

CHOOSING A FUTURE SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILD

The purpose of this document is to give some suggestions of what to consider when deciding on the type of school to visit and of questions that you might like to ask when visiting those schools.

1. Primary considerations:

- Day or boarding
- Single sex or co-educational
- International Baccalaureat or A levels (this will depend upon whether your child is one-sided in profile or equally strong across all subject areas).
- How far you are prepared to travel eg. If you are wanting to watch Saturday matches you may not want to travel three hours each way.
- Whether you want to find a school which will suit all your children or whether you are prepared to treat each one differently.

Above all remember that you are looking for a school which will suit your child and bring out the best in him or her; this will not necessarily be one of the 'big name' schools.

You would be unwise to select on hearsay or recommendation alone. What suits one child will not necessarily suit another. Be prepared to look at a school which you might have hated in the 1970s; schools do change.

2. Action:

- Go to the school website
- Send for a prospectus and a copy of the school magazine.

3. Arrange a meeting with Mrs Redstone to discuss general ideas.

- Consider financial factors, application for means tested bursaries, whether a scholarship might be a realistic option by that stage.
- Discuss those schools which assess children in Year 6 eg. Winchester, Eton, Tonbridge, Harrow, Wellington.

4. Booking a Visit

Once you have formed an idea of the type of school you think would suit your child eg. Coeducational within a 30 mile radius, then you should visit those

schools which satisfy your criteria. However, it would also be a good idea to look at other options including one that you are fairly sure would NOT be right! If it isn't, then you will have confirmed your views, but if it turns out that it might be this will be an indication that your priorities were not necessarily correct and you will need to think again.

This visit will be vital and will determine your child's whole future.

- Check on who you will be seeing and who will take you around.
- You might be meeting with the head or registrar. **Use this opportunity to discuss the ethos of the school, entrance standards and academic standards in general. Ask what the 'value-added' is like and if there is a good tutorial system. Ask what the school is looking for in the pupils it takes in. What are the strengths of the school.....and the weaknesses.**
- Always ask for a pupil to guide you round and ask them every question you want to know, they are likely to give you a very honest answer. Eg. **What is discipline like, which houses are strict, what do they do in their spare time, what do they do at weekends, how often do they go home?
Do they feel supported in their work?
Do they feel supported pastorally?
What do they most like about the school?
What do they like least about the school?
What kind of child would not get on at the school?
Could they describe a 'typical' pupil at that school**
- Make sure you meet at least one housemaster or housemistress. (this is equally important if you are choosing a day house). **Ask the same set of questions again and compare the answers.**
- **Ask about discipline and drugs.**
- **Ask about bullying – what is the house parent's approach?**
- **Find out what the houseparent is interested in and how long they have been in charge of the house.**
- **Try to have a chat with a few of the children in the house and ask them the kind of things that you know your child would be interested in – food, tuck, sport, drama ...**
- **Ask them to describe the 'character' of the house.**
- Do not worry if you don't meet the head – in larger schools there is usually relatively little contact between head and pupil unless there is a problem!

4. After your visit :

Jot down a list of likes and dislikes as soon as you get back to the car.

Ask your child's opinion (if he/she visited with you) - but remember that he/she will probably be influenced by trivialities rather than the substance of the school.

Timescales:

When should I start to visit future schools?

When your child is in Year 5, as lists do fill up quickly in some schools. However, children do change and a quiet, reflective child in Year 5 may be quite different by Year 8!

Should I take my child with me?

Initial visits are probably best done by parents alone as the children are still very young at Y5. As a result of these visits you are likely to narrow your choices to perhaps two schools and should register with both of these. One of these should have lower entrance criteria than the other, so that if, as your child develops, it becomes apparent that he/she is unlikely to attain a 65% average at CE (for example) you have an option which is attainable.

Once you have narrowed your choice to a couple of schools, it is a good idea to take your child to visit during **Y6, and during this visit you and your child should make a choice of house, dependent upon how well your child relates to the house parent.** In some schools houses get booked up during the Michaelmas term of Y6.

Please do arrange a meeting to discuss the entrance levels suitable for your child. We are here to advise you on a range of schools which might suit your child, but as parents, the final decision is yours. This decision should be clear by the end of Year 7 so that the child has just one focus during Y8.

M.Redstone
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