



CHOOSING A NURSERY

**Questions to consider when
searching for a nursery**

Suggested questions to consider when searching for a nursery

We know from personal experience that gut feeling is generally worth adhering to. However, we wanted to share some questions, and things to consider when you are enquiring and choosing a potential preschool setting for your child with Down syndrome.



Nursery set up and practical considerations

► Is the nursery attached to a school or is it a private, voluntary or independent nursery?

There are of course advantages and disadvantages to each set up. Funding can be different and there may well be extra resources within a nursery attached to a school that can be accessed, and some nurseries connected to schools will employ a qualified teacher to work within the setting.

There are some large chains eg Busy Bees and Bright Horizons who can pool/share resources more easily than a local independent nursery in a church hall for example. That's not to say that little church hall nurseries aren't good. Some are amazing and retain staff for a long time, more so than the chains.

► Size of nursery?

How many children are in the nursery per session; what is the staff ratio?

► What hours are potentially available for your child?

Often nurseries offer children with free childcare unusual/less popular hours, for example 3:00pm to 6:00pm. They may say that the nurseries are quieter then and they can focus on the child more - not necessarily the right response!

► What is the layout of the nursery?

Consider how accessible it is with regard to steps, stairs, handrails.

- Is there a breakout space that's quiet to potentially do 1:1 activities?
- Is there a quiet calm space if needed?
- Is there an area your child can sleep if needed?

► **What is the outside space like?**

Consider how practical this may be, if relevant, for a child who isn't walking yet.

► **What is the size of tables and chairs?**

Do they have/can they get different size furniture if needed for your child?

► **Is it a free flow nursery?**

This means children can move indoors and outdoors as they please. Generally, a child will need more/closer supervision in these nurseries.

► **Is food provided by the setting for snack time, and if so, what do they provide or do parents provide?**

Is it a rolling snack time or a snack at a set time?
Good to establish if there are opportunities to make choices.

What does food is provided by the setting for snacktime, or parents provide?

Do they allow children to bring in their own snacks? (There is a big nursery chain that doesn't allow any external food to be brought.)

► **Age/stage**

Do they have different classes per age e.g. baby room, toddler room etc.?
Some nurseries have 2-5 year olds in one large room.

Would they have children out of their age group in a different room, do they keep non-walkers back in the baby room?

► **Communication**

This is an area that parents can become easily frustrated over - lack of communication from settings. Since our children tend to have delayed speech, it is important that the setting feeds back what your child is doing/working on/enjoying at the setting. Photographs are a great tool as they also give our children a prompt and focus to share news at home.

- How do they communicate with parents - is there a home schoolbook and/or do they have an online app, e.g. Tapestry or Family?
- How do they inform parents of a child's targets and progress?

► **Toilet training**

Are they happy to potty train and to follow your advice?

If you are following the DSUK step by step programme, are staff happy to join DSUK's Facebook group for further information and support?



**SCAN HERE TO JOIN
FACEBOOK GROUP**

Special Educational Needs experience/ ability to include your child

► What proportion of their children have SEN?

This can give an idea of how inclusive they currently are. You can ask them to share details around their experience of working with children with a learning disability.

► Does the SENCo (Special Educational Needs CoOrdinator) work full time?

It's good to know that they invest in SENCo time.

Do the hours worked seem reasonable for the number of children with additional needs and the size of the setting?

► EHCP – Education Health Care Plan

Do they have experience of applying for and supporting parents around an EHCP?

► Do they have experience of Makaton/signing?

If so, how recently and how many members of current staff attended?

Would they consider accessing training? DSUK provides a 2 hour introduction to Makaton session for nurseries that costs £20 per attendee. **See all our training courses [here](#).**



► Do they have experience of using visuals?

We know our children benefit from visual prompts/reinforcements so good to establish if not using already, would they introduce to include supporting your child (and plenty others will benefit too!).

Examples of visuals used would be Makaton symbols/photo symbols/ Widget symbols. Also, objects of reference (using the toy animals when singing old MacDonald) and visual timetables. Is there a visual timetable used daily for all children already?

► Will they make staff available to attend training?

- If your child were to join, would they ensure staff can attend training?
- If so, what training would they look to access, and how many members of staff?

DSUK's Early Years Development Programme (EYDP) can provide your chosen setting with free access to our CPD-accredited training, resources and ongoing support.



DSUK also offers an introduction to Makaton session for nursery/childminder settings at £20 per member of staff. **For details of any training ask the setting to email: education@downsyndromeuk.co.uk**

► Funding

- How will they support your child if the child is given additional funding such as DAF?
- One consistent member for all the hours?
- Different people at different times?
- A member of current staff?
- Would they use agency/temp staff?

► Experience of working with external specialist support?

What professionals are they used to visiting, do they have experience of working with a physiotherapist, speech and language therapist and/or specialist teachers who may be involved with your child?

► Medical needs

You are obviously aware of your child's medical needs, some that may be worth mentioning to a preschool setting, if relevant, to see how they respond are the use of thickened fluids, NG/peg feeds and/or gastrostomy.



Additional DSUK Resources

▶ **Toilet training information**

[Toileting issues in schools and nurseries](#)

Best practice guidelines:

[Toilet training a skill development programme](#)

[Baseline toileting chart](#)

▶ **Care plan**

[Intimate care plan](#)

▶ **An introduction for nursery**

[This is me template](#)

VISIT OUR [WEBSITE](#)

Lots of resources
and details of
training can be
accessed via
DSUK's website



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

▶ [Down syndrome education international](#)

[Reading and Language Intervention](#)

▶ [Special iApps](#)

▶ [See & Learn](#)

▶ Reading and language
[Video 1](#)

[Video 2](#)

[Video 3](#)

▶ [Numicon guide for parents](#)

▶ [Maths for life](#)

▶ [POPS reading scheme](#)

▶ [Singing Hands](#)

▶ [Makaton](#)

