

101 QUESTIONS

TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL



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Choosing the 'best' school for your child can be overwhelming. First and foremost, the 'best' school will be one that provides your child with a sound education and an environment in which to become a creative, reflective, and critical thinker, make friends, feel safe and thrive.

First steps

Step 1: Research

The Good Schools Guide, goodschools.com.au, allows you to search every primary and secondary school in Australia.

Step 2: Reflect

Reflect on your child's:

- interests
- academic ability
- aptitude in sport, art and other extracurricular areas
- preference for a single or co-educational learning environment

Step 3: Consider

Consider the following:

- where you are prepared to travel
- which sectors are most appropriate
- a preference for a particular religion or ethos
- enrolment fees and additional costs

Step 4: Assess

Assess the ability of the school to 'add value':

- year on year improved VCE results
- retention rates
- extracurricular opportunities
- pastoral care

Step 5: Investigate

With your short lists of schools:

- attend an open day and/or school tour
- scour their website
- scroll social media posts
- ask the 101 questions



Question List

School Management and Leadership

1. What is the leadership style of the principal?
2. Does the school have a vision for its future?
3. Are the school rules clearly stated and positively enforced?
4. How and why student leaders chosen? What are their responsibilities? Are they given mentor support?
5. Is the leadership team respected by the school community?
6. Can parents contribute to the leadership of the school?

Teachers and Teaching

7. What is the retention rate of teachers?
8. What is the experience and knowledge of teachers?
9. Are the teachers respected by students?
10. How does the school cater for student's individual needs and differences?
11. What is the pedagogy of the school?
12. Are soft skills (such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, time management, adaptability) explicitly taught?
13. What is the school's homework expectation?
14. How do teachers assist students who have issues regarding school, work, sport or home?
15. Does the school provide integration aides and other allied specialists (such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists etc.)

The Curriculum and extra-curricular activities

16. Does the school's curriculum cater to your child's needs?
17. Is the curriculum balanced and comprehensive?
18. Does the school offer the International Baccalaureate (IB)?
19. How does the school support students in TAFE and/or apprenticeship pathways?
20. Is the curriculum able to incorporate advanced concepts outside the students' year level?
21. Does the curriculum allow students to combine academic concepts, theories and principles with applied learning that they can use in the real world?
22. What extra-curricular activities does the school offer and at what year level?
23. Are there clubs, camps, excursions or incursions that may or may not suit your child?
24. Does the school offer exchange programs, either within Australia or overseas?



25. Does the school have a partnership program with an external institution (such as a university)?
26. Does the school have a brother/sister school?

Academic Performance

27. How is student performance and progress measured and evaluated? Will this method suit your child?
28. How is the school's overall performance monitored and evaluated? How is this communicated?
29. Does the school boost its academic results by depending on attracting the most academically able students?
30. Does the school place students in subject classes based on ability?
31. What proportion of the school's students continue with tertiary education? What types of tertiary education? What sectors do they tend to study?
32. What proportion of the school's students enter the workforce post-secondary school? What sectors do they tend to work in?
33. What percentage of students receive an ATAR of 90+?
34. What explanation does the school provide for their school's Year 12 results?
35. Is the school academically competitive?
36. Will your child be sufficiently challenged?
37. What is the school's policy regarding teaching gifted and talented children?
38. What is the school's policy regarding teaching children with additional needs?

The Students

39. What is the admission and selection criteria?
40. How many students are in the school?
41. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school size?
42. What are the class sizes? Is there a maximum number of students allowed in each class?
43. Are there composite classes?
44. What is the school's policy on class construction?
45. Is the school co-educational or single-sex? If co-educational, what is the gender balance of the school, year level and classes?
46. How multicultural is the school? What is the multicultural mix?
47. Does the school celebrate diversity or does it encourage conformity?
48. Do the students display school spirit?
49. How would the school characterise teacher-student relationships?



50. Are there any peer support programs?
51. How are positive, healthy relationships and friendships between students fostered?
52. What are the expectations and realities of school attendance rates?
53. What is the retention rate of students?

Facilities and Resources

54. Is the school clean and well maintained?
55. Are the grounds safe?
56. Are there sufficient areas for the students to play, talk, relax, eat etc.?
57. Do you want your child to go to the one primary and secondary school? If so, does the primary school continue to secondary or is there an affiliated secondary school nearby?
58. Does the school cater for boarders? If so, how?
59. Does the school offer facilities (eg. sports, arts, technology, science, music etc.) in line with your child's interests and ambitions?
60. How is the library maintained and operated?
61. Does the school offer before- and/or after-school opportunities? If so, at what cost? what is the supervision? what are the activities?
62. Does the school provide food? If so, at what cost? what are the options?

Costs

63. What are the yearly costs?
64. Is there financial assistance?
65. Are scholarships offered? What percentage? What are the eligibility criteria?
66. What is the increase in cost as your child progresses through the year levels?
67. What do the yearly fees include?
68. What isn't included in the yearly fees? For example, laptop hire, music tuition, building loans, camps etc.
69. What is the textbook cost each year? Does the school offer a point of sale to buy used textbooks?
70. How much is the uniform? Does the school offer a second-hand uniform shop?
71. What are the fees for boarding?

Information and Communication Technology

72. What is the school's ICT policy, including the use of mobile phones?
73. Does the school hire, lend, or ask parents to buy their own devices? From what year level are devices required? Does the school have a preferred device?
74. What and how is technology used in the classroom?



Transport

75. How far away is the school?
76. Is it easily accessible by public transport from your home?
77. If you plan to drive your child to school, is it close to where you work? Does it have a designated drop-off/pick-up area?
78. Does the school offer a bus service? If so, what is the cost?
79. Does the school offer a 'walking bus' program whereby students join a school-run group that walks together safely to school?

Two-way communication

80. How do teachers interact with parents?
81. Is feedback welcomed?
82. How will your child's progress be reported to you?
83. How much are parents allowed to be involved or expected to be involved in the school, its programs, activities and leadership decisions?
84. Do parents have access to lesson plans, progress reports and homework tasks?
85. How are parents informed if there are concerns or issues with their child?

Values

86. Are the school's religious and philosophical outlooks and practices in line with your family's beliefs?
87. What is the school's philosophy and mission?
88. Does the school follow a specific educational model (eg. Steiner)?
89. What aspect of education does it value most – academic, vocational, physical, social, emotional, spiritual or all of them?
90. How does the school teach the students morals and ethics? Do these align with your family's?
91. What is the school's disciplinary policy?
92. What is the school's policy for incomplete homework and/or assessment tasks?
93. How strict is the uniform dress code?
94. How does the school respond to incidents of bullying?
95. How does the school resolve conflict in the playground and/or classroom?
96. What is the school's policy on illicit substances?
97. How does the school respond to a sick or injured child? Does the school have a qualified nurse on staff?
98. How does the school respond to child with social-emotional difficulties and/or mental illness? Does the school have a qualified counsellor/psychologist on staff?



99. How are unwell (either mentally or physically) children responded to by staff and peers?
100. What roles does the school play in the local community? Is it involved in community projects (such as fundraising, community service, community planning and volunteering of time)?
101. To what extent does the religious ethos of the school impact curriculum delivery?

Need more help or information? Go to www.hendersons.com.au and book a consultation with us to know more about how we can help you and your child.

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