

Choosing the right school for your child

LAURA CUNNINGHAM

lauracunningham61@hotmail.co.uk



When it comes to academic success of a child ...

“its what a parent does, not who they are that has the most impact”

- Professor Charles Desforges

“Heirs of the past, Makers of the future”

- ▶ Worked in education policy
- ▶ Visited lots of schools and got to know lots of school leaders – many of the best
- ▶ I live in Lewisham, South London – it gets an unfair press
- ▶ We didn't choose the right primary for our son
- ▶ The build up to choosing a secondary school for him was a terrible, nerve-wracking experience

You are more in control than you think



- ▶ Make an informed, realistic choice – easy access to information
- ▶ Make sure you know about school admission arrangements and key dates
- ▶ Visit the schools – and make your own mind up!
- ▶ Know your child and what type of school might suit them

So how does the system work

Parents

- ▶ System based on parental preference
- ▶ Last year over 93% of parents were offered one of their top three choice secondary schools and just under 98% for primary.

The school's admission authority

- ▶ Either the local authority or the school itself
- ▶ Responsible for setting a schools 'admission arrangements'

The local authority

- ▶ Co-ordinate admissions (i.e. applications are sent to the LA who then liaise with the relevant admissions authorities)

The School Admissions Code ensures fairness

- ▶ Issued by the Department for Education and sets out roles and responsibilities
- ▶ All state-funded mainstream schools must comply with the Code - including academies and free schools.
- ▶ The purpose of the Code is to ensure that all school places are allocated and offered in an open and fair way
- ▶ It sets clear deadlines for the admissions cycle
- ▶ Requires all admission authorities to publish 'admission arrangements' so it is clear how places are allocated.

Admission arrangements must include:

- ▶ Published Admissions Number (PAN)
- ▶ Over-subscription criteria - how applications will be prioritised if there are more applicants than places
- ▶ It must also include a tie-break (often distance)
- ▶ Children with an Education, Health and Care plan or SEN statement naming a school must be admitted.
- ▶ First priority in oversubscription criteria must be given to looked after children and previously looked after children.
- ▶ The admission authority decides which other criteria to use
- ▶ Code sets out what cannot be taken into consideration e.g. occupation or marital status of parent

Examples of oversubscription criteria

- ▶ Siblings at the school
- ▶ Children eligible for the pupil premium or free school meals
- ▶ Medical or social need
- ▶ Feeder primary schools
- ▶ Catchment areas
- ▶ Faith based criteria only where a school is designated as having a religious character (membership and practice of faith)

Make sure you know key dates

Determination Year (2018/19)

- ▶ Admission arrangements for Sept 2019 entry are proposed, (if applicable) consulted on and 'determined'
- ▶ Objections can be made to Office of Schools Adjudicator

Offer Year (2019/20)

- ▶ Parents express their preference for schools
- ▶ Offers are made
- ▶ If applicable, appeals are heard

Entry Year (2019/20)

- ▶ Child is admitted to school

Starting the process

- ▶ The LA publish the 'composite prospectus' by 12 Sept
- ▶ Check this for your LA and any neighbouring LAs if you are interested in applying for a school within other LAs.
- ▶ Parents express their preferences
- ▶ You complete a single 'common application form' (CAF) for the LA in which you live. All London LAs use the online e-admissions portal
- ▶ You can express a preference for schools in other LAs on this same form
- ▶ You must be allowed a minimum of 3 preferences (London LAs tend to offer 6)
- ▶ National deadlines are 31 October for secondary and 15 January for primary

Offer Year

- ▶ Admissions authority allocate places
- ▶ Must allocate a place to everyone who applies, unless the school is oversubscribed
- ▶ Can only prioritise places based on their published oversubscription criteria
- ▶ Cannot give higher priority based on first preference
- ▶ Local authority make offers
- ▶ On 1 March for secondary and 16 April for primary
- ▶ Any parent whose child is refused a place has right of appeal to independent panel
- ▶ Appeals Code requires admission authorities to establish an independent panel and sets out process/ timings

Grammar school admissions

- ▶ Follow the same process as all other schools
- ▶ Additional step as children sit a test to determine if they meet the academic entry requirements
- ▶ Tests are set at admission authority level
- ▶ Many schools work in a consortium so children only have to sit a single test for these schools (Kent, Bucks)
- ▶ Admissions authorities must take all reasonable steps to inform parents of the outcome of the test before the national secondary application deadline (31 Oct)
- ▶ Schools can allocate places in 'rank order'

Myth-busters

- ▶ Only expressing one preference – this is very risky!
- ▶ Expressing the same preference multiple times – waste of choices
- ▶ “If you put down a school you want and then put down all other schools that are really far from where you live, you will get the school you want”
- ▶ All schools operate catchment areas – many do not, check admissions arrangements.
- ▶ All primary schools offer sibling priority – this is not a mandatory requirement.
- ▶ Grammar schools are only for middle-class families – many prioritise applications from children on Free School Meals/Pupil Premium. Check arrangements!

Improvements in the state sector – more myth-busting !

- ▶ New buildings and facilities
- ▶ Training for school leaders
- ▶ Well-qualified teachers and specialist programmes such as Teach First, Future Leaders
- ▶ More business focused – School Bursars
- ▶ Impact of London Challenge 2003-2011
- ▶ Cultural and sporting opportunities
- ▶ Ofsted inspections

Do your research

- ▶ Look on the school website
- ▶ Look at DfE/ local authority data on the schools
- ▶ Look at Ofsted reports
- ▶ Visit the schools
- ▶ Talk to other parents - but remember every child is different

School name	Type of school	Number of pupils at end of key stage 4	Progress 8 score & description	Attainment 8 score	Grade 5 or above in English & maths GCSEs	Achieving EBacc at grade 5/C or above	Entering EBacc	Staying in education or entering employment (2015 leavers)
Sacred Heart Catholic School	Academy	132	Well above average 1.07	56.1	60%	45%	65%	96% (132 of 138 pupils)
Add to comparison list								
The City Academy, Hackney	Academy	175	Well above average 1.06	55.7	52%	46%	85%	94% (163 of 174 pupils)
Add to comparison list								
Mossbourne Community Academy	Academy	196	Well above average 1.06	56.7	60%	52%	84%	95% (176 of 186 pupils)
Add to comparison list								
Ark King Solomon Academy	Academy	58	Well above average 1.05	55.4	62%	55%	86%	93% (56 of 60 pupils)
Add to comparison list								
Wallington High School for Girls	Academy	207	Well above average 1.04	75.2	98%	93%	97%	100% (179 of 179 pupils)
Add to comparison list								
Khalsa Secondary Academy	Academy	28	Well above average 1.03	57.3	64%	54%	100%	—
Add to comparison list								

School name	Type of school	% of pupils meeting expected standard	Progress score & description			% of pupils achieving at a higher standard	Average score in reading	Average score in maths
			Reading	Writing	Maths			
St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School	Maintained School	96%	Well above average 4.4	Average 2.0	Well above average 3.9	8%	110	110
Add to comparison list								
Eliot Bank Primary School	Maintained School	85%	Well above average 4.0	Average 1.1	Well above average 4.1	23%	109	109
Add to comparison list								
Holbeach Primary School	Maintained School	73%	Well above average 3.6	Above average 1.9	Above average 2.9	7%	106	105
Add to comparison list								
Horniman Primary School	Maintained School	86%	Well above average 3.6	Average 0.4	Average 1.5	21%	110	108
Add to comparison list								
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Maintained School	90%	Well above average 3.5	Average 0.9	Well above average 5.3	3%	108	110
Add to comparison list								
Stillness Junior School	Maintained School	72%	Well above average 3.5	Below average -1.6	Above average 2.2	16%	110	109
Add to comparison list								

Ofsted reports

- ▶ Overall effectiveness
- ▶ Effectiveness of leadership and management
- ▶ Quality of teaching learning and assessment
- ▶ Personal development, behaviour and welfare
- ▶ Outcomes for pupils
- ▶ Early years provision
- ▶ Overall effectiveness at previous inspection


Visit the school open day

- ▶ Take your child, do your research and be prepared to ask staff and pupils questions
- ▶ Observe the behaviour of pupils and staff
- ▶ Homework policy
- ▶ Will your child manage the journey
- ▶ Look at the school policies – eg Anti-bullying / SEND
- ▶ Talk to your child

What is important to you/your child?

- ▶ Academic performance
- ▶ Specialist provision –maths and science/arts and performance/sports*
- ▶ Ethos
- ▶ Selective- comprehensive *
- ▶ Size
- ▶ Single sex – mixed *
- ▶ Religious character or not
- ▶ Travel – local
- ▶ Extra curricular activities/before and after school provision
- ▶ Good SEN provision

* Secondary schools only



“It feels fantastic to work for something and to achieve it, but ultimately grades are just grades and they don’t make you who you are – there are much more important things”

- Jacob Lundie-Fallon (5 A* A Level student, Kingsdale Foundation School 2017)

Above all else

Don't panic!