

# Independent Special Schools – How to choose and what to look for

**View** the lists of special needs that a school or college can meet with a certain amount of scepticism: make sure the school **addresses** the difficulties of the conditions, and doesn't just contain them – or think they can cope as “we had a student with this diagnosis a year or so back”. Check that staff receive training in their students' particular difficulties. Go for a school or college which offers the right range of special needs; be wary of those which profess to cover many. Nothing is as important as making a **personal visit**, on a normal working day, to a short-list of several schools. Try not to take your child with you on these preliminary informal trips – they may become excited, confused and agitated, especially if they visit several in a short space of time.

The Cambian Information Sheet '**Independent Special Schools – How to choose and what to look for**' has a list of questions to ask while visiting schools or colleges.

## There are a number of different types of special schools available:

Maintained special school: schools that cater solely for special needs and are provided and funded by the Local Authority.

Non-Maintained Special School: approved as a special school under section 342 of the Education

Act 1996. Non-profit making schools run by charitable trusts. NMSS schools are funded primarily through pupil fees charged to local authorities which place children there.

Approved Independent Special School: Usually owned by an individual or limited company or group of companies but can be a charity. Approved by the Secretary of State to take children with Statements of SEN, majority of placements funded by LEAs. Wholly funded by pupil fees and can be run on a profit making basis.

Independent Special School: Owned by an individual or limited company or group of companies. Can take children with special needs without Statements or with Statements if individual approval is obtained from the Secretary of State. Wholly funded by pupil fees and can be run on a profit making basis.

## CAMBIAN GROUP

Run seven residential schools, post 16 units and adult provision for children, young people and adults with autism; Asperger Syndrome/ High Functioning Autism; autism or severe learning difficulties with associated complex needs. All our schools are currently rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

Website: [www.cambianguroup.com/specialist\\_education](http://www.cambianguroup.com/specialist_education)

Tel: 0800 288 9779

Email: [education@cambianguroup.com](mailto:education@cambianguroup.com)

There are several other websites and organisations listed below that can help you in your search:

### 1. GABBITAS Education

Publishes the annual Gabbitas Guide to Schools for Special Needs, with separate sections for independent special schools and post 16 provision; independent schools with special needs provision and special schools maintained by Local Authorities. The guide also has pages of SEN information and advice. Gabbitas also offers independent professional assessment with an educational psychologist and can give independent personal guidance on all aspects of education (both services charge a fee). The Gabbitas Guide costs £29.50 including p&p and can be bought on-line.

Online school search:

[www.schoolsforspecialneeds.co.uk/](http://www.schoolsforspecialneeds.co.uk/)

Email: [schools@gabbitas.co.uk](mailto:schools@gabbitas.co.uk)

Tel: 020 7734 0161

### 2. isbi schools

has a comprehensive website through which parents and professionals can conduct an in depth personalised search to create a shortlist of appropriate schools, including special schools, for their child. You can request prospectuses, arrange visits all online.

Website: [www.isbi.com](http://www.isbi.com)

Tel: 01980 620575

### 3. The Department for Education – EduBase2

Is a register of all educational establishments in England and Wales, maintained by the Department for Education. The website offers parents and professionals a free search (up to 150 searches) through their own vast database.

Website: [www.education.gov.uk/edubase/search.xhtml?clear=true](http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase/search.xhtml?clear=true)

Email: [helpdesk@edubase.education.gov.uk](mailto:helpdesk@edubase.education.gov.uk)

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## 4. Special Needs UK

is a website for parents and professionals to carry out an online search for a suitable school.

Website: [www.specialneedsuk.org](http://www.specialneedsuk.org)

## 5. Which School?

For Special Needs is published each year by John Catt Educational. It costs £19.99 + p&p – order online or call.

Website: [www.johncattbookshop.com/Which\\_School\\_for\\_Special\\_Needs\\_2012\\_13-details.aspx](http://www.johncattbookshop.com/Which_School_for_Special_Needs_2012_13-details.aspx)

Their website has an online search facility for a special school at Special Needs Guide:

Website: [www.specialneedsguide.co.uk/](http://www.specialneedsguide.co.uk/)

## 6. Youthinmind

has a free online directory and school-finder. This is run and edited by Professor Robert Goodman a doctor (and parent of a child who attended a special school) who has worked for over 20 years with children with SEN. Schools are listed by Local Authority area but you can do a more individualised search for the type of school, the level of the child's learning difficulty and specify their special needs.

Website: [www.findaspecialschool.info/](http://www.findaspecialschool.info/)

## 7. The Independent Schools Council

(for parents who wish to educate their child in the private sector.) Their website has a parents' section where you can get general information on independent schools, help with fees and there is advice on SEN.

Website: [www.isc.co.uk/find-a-school/informationfor-parents/special-educational-needs](http://www.isc.co.uk/find-a-school/informationfor-parents/special-educational-needs)

You can search for an independent school which also caters for some special needs at this link:

Website: [www.isc.co.uk/find-a-school](http://www.isc.co.uk/find-a-school)

## 8. DYSLEXIA

if your child has a specific learning difficulty (dyslexia), visit the CREStED (Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils) website for the list of schools which have met agreed criteria for dyslexia-friendly education, also have a parents checklist.

Website: [www.crested.org.uk](http://www.crested.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 601 5013

## POST 16 PROVISION

### 1. NATSPEC

The Association of National Specialist Colleges produces an annual publication of its member and associate colleges. A hard copy of their directory is available **FREE** from Queen Alexandra College on 0121 428 5050 and Derwen College on 01691 661234. The NATSPEC website has information for parents/carers on choosing a suitable college and an online College Finder directory.

Website: [www.natspec.org.uk](http://www.natspec.org.uk)

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All the information sheets are checked and amended annually. Please ensure you have the current version.



Cambian is the largest provider of specialist residential education and care for young people with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and other associated complex needs in the United Kingdom. Cambian is trusted by hundreds of parents and over 70 Local Education Authorities. [www.cambiagroup.com](http://www.cambiagroup.com)

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CAM617 Date of preparation 29/10/18