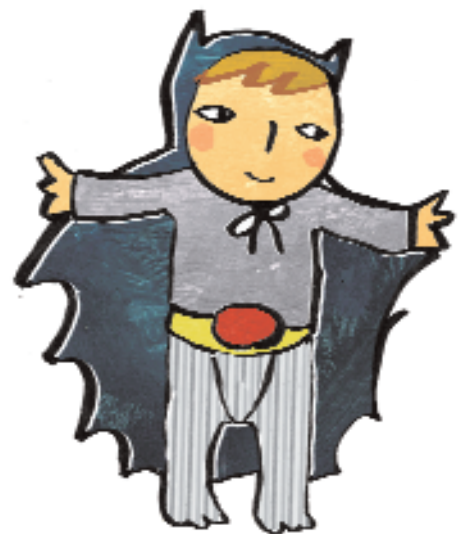


# Finding a school.

Pointers for parents.







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# Finding a school

**In Surrey children usually start school in the September following their 4th birthday. Most schools offer part-time schooling at the start.**

Statutory School Age is the age at which legally children must attend full-time school. In England and Wales that is the beginning of the term following the term in which they are 5 years old. Until then it is your decision whether your child is ready for school. If you have doubts about your child being ready for school it is important to discuss this with your child's nursery and the school, which s/he will be attending. It should be possible to work out flexible starting arrangements that meet the needs of your child.

## For more information

A leaflet *Can your child start school at 4 years old?* that deals with some of questions parents and carers ask can be obtained from the Surrey County Council Contact Centre. Tel. 08456 009 009



## Did you know?

Surrey Parenting Education and Support's survey found that more than 80% of parents in Surrey like having a choice of primary school for their children

## Choosing a school.

**You will probably start thinking and talking about schools long before your child reaches school age.**

You will need to apply by sending in a Parental Preference form the October before your child is due to start school.

## Parental Preference form

You can get a copy from your child's preschool or any Surrey school or by getting in touch with the **Surrey County Council Contact Centre** Tel. 08456 009 009

Finding the right school for your child is a big challenge.

It is usually best to consider first the school nearest to your home, as your child will then have local friends. You could walk your child to school and you would have a network of people close to home with whom you could share journeys to and from school, play days in the holidays and even after-school care.

What you can do to help you decide:

- Talk with other Mums and Dads who already have children at school. This is a good way of finding out about your local schools. Talk to several different parents, as parents have differing views.
- Obtain a prospectus from the school you are most interested in. Schools must have a prospectus to give to parents who are seeking a place for their child. This must include information on:

The Admissions Policy

The names of the Head-teacher and Chairman of Governors

The school's values and aims

Whether it is connected to any particular religious faith

What religious education is given and the rights of parents to withdraw their children from religious worship and lessons.

What help is available for children with special needs

The school's National Curriculum assessment results.

- Visit schools and make up your own mind whether it is right for your child
- Read the Information on School's Admissions and Transfers booklet that will explain the admissions system, provide a Parental Preference form and list all Surrey Primary schools.

**The Admissions Policy** sets out the rules the Local Authority use to decide which children have priority to go to a particular school. These rules are changing for admission in 2007. If a school has more children applying than there are places, priority will be given to children in the following order, to those who are Looked After by any local authority, to brothers and sisters of children already attending the school at the time of admission and to those for whom it is their nearest school.

### For more information

Surrey Contact Centre on 08456 009 009  
[www.surreycc.gov.uk/education](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/education)



### Governors

School Governors are representatives from the school staff, parents and the community. They are responsible for making sure the school provides an education that helps all the children achieve the best possible educational results.

They:

- Set the aims and values for the school
- Are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- Agree the school's budget each year
- Plan the school's future
- Appoint senior staff including the head-teacher
- Communicate with parents and the community to ensure the school is serving them well

You may want to see how the school's test results compare with those of other schools. The 7 year-old test results are printed in each school's prospectus. You can also ask to see a summary of the school's latest Ofsted report.

**Ofsted** is the Inspectorate for children and learners in England. Ofsted inspectors contribute to improving education and care by inspecting schools and preschools. You can find Inspection reports at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

It is important to remember that test results do not tell you about how friendly a school is, how it helps children with difficulties nor how closely it works with parents. You will find out more about a school by visiting and asking questions of school staff. If possible take your partner or a friend with you when you visit so that you have someone to talk to afterwards about what you have seen and heard.

Many schools hold Open Days for parents who are thinking of sending their child to the school as this enables them to talk to a whole group of parents at the same time.

Working parents may also need to find out about before-and after-school clubs and holiday care.

### Questions you may want to ask a school you visit

- What information does the child's preschool pass on to school?
- How many children are in a class?
- Are there any mixed age classes?
- Is there any before and after school care?
- What clubs are run?
- How is healthy eating encouraged?
- How are parents told about the quality of school meals?
- Does the school encourage the drinking of water throughout the day?
- How is playtime managed?
- How does the school introduce children to the reception class?
- What opportunities are there for parents to meet or help in school?



### Did you know?

You can apply for a school place on-line  
 Go to [www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions)

## School transport

If you think your child might qualify for transport to and from school because you live more than two miles from your nearest school or for any other reason you should phone the Contact Centre (Tel. 0845 6009 009) for more information and an application form.

## School meals

**Surrey Commercial Services provide a school's meals service to Surrey Schools.**

You can see sample menus and find out how to pay on-line on their website at [www.myschoollunch.co.uk/surrey](http://www.myschoollunch.co.uk/surrey)

## Free School meals

**Children are eligible for free school meals if their parents receive:**

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 Once you have a place at a school for your child you should apply to your school for free school meals.

You can also send your child with a packed lunch to eat at school.



## Educating your child at home

**Information about educating your child at home can be found in Education by Parental Provision a Surrey County Council booklet that can be obtained by phoning the Contact Centre. (See opposite)**

Many schools ask you to sign the **Home-School Agreement** when your child joins the school. This sets out your responsibilities in the education of your child. Your support and interest is very important for the success of your child.

## Help in school for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

**All schools cater for a wide range of learning needs and have funds and resources to ensure that the majority of children will be included in their local mainstream school.**

The majority of children with special or additional needs are supported in their schools through this funding at School Action or School Action Plus.

**School Action** and **School Action Plus** are the first stages in the Code of Practice.

**The Code of Practice** sets out the way in which schools should record and provide for children whose learning is causing concern.

Support will include a range of resources and equipment, small group activities to meet specific needs, and activities that are adapted and supported to meet the child's learning style.

## Did you know?

1 in 5 children may, at some time, experience difficulties in some aspect of their learning and development and may need help to support their learning at school.

Each area in Surrey has a Locality Team, which is a group of professionals from Education, Health and Social Care who help the teachers assess pupil's learning and supports all schools and their development in meeting children's needs. All schools have regular meetings with their Locality Team and if the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) thinks that your child, the school or you would benefit from input from a member of the Locality Team this will be discussed with you before a referral is made. You will always have the opportunity to meet the Locality Team member and following their visit to the school their advice can be included in your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

- The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is the teacher in the school who is responsible for special educational needs
- An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the recommended way of recording the action being taken to support a child with SEN. It sets out the targets (what it is hoped to achieve), how this will be done, by whom and when the plan will be reviewed.

It is the SENCO's role to ensure the child's IEP is regularly monitored and reviewed and it is usual practice for parents to be included in these review meetings.

Most children with special needs will have been identified before they reach school age and will be getting any extra support they need in their nursery or playgroup. This will be recorded and monitored through their Individual Education Plan (IEP) by the SENCO. Their needs will continue to be met and monitored when they move into school.

A very small number of children have complex and severe learning needs. These children are usually identified before they enter school as they are likely to be already involved with Health teams such as the Community Pediatrician, Speech and Language Therapist or Early Education Support services such as Physical and Sensory Support Services (PSSS), Portage Early Education Support or the Special Educational Needs Advisors of the Early Years and Child-Care Service (EYCS).

If your child has significant SEN or additional needs you will have received advice from the SEN Management Team. Children will only be considered for specialist provision if they have already been identified as having significant SEN and will already have undergone a multi-professional assessment.

Even if you know that your child has SEN you need to complete a Parental Preference form for a mainstream school of your choice.

### For more information

- Preschool children with special or additional needs – Are you worried about your child's progress?

A booklet produced by Partnership with Parents

To get a copy phone **01737 737300**

- Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A guide for parents and carers

DfES Publications Centre PO Box 5050

Sherwood Park

Annersley

Nottingham NG15 0DJ

Or phone **0845 602 2260**



If you have been advised that your child may need to be on the school's Special Educational Needs Register this information will be passed to your child's school once she has been offered a place and your child's progress will continue to be closely monitored in school.

## Want to know more?

- Resources to Support Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools explains how schools are financed to support children with special educational needs.

It can be obtained by contacting the Special Educational Needs Manager at your local Children's Service's Office:

**North-East Area, Leatherhead**  
**Tel. 01372 833500**

**North-West Area, Woking**  
**Tel. 01483 518110**

**South-East Area, Reigate**  
**Tel. 01737 737990**

**South-West Area, Guildford**  
**Tel. 01483 517890**

- The Code of Practice sets out the stages and procedures for assessing and meeting Special Educational Needs. A copy is available in all schools or it can be obtained from:  
[www.surreycc.gov.uk/sen](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/sen)
- Preschool Children with special or additional need from **Surrey Early Years and Childcare Service Tel. 01372 833833**
- See also the booklet *Helping your child in the year before school, When your child has a school place and Life at school.*



For help in resolving difficulties or disagreements

- See the section *Talking to teachers* in the booklet *Life at school* or phone **Partnership with Parents on 01737 737300**

## Partnership with Parents

Is an organisation that supports parents of children at all stages of the Code of Practice throughout the child's education from pre-school to transition from school. Partnership with Parents provides a helpline, surgeries, information sessions, workshops, casework and an information bank.

It works to develop an effective partnership between parents and carers of children with special educational needs, the voluntary organisations that represent them, schools and Surrey Local Education Authority (LEA).

**[www.pwpsurrey.org](http://www.pwpsurrey.org)**

You can also contact them by phone on **01737 737300**

## Out of school care

**Most of the provisions described below are open to all children and are able to meet the needs of those with special needs.**

There are also some provisions set up specifically for children with disabilities.

For further information on out of school facilities for children with disabilities contact Surrey Children's Information Service (CIS) This is a telephone, internet and outreach service.

**Tel. 08456 011777**

Email: [surrey.cis@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:surrey.cis@surreycc.gov.uk) or go to [www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis) and select Children's Information Service



## Breakfast Clubs

A breakfast club is typically open before school from 8 – 9am sometimes earlier. The Club provides breakfast and supervision with a range of activities depending on the age group.

If the club is open for more than 2 hours, or the school also runs an After School Club, it has to be registered with Ofsted.

This means that it has to follow the Ofsted National Standards. The National Standards ensure good quality childcare and the safety of your children. This includes clubs being run by trained and qualified staff.

**Ofsted** is the Inspectorate for children and learners in England. Ofsted inspectors contribute to improving education and care by inspecting schools, preschools and after school and holiday care. You can find Inspection reports at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## After School Activities and Clubs

Many teachers give their time to provide children with activities and clubs at lunchtime and after-school. They do not aim to provide childcare but give children valuable experiences beyond the school day.

An After School Club provides supervised activities for school age children. It is where school-age children can have fun, relax, talk to their peers, meet new friends and be safe. If the club is open for more than 2 hours it has to be registered with Ofsted.

It is generally run in a school, although can be in a Community Hall or somewhere else locally.

## What happens in an After School Club?

The staff in the club have usually prepared several different activities.

These might include:

- Collage work
- Making models
- Pottery
- Dressing up



If children want to be more active they may be able to play ball games or take part in other energetic activities.

If your child is feeling tired after a hard day at school, they may be encouraged to find a quiet corner to look at a book or they may want to play a board game with some friends.

Children will be given a choice about what they would like to do.

Most After School Clubs provide food. Sometimes it is a snack such as a sandwich, some fruit and a drink other clubs like to provide a hot option like spaghetti Bolognese or beans on toast. Many clubs will only provide healthy options, including having fresh fruit and water or juice, available throughout the session.

### How much do they cost?

The cost varies considerably throughout Surrey and is often dependent on the number of children in the club and what the families actually want. Some clubs offer options such as a charge for childcare alone or a charge for childcare with food. Some will give a reduced charge for brothers and sisters. It is important that you find out as much about the club as you can before signing up.



### Other After-School Care

**Many Childminders are happy to take children for After-School and Holiday Care. Childminders look after children in their own homes and will provide meals and snacks.**

Sometimes this can be a better option for a young child as it provides a smaller more intimate environment after a day at school. It can be helpful to talk to other parents to find out about their experiences of different forms of child-care.

It is always important to visit Clubs and Child-minders yourself and make up your own mind as to what will suit your child best.

### Want to know more?

Details of clubs can be obtained from Surrey Children's Information Service Phone 08456 011777 or go to [www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis) and select Registered out of school care then after school clubs or breakfast clubs as appropriate.



### For more information about local Childminders

**Surrey Children's Information Service**

Phone 08456 011777 or go to [www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis) and select Childcare choices



## Holiday Play schemes

**Holiday Play schemes are very similar to After-School clubs and offer the children a choice of activities. Children meet other children and have the opportunity to try new activities.**

Some Holiday Play schemes pay outside specialists to come to the club and provide special activities such as games coaching, circus skills, dance and drama or pottery classes which parents can pay for as an extra.

Parents are given the choice of booking the class or activity that their child wants to do.

Some arrange outings, which are also an extra cost to parents who want their children to take part.

Some clubs provide breakfast, lunch and tea, while others provide fruit and drinks throughout the day. Other Holiday Play-schemes ask that the children bring in their own packed lunch, which is stored in a fridge until lunchtime.

### How much do Play-schemes cost?

Play-schemes and fees vary. It is always best to check what is on offer and all fees before registering. Some Play-schemes expect full-time attendance while others offer flexible part-time sessions. They may also offer incentives for whole day attendance and for families with several children wanting to attend.



### Want to know more?

Surrey Children's Information Service can tell you where they are, when they are open and the contact number for the play scheme.

Tel. 08456 011777 or  
[www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/cis)



There are many other organisations that run holiday activities. Some of these are short sessions and some provide all day care. Most of these organisations send advertising material to the local schools or you can find information in your local press, at the library or in Parent newsletters such as Grapevine.

### For other ideas contact:

- Local museum and Arts Centre
- Library
- Local outdoor recreational spaces
- Theatre
- Sports centre



## Family Fun

### The Great Outdoors

**People who live in Surrey are very lucky in having access to extensive countryside and open green space for walks, riding bikes, games and picnics.**

There are also children's playgrounds and Children's farms and the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens at Wisley.

Many towns have 'Town trails' or discovery walks.

#### A book to read

Where to go with Children in Surrey  
ISBN 1903594685



### Sports Facilities

Swimming pools and leisure centres often offer special rates for families and times when they cater particularly for family activities.

A wide range of activities is available for families in Surrey including soft-play facilities, climbing-walls, ice-skating, ten-pin bowling and horse-riding.

## Festivals and Events

Local newspapers and libraries are the best source of information on events locally.

The National Trust at [www.nationaltrust.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.co.uk) offers events and activities throughout the year. The programmes include spring snowdrop days, countryside walks, family Easter trails, garden tours and fairs, and outdoor theatre and summer concerts, living history days and behind the scenes tours whilst Halloween and Christmas festivities round off the year.

### Look out also for:

- Fire Station Open Days
- The Surrey County Show is held in Stoke Park, Guildford every summer
- Musical events some of which are appropriate for children
- School fetes and fairs
- Craft exhibitions
- Garden Open Days.

## Museums and Arts Centres

Surrey's museums offer a wide range of special events for families in addition to their permanent exhibitions.

## Theatres

Surrey's theatres present a number of family and children's productions particularly in school holidays and at Christmas time.

### Further afield

For younger children even a short excursion on a bus or train can seem like a big adventure if the focus is on the whole family's interests.

For possibilities beyond your immediate neighbourhood consider investigating a Family Rail card which offers concessions on family travel. Details are available at any mainline railway station.

Find out more about Family Rail Card at [www.family-railcard.co.uk](http://www.family-railcard.co.uk)









*Finding a school.*



Other booklets  
in this series:

*Helping your child in the  
year before school.*

*Safe and healthy children.*

*Life at school.*



Surrey Parenting  
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