



Top Ten Questions to Ask When Choosing a Private School for your Child

1. *How safe is the school?*

The safety of your child is the number one concern on most parents' minds when choosing a school. The question needs to address the security of the facility, the sign in/sign out process, and how well teachers are prepared to handle your children in a crisis situation. If responses are slow in coming, or if the issue does not seem to be treated with appropriate concern by the administration, then this should be considered a red flag and the wrong fit.

2. *What is the school philosophy?*

Many times a school's philosophy is explained on the website. However, this question still needs to be asked of the administrators as well as the teachers during your visit. If you are sending your child to a religious school you will want to be sure that the faith being taught is in harmony with the faith that you want for your child. The same is true if you are sending your child to a private school that operates around any basic philosophy. It is important to choose a school in which your children will be taught things that reinforce and will be reinforced by what you are teaching in your home. The last thing children need is to receive conflicting messages from parents and educators.

3. *What is the ratio of staff to student in my child's grade group?*

With the crowding of public schools, many parents are seeking a smaller classroom setting for their child. Private schools offer the exclusivity of students and thus the smaller classrooms with more individualized attention from teachers and teacher's assistants. Large classrooms will mean less individualized attention and more time diverted to discipline issues.

4. *What is the typical schedule for my child's age group for the school day?*

This question allows you to have a mental picture of what the basic daily schedule is like. In order to know how this schedule will affect your child's needs, you will want to know specifically about lunch, snack, and recess. You will also want to know how early school starts and when the day is over. For the working parent, you will also need specifics as to the after school care programs and those schedules.

5. *Are their opportunities for me to be involved as a parent in the school?*

You may be a parent with an interest in being involved in your child's school. Are there after school programs that need adult supervision? Do classroom teachers need room mothers to assist with classroom activities or trips? Is there a school parent organization that works on fund raisers or special programs for the kids? Not only will these question give you a sense of how interactive the school is but it will also likely filter back to teachers that you are someone willing to step up and help out.

6. Do you offer any special programs or enrichment opportunities for your students?

If you are seeking a school that can meet the special needs of your child, this is a very important question to ask. The needs may be for a learning disability or you may have a child that is very interested in a specialized area. In either case you will want to know what efforts the school makes to meet those needs. There may be music programs with instrumental lessons, art programs, computer labs, foreign language programs and special needs programs that you would like to know about because of your particular child.

7. *How diverse is this school?*

Questions about diversity are asked for many reasons. One would hope that a major reason to ask about diversity is because parents recognize how important this aspect of education can be for their child. If you are looking for a school that is inclusive and encourages applications from a real cross section of races, religions and ethnicities then you really need to ask a direct question about the student population. You're asking the question in and of it may actually hope to promote the diversity you value.

8. *How long has this school been in operation?*

choosing a private school, understand that successfully operating a private schools only exist as long as they successfully educated children and respond to the needs of parents. A private school that has been in operation for a considerable period of time is likely to continue to stand the test of time. Still, brand new private schools need to be examined carefully. What they lack for in seniority they may well make up for with excellent curriculum and solid staff. That's why you need to visit a school armed with ten questions to ask when choosing a private school for your child.

9. *How often do children stay in this school on average?*

This question is really meant to discover what the response of children has been to this particular institution. Has the reaction of children brought them back year after year until they run out of grades or do children only stay a year or two and then want to find something different?

10. *What is the tuition?*

The question about money seems best held to the end of the discussion. If you haven't liked the answers to several of the important questions above, you may not have to bother to ask about price. This school might just not be the right fit for your child. But if everything else is squaring up nicely, then finally it becomes time to ask the practical financial question. The thing is you really don't want to choose a school based on price. You want to choose what is best and then find a way to pay for it.

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