



Choosing the Best School for Your Child

Sometimes choosing a school for your child is as easy as geography – the one closest to home is the right one. But for some families, school selection can be a more complicated decision.

About choosing a school for your child

Decisions about where your child goes to school are very personal and can be difficult. It's common and normal for parents to feel anxious about getting this decision right.

For some parents, the decision is simple. Their children go to the local state school – the school in the same government zone as their house. Other parents might want to look further afield at independent or private schools.

Things to consider when choosing a school for your child

If you're looking beyond the local public school, think about what will work best for **your child's personality, strengths, needs and interests**. You might also consider how different schools' cultures and values fit with your family values and family life.

Here are some other things you could think about.

Personal values and preferences

- Do you prefer public, private or independent education (i.e.. Catholic Schools)? Are the facilities or subject choices a consideration?
- Do you want your child to attend the same school that you attended or have a different experience?
- Do you want your child to have a religious education?

Practical considerations

- How do things like the location of the school, cost or difficulty of travelling to and from the school, and public transport options affect you?
- If you have other children, is it important that all your children go to the same school?
- Where are your child's friends going to school?
- Where do most of the children from your child's kindy or family care group go to school?

School-specific factors

- Is the school small or large? What size is likely to suit your child best?
- What facilities does the school have to support your child's learning – playgrounds, library, music programs, clubs and sporting teams?
- Has the school improved its academic results over the past few years? What about its performance in other areas like the arts, sport or community engagement?
- How well does the school support children with additional needs, if your child has a disability, developmental delay, autism spectrum disorder or other need?



School communication and connections

- What opportunities are there for parent and family involvement with the school, and how is communication between home and the school managed?
- How is the school connected with the local community?

Choosing a primary school

The following questions might be useful if you're thinking about primary schools:

- Will you and your child feel welcome at the school?
- Does the school offer a 'transition into school' program?
- What approach does the school take to behaviour management?
- What do other parents you know think about the different schools in your area? What are their experiences?
- Does your child's kindy teacher have an opinion on which school might be the best fit for your child?

Choosing schools: important facts and factors

Many parents worry about things like class size or whether a single-sex or co-educational school is best. They also want to know how to find out about a school's philosophy. Here are some answers that might guide your thinking.

Class size

Small class sizes can have a positive effect on children's learning but teacher quality and working conditions for teachers are likely to be more important. This includes teachers being well supported by other staff and having access to resources.

School culture or philosophy

Schools have individual and distinct cultures and teaching philosophies. For example, some have a strong sports ethic, some follow a religious affiliation, and others promote individuality, artistic pursuits, creative thinking or problem-solving.

It all depends on what's important to you and your child. Are you looking for a school with a balanced sporting and academic approach, or one with strengths in artistic and musical areas, or in science and maths? An environment with a strong academic focus might be important to you, or perhaps one that teaches your child more about your religious views.

Most schools talk about their philosophies and approach in a document like a prospectus, handbook or charter. You might also find this information on the school website.

Before your school search starts, it could help to come up with a list of five things that are most important to you (and your child) in your choice of a school. As you go through the school selection process, think about this list – you might want to add to or revise it as you gather more information.

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