

Find the **BEST SCHOOL** for your child

With so much on offer at each independent school, it can be hard to know which school is the best fit for your child. Most families attend an open day (in normal times) or book a visit to tour the school and chat with the head before making their final decision. We have created this handy checklist of questions for you to think about which aspects of school life are important to your child and your family. Choose the questions you would like to ask the school, its pupils and friends who currently have children at the school. There are no wrong or right answers to any of these questions. What is important to one person may be of little interest to another. For example, how many pupils are in a school or class? A small school will offer advantages a big school simply can't, but a large school will also offer other aspects a small school can't. The questions here are just prompts to help you establish which school it is that fits your family values and ethos.

Often it is a pupil who will give you a tour of the school. You can find out a lot from simply asking them: What do you like and dislike most about your school?

SIZE	School A	School B
• What is the overall size of the school ?		
• Are all age groups on the same campus or on separate sites?		
• How many classes are there for each age group and how many pupils per class ?		
• How integrated are the various age groups, eg during breaks, at assembly, for composite class activities and extra-curricular activities?		

LOCATION	School A	School B
• Is the school within walking distance of your home?		
• Does the school offer a bus services or walking bus, and do you need to pay for this service?		
• Is the school on a convenient public transport route?		
• Is there a procedure for drop off and pick up times and does this fit in to your schedule?		

FOOD	School A	School B
• Is lunch provided for all year groups and does it cost extra?		
• What types of meals are provided and are they hot or cold?		
• Is the food freshly prepared on site and are the menus changed regularly?		
• Does the school offer a breakfast or evening meal service?		
• Is there provision for special dietary requirements?		
• What is the mealtime experience like, eg do teachers eat with the children and do all year groups eat together?		

FACILITIES	School A	School B
• What has been the largest investment in the school's facilities recently and do they have plans for any future investments?		
• When looking at facilities remember to ask which year groups they are available for? How do pupils get to off-site facilities ?		

CO-EDUCATION OR SINGLE SEX	School A	School B
• If co-educational what is the male:female ratio and is the school co-educational in all year groups?		
• If there is a smaller gender group how is it integrated into the activities of the school?		
• If the school is single sex, does it have links with other single sex schools of the opposite gender?		
• What does the school view as the main advantages of the type of education it provides?		

RELIGION	School A	School B
• Does the school accept pupils of any faith?		
• Does the school hold a daily assembly and, if so, is religion brought into the theme?		
• Do all year groups attend assemblies?		
• How is religion taught within the school's curriculum?		
• Do the pupils sing hymns on a regular basis?		

EDUCATION	School A	School B
• Does the school follow the Scottish, English or a wider curriculum and which public examinations are taken for which subjects?		
• How integrated is the use of IT/iPads in learning?		
• If your child has particular interests or you want them to learn a specific subject, is the school strong in this area? [Ask to see the head of this department if they are available during your visit as this will give you a good sense of the passion s/he has for the subject.]		
• For which age groups are languages offered and which languages are available? [Remember to ask about Latin as well as modern languages.]		
• How much homework is given at each age and stage ?		
• Does the school group pupils by set, stream or mixed ability and for which subjects and age groups?		
• Which universities and courses have been the most popular for leavers in recent years?		
• Do class sizes change for particular subjects for different age groups?		
• What are recent exam results like? Are there subjects in which the school excels?		
• If your child is particularly bright, or needs special help/attention, ask how many support for learning teachers there are, how pupils access support for learning and if there is an additional cost for this?		
• How do you support pupils applying to Oxbridge? Do you provide support for entrance exams such as STEP mathematics?		

SPORTS	School A	School B
• What sports are offered within the curriculum?		
• How many hours of sport are there on the weekly timetable?		
• Does the school participate in competitive matches against other schools and in what sports?		
• How do pupils get selected to be in a team?		
• What sports facilities does the school have access to, are they on the same campus as the main school building and if not, how do pupils get to the facilities?		

AFTER SCHOOL & EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	School A	School B
• What time does the school day start and end?		
• Does the school offer wrap-around care and holiday clubs, how much do these cost and how many places are available?		
• Are after school activities included in the fees, are any of them compulsory and are there a variety of activities available to all year groups?		
• Does the school have a CCF unit or participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme?		

MUSIC & DRAMA	School A	School B
• Is drama on the timetable and can you take external drama exams eg. LAMDA?		
• If private music tuition is offered, for which instruments and which age groups is it available?		
• Are children taken out of class to attend private music tuition?		
• Does the school have organised music groups such as an orchestra, a pipe band or a choir and who can join?		
• What opportunities do pupils have to perform to an audience either individually or in groups?		
• Does the school take part in any external music or drama competitions?		

BOARDING	School A	School B
• Does the school offer full, weekly and/or flexi boarding?		
• Is it possible for your child to attend taster boarding days?		
• How do the routines, house system and timetables of day and boarding pupils differ?		
• What is the boarding:day pupil ratio?		
• What age does the school take boarders from?		
• Make sure you visit the dormitories and common areas. Are these facilities modern and comfortable and are children able to personalise their space?		

QUIZ PUPILS - As most open days involve being shown around the school by current pupils, this gives you a perfect opportunity to get some 'straight' answers to questions that may concern you. Bare in mind, however, that you would expect pupils to display a certain amount of loyalty to the school in their answers. This is a chance to get answers to questions that may be very specific to you, eg healthy eating, break-time activities, how strict (or otherwise) the school is, school trips, etc.

ETHOS & STAFF	School A	School B
• What is the school's anti-bullying policy?		
• Does the school have a published disciplinary code and will the approach to discipline suit your child's temperament and match your own views?		
• Is there a published set of school rules that you can have?		
• What are the qualifications and experience of teachers and what is staff turnover like?		
• How does the school reward and encourage achievements and a good work ethic?		
• How does the school motivate pupils?		
• Does the school have prefects and how does this system operate?		
• Does the school operate a house system and how does this play a part in school life?		
• Is there a mentoring system and how much interaction is there between younger and older pupils?		

COSTS	School A	School B
• Does the school offer bursaries and/or scholarships. Who is eligible and what percentage of assistance is available?		
• What additional costs, on top of fees, could I expect?		
• Does the school offer reduced fees for siblings, former pupils or certain professions?		
	School A	School B
Termly Fee		School Bus
Food		After School Activities
Books/Stationary/iPad/Laptop		Compulsory Uniform & Sports Kit
Exams		Music Lessons

ENTRY PROCEDURES	School A	School B
• Is there an entrance exam and what does it involve? What date is the next assessment day?		
• Does the school operate a waiting list and is it based on first come first served or academic ability?		
• How much does it cost to register on the waiting list?		
• Do pupils gain automatic entry from the lower parts of the school?		
• Does the school require reports and sample work from a previous school?		