

GETTING TO KNOW INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

A Guide to School Visits

Once you have a list of schools you want to explore, visiting those schools in person is essential. Schools offer admissions events ranging from campus tours to open houses to meet and greet events with members of their community to student and family interviews. Making the best out of your visits is integral to getting the most out of this process and will allow you to make an informed decision.

Use this tool as a reference or take a copy along with you when you visit schools.

PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

- Research the schools you are visiting to learn about curriculum, activities, educational philosophy, and values.
- Prepare questions that you want to ask during your time there.
- Discuss with your child what they want their high school experience to be like. What are your hopes and dreams for them during high school?

THE VISIT

- Go into the visit with an open mind.
- Be an active participant during the visit.
- Talk to as many people as you can. Teachers, staff members, students, and parents/guardians all have different perspectives on a school. Gather as many perspectives as you can.
- Observe how students interact with other students and how adults on campus interact with students and each other. Much can be learned about a community by noticing the ways people interact with one another.
- Ask yourself how you feel while on campus. Can you picture yourself being part of the school community? Can your child picture themselves there?
- Ask questions. If there is little opportunity for this during the visit, follow up afterwards to ensure that your questions are answered.
- Be sure to get the names and contact information for the people you can contact later if you have further questions.
- Lean on the Admissions Office staff. They should be happy to guide you through each visit and the entire admissions process.

TIP

Schools say a lot about their programs and community during visits and on their websites. Hold them to it. Does what you are experiencing on the school's campus match up with what they say?

QUESTIONS

Many of these may be answered during the visit but be sure to get answers to the following during or after your time on campus.

- What are your school's values, and how do you see them manifest across campus?
- What is your academic philosophy? Tell me about your curriculum.
- What clubs, student groups, traditions, and school spirit events do you offer?
- What leadership opportunities are available to students and how does the school foster leadership skills in all students?
- How would you characterize the student-teacher relationship at your school?
- How do you support students academically, emotionally, and socially? How do you help students excel and reach their full potential?
- What is your school's approach to student character development?
- What structures and policies are in place to maintain campus safety and security?
- What opportunities are there for parents and guardians to engage with the school community and be a part of their student's life at school?
- How does college counseling work at your school? Where do your students matriculate?
- How have you enhanced your program and the student experience in the last 5 years, and what plans do you have for the next 5 years?

AFTER YOUR VISIT

- What did you like about the school?
- How did you feel when you were on campus?
- Can you picture yourself as a parent/guardian/student there?
- What are some things that you noticed that you really liked?
- What concerns did you have, if any?
- What questions do you have?

DECISIONS

You will likely have several choices at the end of the admissions cycle. If you are still unsure, consider the following:

- Don't let questions go unanswered. Reach out to Admissions office staff for help.
- While you can always register for more admissions events, consider attending a game or performance open to the public that is not admissions specific.
- Ask for what you need. If you need an additional visit or more time with an admissions counselor in person or on the phone, reach out to them.
- Listen to your child and help them see aspects of the decision that they may not have considered.