



The Park Federation Academy Trust

Cranford Park Academy

Choosing a secondary school for September 2023

Introduction

As you know, selecting a secondary school for your child is a very important decision. It is vital to find a school that you believe will provide your youngster with a safe and successful educational home for the next 5 – 7 years. Moreover, you want to find a school that your child is happy to go to.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide the parents of Cranford Park Academy with clear and practical advice about the key aspects surrounding the transfer to secondary school. The best way of finding out about the process is to attend our Year 6 Parents' Meeting early in September. This booklet is simply a supplement to the meeting; it has not been written to replace it.

If after reading the booklet and attending the meeting, you still have questions over certain issues, please feel free to contact the school and ask to speak to Mrs. Sarah Evans (Academy Principal). It is vital to seek advice – remember this is a very big decision you are about to make!

Stage One: What types of school are there?

State Schools (Government funded)

Most children in England attend schools funded by the Government. These are referred to as “state schools”. No fees are charged by these schools. There are six main types:

- Community schools
- Foundation schools
- Grammar schools
- Academies
- Free schools
- Special schools

A key difference between a **community school** and a **foundation school**, academy, grammar or Free School is that the links between the Local Authority (LA) and a community school are stronger. For example, there will be more LA influence on the Governing Body of a community school. However, for parents and children on a day-to-day basis there will probably be no obvious difference between these main two categories of schools. The similarities significantly outweigh any differences.

Academies



Academies are schools that receive most of their funding directly from central government. However, they also sometimes receive funding from private sponsors (e.g. private businesses, charitable trusts). There is no or very little LA involvement.

Grammar schools:

A grammar school selects its pupils by examination results. To gain a place your child will be required to pass the 11+ test. To achieve this, a child needs to be academically able.

It is important to state that not all parents or citizens agree with a system that separates children in line with their academic attainment at 11. As a school we do not believe it is our business to take sides in this debate. We will support all parents in their quest for a secondary education that they believe is right for their child.

Free schools:

Free Schools were introduced in England in September 2011. They are state funded. They are established by parents, teachers or other suitable people/groups/organizations. They must be formally approved by the Government and cannot charge fees.

Special schools:

Special schools have been established to cater for the needs of children with very particular requirements. If there is any possibility of your child attending such a school, Mrs. Sarah Evans (Academy Principal) and Mrs Bethanie Baldwin (Vice Principal and SENCO) will be liaising very closely with you on this matter.

Schools with a link to a religious faith:

In this country there are many denominational schools. These are educational institutions linked to particular religious faiths. The vast majority of these schools are connected to the Christian church. The most common Christian schools are either Church of England or Roman Catholic. However, more recently Government funding has been provided to other religious faiths to start their own schools.

Normally to gain a place at a faith school you will have to prove you are an active member of that particular faith. However, some religious schools will allow members of other faiths to join.

Private schools:

Apart from state schools there are private schools. Some are academically selective; some are not. The main difference between a state school and a private school is that the private school will charge you fees. On rare occasions they will offer certain pupils lower fees (scholarship system).

Stage Two: What information do you need before choosing the school?

So far we have established the importance of the decision you face and the main types of school on offer. Now we are moving onto the active stage of the process – getting out there and gathering the information.

Main sources of information:



- Visiting the school.
- School brochure including exam results.
- “League tables” of school performance in examinations.
- Views of friends and family.
- Own direct knowledge of the school.
- Travelling arrangements.

Visiting the school:

Hillingdon secondary schools open evenings 2022/23

Barnhill School	Wednesday 28 September
Bishop Ramsey CofE	Thursday 6 October
Bishopshalt School	Thursday 8 September
Guru Nanak Sikh Academy	Tuesday 4 October
Haydon School	Thursday 22 September
Harlington School	Tuesday 27 September
Hewens College	Thursday 29 September
Northwood School	Monday 3 October
Oak Wood School	Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 21 September
Park Academy West London	Wednesday 14 September
Queensmead School	Wednesday 21 September
Rosedale College	Tuesday 20 September
Ruislip High School	Thursday 29 September
Swakeleys School	Thursday 15 September
The Douay Martyrs	Thursday 22 September
The Harefield Academy	Tuesday 20 September
Uxbridge High School	Monday 26 September
Vyners School	Wednesday 28 September

Visiting the school is an immensely important source of information. Please make sure you find time to visit any schools you are interested in. If at all possible, take your child with you.

Probably all schools will offer a series of “Open Days” and/or “Open Evenings”. Remember secondary schools are like businesses - they depend on “customers”. Put bluntly; no pupils; no funding; no school. Therefore, there is an element of “show business” about the “Open Days” and “Open Evenings”. To a certain extent they are provided to promote the school and to present the school in the best possible light. Understandably they are rather stage-managed.

As you go round the school, whether on an “Open Day” or “Open Evening”, these questions may help you to gather useful information:

On arrival do you feel welcomed?

Does the school have a positive atmosphere – does it feel “right”?

Are staff friendly and helpful?

Are staff able to answer your questions?

Do staff take an interest in the primary school children who are visiting?



Normally the headteacher will speak to parents in the main hall. What do you think of the speech? Does the headteacher's vision of a good education fit with your personal views? On first meeting, does the headteacher impress you?

Do remember that secondary schools are very big organizations and the headteacher needs to deal with many issues behind the scenes. Therefore, secondary school headteachers probably do not play as big a role in day-to-day events as a primary school headteacher. One of the most important people in the life of a secondary school child is the Head of Year. Therefore, try to find out which teacher will be Head of Year 7 and try to have a chat with him or her.

Is the quality of the pupils' work on display of a good standard?

If there are any children's books left out on desks, is the standard of work good and are the books properly marked by the teachers?

If you get a chance to talk to pupils from the school, are they polite, friendly and helpful?

Ask the pupils their views of the school. What do they think of the place?

Does the building look well cared for?

Are classrooms in reasonable decorative order?

Are resources stored in an orderly fashion or are they untidy?

Is there any graffiti?

Find out what your child's favourite subjects are and then spend longer in these subject areas during your visit. For example if your youngster is keen on science - do the science laboratories look well equipped and are the teachers keen to talk to you and your child about their subject?

Two key questions:

What did your child think of it? Make sure you give your children plenty of time to express their views about the school.

Are you happy for this to be your child's educational home for the next 5 – 7 years?

School brochure including exam results:

Most schools will have a school brochure/prospectus but often this information is now on the school's website. This document should provide you with a great deal of useful information. There will probably be the school's approach to homework, uniform, bullying etc. If there is a particular area of school life that you are interested in and but not covered in the brochure, telephone the school and ask for clarification. There should be a section in the brochure/on the website about recent exam results

With regard to exam results, don't allow this to be the only factor that determines your choice of school. There is more to a good school than test results. However, it would be foolish to say that exam results don't matter – they do. Therefore, when deciding on a school for your child you need to keep a balanced view. Yes, the exam results need to be considered but in a broad context, including other information about the school.

“League tables” of schools performance in examinations:

Each year newspapers compile lists of how schools have performed in public examinations. They are called “league tables” because they often put the school that has the best results at the top of the list and the school that has done worst at the bottom.

This is a very crude way of presenting the information. We all know that the communities that schools serve are different. For example, most parents would know that the challenges for a school serving a deprived inner-city area are different from a school serving a wealthy and affluent community on the outskirts of a market town in the south east of England.

It is quite understandable for parents to consider the “league tables” when choosing a school for their child but it is wise to put the results in some kind of context.

Apart from using ‘league tables’ from newspapers, you can also get the information from the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE refer to them as Performance Tables. These can be found on the internet.

Ofsted Reports:

Ofsted stands for the Office of Standards in Education. Part of its job is to inspect schools and report on the standards it finds. These reports are very useful documents and can be found on the internet.

Views of families and friends:

Parents will often ask family and friends for their views on secondary schools, especially if that person has or has had a child at a particular school. This can be a useful source of information. However, always remember that what might have been right for someone else’s child might not be right for your youngster.

Own direct knowledge of the school:

Often parents will have older children at a particular school. This is a very useful source of information because you have recent day-to-day knowledge about the place. However, we all know that children within the same family can be very different! Therefore, you must think carefully about whether your child in Year 6 will do well in the school that your other children have attended. Most parents would like all their children to attend the same school if possible, but always consider that each of your youngsters is an individual. It must be his or her individual needs that are taken into consideration.

Travelling arrangements:

It is vitally important for you to think seriously about this factor. It is useful to know whether your child will be travelling on his or her own or whether a group of friends will be travelling together. This will clearly influence some of your answers to the questions listed below.

Issues to take into consideration –

- Bus journeys
 - How many buses will my child have to catch?
 - What time will he or she have to catch the bus to be there on time each morning?
 - If there are two buses involved, are the connections good?
 - What time will my child arrive home?
 - Do I think my child will be safe on a dark winter’s evening on that particular journey?
 - What is the lighting like at the bus stop?
 - What is the walk like from your home to the bus stop?

What is the walk from that bus stop to the school like?

- Car journeys
How long will the journey take in rush hour traffic?
If I have primary school aged children as well, will I be able to fit this new journey in each morning and evening?
- Walking
How long will it take each day?
Is it a safe walk?

Stage Three: Making the Decision

So you have gathered a great deal of information and now it is time to make your choices. On the Common Application Form (CAF) you can choose up to six schools. **We strongly advise you to use all six preferences.** Some parents refuse to take this advice because they are adamant that only one of the schools they have seen is good enough for their child. We understand this determination but would still advise against this. If you do not get this school even after an appeal, you may end up at the end of Year 6 with no school for your child. **Therefore, please ensure you name six schools on the form.** The advice about the order of preferences and other useful information is made very clear in the Hillingdon information booklets ‘Starting Secondary School Sept 2023’ and Schools Admissions 2023 (the booklets can be found online at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/schooladmissions).

Parents will often ask the school what they should do if they want one school but their child wants a different one. This is a difficult question to answer! However, remember that short-term issues, such as whether their “mates” are going to a particular school, understandably influence children. As a parent you have got to look beyond the next few weeks and months, and take a much longer-term view of the future. Therefore, we recommend that parents should have the final say.

Stage Four: The Application Process

Hillingdon Resident

If you are a Hillingdon Borough resident, you will be able to request the Local Authority Common Application Form (CAF) on line. A detailed advice booklet ‘Starting Secondary School Sept 2023’ is available on the Hillingdon council website

If your child already has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), you are not required to complete an application. You will follow a different admissions process with your allocated SEND officer. For more information, please contact the SEND team on senadmin@hillingdon.gov.uk

On the application form you can list a maximum of six schools you are interested in. **You can include Hillingdon and non-Hillingdon schools on this list.** However, if you are applying to a private school, you will need to complete the school’s own application form. **We would like this opportunity to encourage as many families as possible to complete the online version of the Common Application Form (CAF) for Hillingdon residents which can be found on the internet (www.hillingdon.gov.uk/schooladmissions).** If you need any help with the CAF, please contact Margaret O’Donovan, our Family Support Worker.



I would strongly recommend that you submit the Common Application Form so that it is received by Friday 21st October 2022, which is the last day before half term. The official closing date for the receipt of the Common Application Form is Monday 31st October 2022.

Non-Hillingdon Residents

If you are a non-Hillingdon resident, you will need to get a copy of the CAF from your Council.

For both Hillingdon residents and non-Hillingdon residents, if you already have a child at a secondary school, you must make a new application for your next child. You will not automatically get a place at the school.

If you would like advice and guidance from the LA, please call the Admissions Team Customer Services Centre on 01895 556644.

Supplementary information forms (SIFs)

Please note some schools, such as faith schools, require the completion of a supplementary information form (SIF). This is so that they can decide which pupils should have the highest priority when making offers. SIFs are available directly from each school and their website. They must be returned to the school or to the address provided by the school by the specified deadline, which may differ between schools.

The following schools require SIFs to be completed in order to process applications. SIFs can only be considered if they have a direct bearing on oversubscription criteria or for the purpose of selection by aptitude or ability.

Schools must still accept applications without a completed SIF as all schools have to consider 'other applicants'.

- Bishop Ramsey C of E School
- The Douay Martyrs Catholic School
- Guru Nanak Sikh Academy

The following school operates a fair banding system to allocate places. The places within each band are based on year 6 students taking a Non Verbal Reasoning Test (NVRT).

- Swakeleys School for Girls

Please visit the schools individual website for supplementary forms and deadline dates.

Stage Five: The offer of places

You will receive an email on the evening of **1st March 2023** with the outcome of your application if you applied online. You will then be required to log into your eAdmissions account to accept or decline your offer by **15th March 2023**. If you chose not to apply on line a letter will be posted out on the 2nd March.

You must accept the offer to secure the school place. If you do not accept by 15th March 2023, the offer may be withdrawn.

Your Council will try to offer you your first preference but this is not guaranteed.



There will be an appeals system if you are unhappy with the school offered. If you would like any advice about these issues, please telephone Mrs. Sarah Evans (Academy Principal).

Stage Six: Making an Appeal

You will need to inform the secondary school that you intend making an appeal. The school will send you details about the appeals process. It is likely to include:

- ❑ Description of the appeals procedure
- ❑ Appeals form
- ❑ Deadline for the appeals form to be returned

Apart from the appeals form, the school is likely to offer you an opportunity to meet with its appeals panel so that you can put your case personally.

While the appeals process is going on, we would advise you to visit other schools just in case your appeal fails.

Again, if you need help, please speak to Mrs. Sarah Evans (Academy Principal).

Best of luck!