66 QUESTIONS TO ASK SCHOOLS

Bonas MacFarlane's school placement team put together this list based on questions that they research when helping parents choose a school.

They told us, "Each family will have their own priorities, but over the years we have built up a list of the basic questions that parents usually ask. It's now quite a long list, but parents can use these questions as a checklist to help them focus their search.

Many of these questions you will be able to answer by reading the school's prospectus and website. Others you will need to ask the schools directly."

BASIC INFORMATION

1. Where is the school located? How far is this from home? How will my son or daughter get there?
2. Is the school in a city, town, the heart of the country, UK or overseas?
3. Is this a standalone school or is it connected with a prep school?
4. What is the size of the school? Is it a small school (50-60 in a year group)? Or large (perhaps 200 or more in a year group)?
5. What are the hours? How does the day work?
6. What are the fees?
7. When was the school founded?
8. Who owns the school?Is it a charitable trust? Part of a larger group?
9. How long has the Head been at the school? When do they plan to retire?

FACILITIES

1. What outdoor space and facilities does the school have?
2. Do you have a school hall, sports hall, library, theatre, swimming pool?
3. Is there a good mixture of traditional and contemporary equipment?
4. Do you have dedicated science laboratories?
5. Please tell me about the food and lunch.

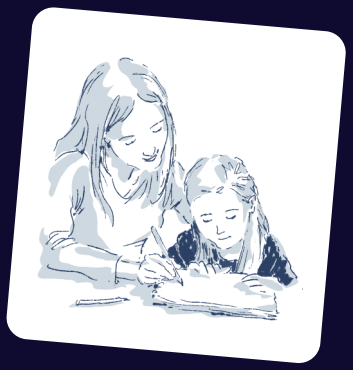
ACADEMIC QUESTIONS

1. What are the class sizes?
2. What is the staff to pupil ratio?
3. Is the teaching mixed ability, set or streamed?
4. How do you monitor each child's progress?

BONAS MACFARLANE

Potential, released.

Bonas MacFarlane's approach to school placement has been described by the London Evening Standard as "breathtakingly comprehensive".





bonasmacfarlane.co.uk

5. How do you provide parents with information about progress?
6. What subjects do your offer up to 16 (and sixth form?)
7. What languages do you offer? Do you teach Latin? Greek?
8. Does the school teach A Levels, IB or a combination of both?
9. Which universities do you feed?
10. How do you support university applications? Do you have a US university advisor?
11. What are your GCSE and A-level/IB results?
12. How many pupils stay on in the Sixth Form? How many join the school at 16+, do many come from overseas?
13. What are the staff qualifications? How many are subject specialists?
14. What additional support do you offer? What is your SEN support? What assessments do you do?
15. What learning difficulties can you cope with?
16. If my child has a particular talent do you have programmes to enrich and stretch?
17. How does the school embrace technology and innovation?

BEYOND ACADEMICS

1. What extra-curricular activities and clubs do you offer?
2. Do you offer individual music lessons? Which instruments?
3. Will my child take part in drama and musical productions?
4. What sports do you offer? Does everyone have to do the same sports?
5. Will my child be likely to be in a team?
6. What other schools do you compete against?
7. What trips and expeditions do you run?
8. What careers advice do you offer?

PASTORAL QUESTIONS

1. How do you promote well-being and happiness?
2. What happens if my child is unwell or injured?
3. What happens when things go wrong?
4. What are your drug policies? How do you manage teenage stress and mental health? How do you deal with bullying?

ETHOS

1. Does the school have a religious ethos, or any other particular ethos? How do you cater for children who do not share that ethos?
2. How are you preparing children for the future?
3. How international and diverse is your school?

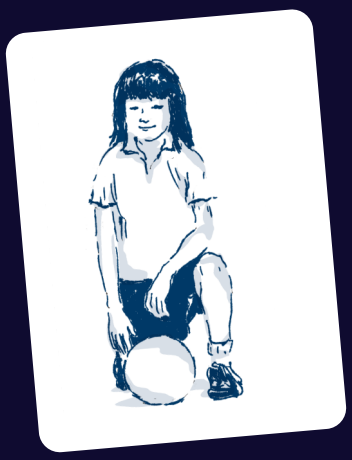
BOARDING

1. How do you manage the transition to boarding for children who were not prep school boarders?
2. What do you do about home-sickness?
3. Can my child weekly board? Or part-time board? What are your attitudes to children coming home at the weekend?
4. Are there lessons and matches on Saturdays?

BONAS MACFARLANE

Potential, released.







5. How many full and part time boarders do you have?
6. How many children are in school at weekends?
7. How does the boarding setup work? Are boarders grouped in houses? Which members of staff are responsible for boarding?
8. How many pupils are in each dormitory?
9. How do we stay in touch with our child? Can my child have a mobile phone?
10. What happens on my child's birthday?
11. How do you manage safeguarding?

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

1. What are the main entry points (ages when children join)? If my child is a different age can they join, and how will they be integrated?
2. When should I register?
3. What are the entrance criteria?
4. Do you have screening tests and if so how should we prepare my child?
5. Do you use Common Entrance for the main entry examination?
6. Do you interview each child?
7. What scholarships do you offer and how do we apply for them?
8. What bursaries do you have available?
9. I have more than one child, do you give discounts for multi-child families?



BONAS MACFARLANE

Potential, released.



bonasmacfarlane.co.uk