

2021  
CATHOLIC EDUCATION  
DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA



SCHOOL SELECTION  
MADE SIMPLE

# Contents

3

School selection made easy.

4

Where do I start?

6

How can I tell if my preschooler is ready for school?

7

What should I be looking for in a school?

10

Exactly what are Catholic schools, and where do they fit in?

11

Thinking about a Catholic school? Here's what you need to know ...



# SCHOOL SELECTION MADE EASY

Choosing a school for your child can be one of the biggest decisions you make as a parent or carer, whether your child is just starting school, or is further along in their learning. The aim of this guide is to provide information around school selection that will simplify and explain today's education landscape and give parents and carers some practical tips for making an informed decision.

# WHERE DO I START?

In today's information age it is easy to be overwhelmed by the massive amount of information available from all different sources, and to be unsure about where to begin when trying to choose a school. It helps to focus on these key areas as a starting point:

## **COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOLS THAT ARE POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUR CHILD.**

Speak to family and friends about their schools; visit schools by calling and arranging a time or going to an open day; check out school websites or Facebook pages; collect brochures or flyers from schools; and scan your local paper for features about schools in the area. Many school websites now also feature virtual tours. School policies and annual reports often tell you lots about a school and can usually be found on school websites. Knowledge is power and knowing all you can about your options will help you feel comfortable making a decision. To find out what schools are available to you, use the Australian Government's My School website to find government, Catholic and independent schools across Australia.

## **CONSIDER YOUR CHILD'S INTERESTS, ABILITIES AND NEEDS.**

The aim of education is to ensure that every individual child achieves their full potential. Does your child have any special learning, language or physical needs to be met? What is your child's learning style – e.g. visual, verbal, hands on, in groups, by themselves? Is your child interested in a particular sport, language, creative or performing arts? Your choice of school should reflect what best suits your child.



**THINK ABOUT YOUR FAMILY PREFERENCES AND THOSE OF YOUR CHILD.**

This can include considering factors such as location – do you need the school to be in walking distance? Do you need public transport options? Often cost is an important factor, so consider costs for fees, uniforms, books and equipment. Is there financial assistance or scholarships available? Is a religious education a key factor for your family? How does your child feel about the schools you are considering? It is worth taking your child to visit the schools so that they can get a feel for them and form their own views.

**FIND OUT ABOUT THE APPLICATION AND/OR ENROLMENT PROCESSES FOR THE SCHOOLS YOU'RE INTERESTED IN.**

Most schools accept applications and enrolments from early in the year before your child will start school. However, some independent (non-government) schools often have long waiting lists, so you may need to apply and enrol much earlier. You can contact the schools directly to find out about their requirements.



# HOW CAN I TELL IF MY PRESCHOOLER IS READY FOR SCHOOL?

Any child who turns five years old on or before 31 July is eligible for enrolment in Kindergarten that year. All children must be enrolled in school by the time they turn six. School readiness is also an issue that you can discuss with your child's prospective school. As part of an enrolment interview, a school representative will meet with you and your child and will be able to provide professional advice. You can also seek advice and feedback from your child's daycare centre or preschool.

## THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY ALSO HELP YOU THINK THIS THROUGH:

- does your child have the confidence to ask for help or assistance when they need it?
- can they identify their own belongings?
- can they open a school lunch box?
- can they eat and drink by themselves?
- does your child play and relate well with other children?
- are they able to accept direction from others?
- are they able to go to the toilet by themselves?
- is your child able to settle themselves when they get upset?



# WHAT SHOULD I BE LOOKING FOR IN A SCHOOL?



## **LEARNING IS VALUED AND VISIBLE.**

A good school places learning at the centre of all that it does, and not just student learning. From the Principal down to the newest teacher there should be a willingness to learn and continually improve, often this is demonstrated through professional learning opportunities. Are the teachers embracing every chance to improve their knowledge and skills? Are teachers planning and working together and modelling collaboration? When teachers show that they are also learners it helps students understand the importance of learning and that it is a lifelong journey.

## **EVERY CHILD IS CONSIDERED CAPABLE OF GROWTH AND SUCCESS.**

The best schools truly believe that every student is a capable and resourceful learner. They value the voices of their students and take every opportunity to celebrate the achievements of all students, not just those who are excelling academically. Look for a school that recognises the importance of social as well as academic growth. This type of school offers an environment where every child feels valued and important and supported in their learning and development.

### **THE SCHOOL INTERACTS POSITIVELY WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY.**

Schools do not exist in isolation and should see themselves as connected to the world and people around them. Good schools maintain positive relationships with all parents and carers through regular communications and opportunities to participate in the life of the school beyond helping out at the canteen and fundraising. How are parents from non-English speaking backgrounds included and valued? It is also about establishing partnerships with community groups and industries to create new and exciting learning opportunities for the students.

### **OPEN DAYS AND SCHOOL VISITS - WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO PREPARE.**

As a result of COVID-19, some schools may be offering online opportunities to learn more as an alternative to traditional open days. Some schools have created virtual tours, informative videos and are holding information sessions through online forums like Facebook live. Where possible one of the best ways to determine the culture of a school is to visit. Go during school hours on a regular day if possible, this way you will see how things work day-to-day. Don't be afraid to ask questions to get a better understanding of the school environment.

**Below are some suggested questions you may find useful for a school visit or online information session.**

- how will my child learn? (this is much more useful than just asking what they will learn, which is basically the same across all schools)
- how will you get to know my child as a learner?
- how will you make learning relevant for my child?
- how will you involve my child in learning?
- what does the learning environment look like?
- how will you measure success in learning? (the answer should be something more than tests scores and NAPLAN results)
- how will you involve us as parents/carers in our child's learning and in the life of the school?
- how do you use technology to enable learning?
- what will parent engagement, including communication, look like?
- what are some of the other opportunities available to my child at the school?





Primary school open days are usually run during school hours giving prospective families the chance to see learning and teaching in action. The timing of secondary school open days and tours vary but are often in the evening. Participating in these events is an important part of the school selection process, giving the chance to chat informally to teachers, other parents and students, as well as allowing a close up look at learning spaces and the school's facilities.

Pay attention to your first impressions, in this case they really do count. Things to think about when you visit:

- when you arrive does it feel warm, welcoming and inclusive?
- is the school clean and tidy?
- how friendly are the staff?
- how does the Principal interact with you and your child?

It is a good idea to check out as many schools as you can to help you compare but remember not everything that happens in schools is on show, so do your research too.



# EXACTLY WHAT ARE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, AND WHERE DO THEY FIT IN?

Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) leads 80 schools (known as systemic or Diocesan schools) across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains and although they are part of a 'system' of Catholic schools, each one is a unique school community. CEDP schools are funded by the Australian and NSW governments, as well as through modest school fees and fundraising.

A Catholic education in the Diocese of Parramatta is innovative, personalised and relevant to the needs of today's learner. The individual child is the focus of the learning and teaching with a curriculum that caters for a wide range of interests and abilities. Catholic schools teach the same curriculum as government schools. CEDP aims to develop in students the skills they need for today and to prepare them for tomorrow with an emphasis on communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

Our system of Catholic schools is a work of the Church, under the leadership of our Bishop and in collaboration with priests, parents, students and staff, to realise the mission of bringing the person of Jesus Christ into the lives of the young people in our care and their families. Our Religious Education program has been reimaged to ensure its relevance for today's world.

Our schools are an affordable alternative to high-fee private schools and consistently achieve great results for students. We understand that students need to feel happy and safe at school in order to thrive, so our focus is on student wellbeing and meeting the needs of each child.

CEDP schools have highly skilled educators on staff who are supported and encouraged to continue to improve and learn. Our schools view parents and carers as important partners in their child's education and are committed to strengthening the connection between home and school. We welcome our students and their families to not just enrol in a school, but to join a dynamic learning community where everyone has a role to play.

# THINKING ABOUT A CATHOLIC SCHOOL? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ...

All children and families are welcome to apply for enrolment at Catholic schools in the Diocese of Parramatta. When spaces are limited, preference is given based on the CEDP enrolment policy.

Students in our schools are from a variety of religious backgrounds. Your child will not feel out of place if they attend a Catholic school and don't share this faith. Our education, including classroom teaching, is respectful of all learners and is based on the foundational belief of the dignity of every person. For more information on what is taught and what the student learning journey looks like at Catholic schools visit our website.

Unlike government schools, CEDP schools do not have 'school zones' that dictate which schools you can apply for. Students can apply to enrol in any of our schools, regardless of where they reside. Visit our website to find a school and contact them for more information on enrolment.

Moving from a government school to a Catholic school is perfectly fine, there is no requirement that you must attend a Catholic Primary to be accepted into a Catholic secondary school. We also accept enrolments in all grades at any time of the year (where places are available), although the main enrolment period for Kindergarten and Year 7 is between March and May of the year prior to your child's proposed starting year at the school.



Catholic Diocesan schools seek to keep fees as low as possible to allow access to a Catholic education for all families. Fees are therefore significantly less than private and independent schools, particularly in the Diocese of Parramatta. We understand the financial demands placed on families and as such, no child who meets the enrolment criteria will be refused enrolment or disadvantaged because of a family's financial circumstances. We also recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in additional financial strain for many: assistance is available.

As a guide, the cost of a Catholic education is around \$7-\$11 a day for primary and \$13-\$14 a day for a child in Year 7. Significant discounts apply for siblings, see our website for full fee details. Flexible payment options are offered to all families in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Parramatta at the start of each year. This provides families with the opportunity to select a payment plan that best suits their financial circumstances. Payments can be made via direct debit/credit card or BPay on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis at no additional charge.

CEDP offers assistance for families facing financial hardship. If you are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to pay fees, please discuss the situation with the school principal. Your situation will be treated with care, sensitivity and confidentiality.



Selecting a school is never an easy decision, but at the heart of making the best choice is being well-informed and keeping the needs of your child at the centre of the process. The best school for your child is the one that best meets their needs and brings joy to the business of learning.

For more information about Catholic schools in the Diocese of Parramatta, including Vocational Education and Training, trade training opportunities, the CAPTIVATE creative and performing arts program and much, much more, please visit [www.parra.catholic.edu.au](http://www.parra.catholic.edu.au).





[www.parra.catholic.edu.au](http://www.parra.catholic.edu.au)

 @CatholicEdParra  Catholicedparra  catholicedparra