

eGuide

TOP 10 TIPS ON HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE SCHOOL IN THE UK FOR YOUR CHILD

(including 30 Point Questionnaire for school visit)

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UK International Baccalaureate Schools

This eGuide is divided into 4 parts

- *An introduction*
- *Brief list of Top 10 Tips*
- *Detailed explanation of Top 10 Tips*
- *30 point checklist to take on school visits*

If you are experienced in private education or have little time, you may wish to just consider only the second and fourth sections

Background to The International Baccalaureate in the UK

Introduction

Before we consider how to choose an IB school, here is some background. The International Baccalaureate is an international qualification now offered by 1800 schools throughout the world and 89 are in the UK. It is overseen by The International Baccalaureate Organisation or IBO in Switzerland.

There are three programmes

1. The Diploma Programme (DP) for students aged 16 to 19
2. The Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students aged 11 to 16
3. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) for students from 3 to 12.

It is the DP which has come into prominence in the UK largely because a number of schools have felt that the UK A levels were no longer sufficiently stretching when more than 90% of candidates could achieve A or B grades. The DP is a 2 year programme which requires academic rigour, genuine breadth and coherence. Successful candidates can gain entry to more than 700 universities worldwide.

In 2006 it was finally confirmed by UCAS that they rate good DP grades higher than A levels. The maximum score of 45 points is worth 768 UCAS points or 6 Grade A passes at A levels! A relatively modest score of 35 points is worth four-and-a-half A grades at A levels. You can now see the conversion table on <http://www.ucas.com/candq/tariff/>. The key difference here is that most pupils take 3 or 4 A levels whereas all IB students take 6 courses and therefore tend to end up with more UCAS points.

How many schools offer the IB and where?

So, where can you study for the IB? A relatively modest 39 UK independent schools out of the 89 IB UK schools offer the IB. We list all of them in our geographic search engine (<http://www.best-schools.co.uk/find-a-school.aspx>). Those schools which are prepared to

publish their results are listed in The Top IB Schools Table. Unfortunately, we only have a proportion of the results. The IBO refuses to publish them and some of the schools will not reveal them, from which you may draw your own conclusions. A few schools have only been offering the DP for a short time and say they are not yet in a position to publish results.

How does the curriculum work?

DP (16 to 19)

Subjects are offered at Higher Level, Standard Level or both. To qualify for the Diploma a student must pass at least 3 subjects at Higher Level and a total of 6 from the following list

- English Language
- Second Language (schools will offer their own selection)
- Individuals and Societies (business, economics, geography, history, IT)
- Experimental Sciences (Biology, chemistry, physics, design technology, environmental systems)
- Mathematics and Computer Science
- Arts and Electives (instead of Arts students may take an additional subject from groups 2,3,4 and 5)

A candidate can receive between 1 and 7 points in each category. He or she can also get up to 3 points for The Theory of Knowledge and The Extended Essay – thereby meaning a maximum score of 45 points which a small number of candidates actually achieve. A diploma is given to those scoring 24 or more.

The Theory of Knowledge is obligatory and similar to the subject of Philosophy covering

- Ways of Knowing
- Routes of Knowledge
- Value Judgement

Students must write an extended essay up to 4000 words on an independent topic within the subjects being taught within the IB. This is intended to show the kind of independence, analysis and writing skills expected by universities. It is a valuable first experience of individual research.

You can see from the above that the DP requires a broader range of knowledge and skills than those demanded by 3 similar A level subjects. The huge difference is that a linguist is challenged to learn a science and that a scientist must learn a foreign language. This keeps university options open longer, especially when no one can predict what professional life will demand in many years from now.

It has been suggested that those students aiming for a medical or science degree should also take a specific science A level, although universities have confirmed that this is not a

general requirement. Plainly it is best to check with the preferred universities before embarking upon study.

One criticism would be the non availability of modern subjects like theatre and media studies, whilst others would counter that such subjects are just soft options for A level passes.

The IBO provides much in online resources for the curriculum and IB schools often set up joint projects which add much more interest and fun to projects.

MYP (11 to 16)

The MYP studies all of the major disciplines including languages, humanities, sciences, mathematics, arts, technology and physical education.

Schools can include other subjects not part of the MYP framework.

Teachers use a variety of tools to assess student progress including oral presentations, essays, tests and projects. They apply the IBO assessment criteria to student work and can opt for official IBO certification where the IBO validates their own assessment.

One can see that the MYP also offers a broad curriculum, but there is not quite the same deficiency of qualification in GCSEs to the extent that they are not a particularly important aspect of university admission. Thus a number of IB schools only offer the DP.

PYP (3 to 12)

PYP focuses on the development of the whole child, including social, physical , emotional and cultural needs. It simultaneously gives a strong foundation in maths, social studies, drama, language, music, visual arts, science and physical education. As befitting of the IBO concept, pupils are encouraged to be aware of the points of view of people in other parts of the world.

It is built around 6 themes

1. who we are
2. how the world works
3. how we express ourselves
4. where we are in place and time
5. how we organize ourselves
6. sharing the planet

As with the MYP there are only a small number of schools offering the PYP at the present.

How do you choose an IB school?

The essential factors influencing choice are the same for any independent school (see later) but first you have to find an IB school.

(a) Location This is not overly difficult to the extent that there are so few schools offering the IB at present that your initial choice will be heavily influenced by area and availability. The majority of IB schools are coincidentally in a circle around the Home Counties and Greater London.

(b) Type of IB School. Some IB schools are truly “international schools” like ACS, Marymount, Woodside International, Atlantic College and International School of Aberdeen. Others have adopted the Diploma Programme as a result of disenchantment with the dumbing down of A levels, such as St Helens, Kings Wimbledon and North London Collegiate.

You need to decide if you believe in the IB concept as a lifetime education or just a better alternative to A levels. The real problem is that if you want your child to study the IB before the age of 15 there are only 4 schools offering the PYP and 7 offering the MYP and they are all in Greater London.

(c) Academic Performance. A good starting point for considering a senior school will be the average points scored in the DP in recent years. Despite the fact that most Heads try to deny the relevance of league tables, all of the mature IB schools proclaim their successes on their websites. But, if they don't publish their average points, they are often afraid of being compared with better performing schools.

(d) Subjects available for the DP. If your child is a teenager and has already decided they want to specialise in the sixth form, in say music or art or all sciences, then you should question whether an IB school is the right choice. Some IB schools will have a slightly wider subject availability in the DP range than others. Some will offer A levels at the same time. If this is important to you, then be sure they are not planning to discontinue them. It's going to be more difficult to judge a school which has only offered the IB for 2 years as opposed to 10+ years.

(e) Day or Boarding. A fair number of IB schools do not offer boarding which cuts choice even further if you need a boarding school. The IB boarding schools as a generalisation do not have such high results, but they are generally less selective on their intake.

Now, you consider the top 10 remaining factors for any independent school:

Abbreviated list

1. Does the school fit the basic requirements of you and your child?

- Age range, gender, day or boarding, religious denomination.

- Subjects available in IB DP
- 2. Will your child be happy there?**
 - What do other parents/children say about it?
- 3. Does it have a good academic record?**
 - Results, high or low pressure environment, teaching quality
 - What are leaver destinations?
- 4. Accommodation options**
 - Rooms for boarders
- 5. Do you like the ethos of school?**
 - Invariably set by the Head
- 6. What is the teaching like?**
 - Quality of teachers, staff turnover
 - Curriculum
 - Class sizes and school overall
 - School discipline and rules
 - School inspection report
- 7. What are the pastoral care facilities like?**
 - Care from school staff, medical care, discipline and supervision
- 8. Does it have school facilities your child would use?**
 - School facilities – swimming pool, theatre, music etc.
 - Range of activities, costs
- 9. Is the location optimum for you?**
 - How important is area?
- 10. Does it give YOU value for money for what you want?**
 - Value for service delivered, fit with your budget, extras

1. Your basic requirements

1.1 Starting Age

The main part of the website concentrates on senior schools, which take entry from age 11 or 13 (and also at 16) because it is only in this category we can measure exam success. Bear in mind the majority of IB schools only offer the DP which commences at 16.

We also list many of the schools which have pre-preparatory (ages 2/3 to 7) or preparatory (ages 7 to 11) entry, but only a handful offer the PYP or MYP curricula

If you have a child younger than 11 and you have your sights set on a particular senior school only, you might wish to find a prep school which acts as a feeder school to your chosen senior school.

The advantage of being in an “all through” is that your child tends to progress naturally into the senior school. If you are “on the outside” there might be a waiting list.

The majority of senior schools state that their admissions procedure requires the successful passing of the Common Entrance Exam, typically taken in January for admission the following September at age 11 or 13. However, there are often special admission processes for International Parents. Talk to us on 0845 26 28 20 if you have a problem.

1.2 Gender

There are of course girls only and boys only school, but there is a definite trend to go co-ed. The arguments rage about the merits of single sex education with many Heads claiming there is no difference in academic achievement in single sex schools. However, this is a difficult premise to support, when there is very strong evidence that girls only schools do produce the best academic performance.

A significant number of single sex schools have been converting to co-ed in their sixth forms on the basis that it is time to prepare students for the reality of the outside world. However, a politically incorrect view is that some single sex schools have been losing so many pupils at age 16 (because the pupils themselves harass their parents to transfer to co-ed schools) that they have had no option but to go co-ed because of the commercial pressures. Of course, almost all single sex schools arrange social functions and also sometimes mixed lessons with neighbouring schools of the opposite gender.

At the end of the day, this is very much down to parent's preferences. Do not be afraid to discuss the subject with the school on your visit.

1.3 Religious Denomination

Most schools will originally start from one faith – you will find Church of England, Roman Catholic, Quaker, Methodist, Jewish and Muslim etc. You will also find that most schools will accept pupils of any faith. If your views are particularly strong, then discuss them with the school. For example if you are CoE sending your child to a Catholic Schools, they will likely insist all pupils will attend Mass.

There are an increasing number of Muslim schools, but none that we know which offer the IB.

In this day and age, most schools are becoming non denominational and respecting all faiths.

1.4 Subjects taught

This is more of an issue for older children. There are variations in the DP subjects offered.

If your child has a particular University degree course in mind, you need to be sure that the IB DP will permit entry. Some IB schools offer A levels as well

The typical independent school might offer between 20 to 28 different A level subjects – but not if it is majoring on the IB

Most schools are going to offer all of the academic subjects, but they may not offer particular languages or performing arts subjects. If your child is old enough to have particular aspirations, it is not difficult to find a school with the required subjects, but all is not lost if the interest develops later on – it is quite easy to transfer to an independent sixth form college at 16 or 17 (see www.sixth-form.com)

1.5 Proportion of day and boarding pupils

If you are looking to board a child, we would recommend caution if less than 25% (or 50 in number) are boarding, because it is not a true boarding school and will be rather deserted at weekends when the day pupils leave. This is not an absolute rule and indeed cost may be a factor because such smaller schools will usually be cheaper. We simply point out that your child does need companionship at the weekends and a variety of activities to keep them interested and happy.

2. Will your child be happy?

Of course, it is vital that your child is happy, especially if they are going to a boarding school. Certainly you should explain the advantages of independent schools beforehand. However, the key point will be your visit to your short listed schools. Certainly if it is a senior school, you should try to let your child have some input into your decision. A happy child is going to be more motivated to do well.

Of course, you are not going to know the answer about boarding until after they get there – so what can you do?

Most boarding schools have “taster boarding days or weekends” If in doubt, let your child *road test* the school.

If possible, let your child have a say in the choice of school. If you visit say three schools, he or she will inevitably have a preference. In most cases they will be stamping their feet and proclaiming “I want to go to that one!” – usually the one which stretches your pocket the most with the Olympic sized swimming pool and equestrian centre! (Tip – if you really cannot afford it – don’t visit – because junior does not usually appreciate the depth of your wallet or lack of it!)

See as much of each school as you can, including the actual accommodation, if boarding. The Head will set the tone, but be sure to meet the particular House Head as well. Above all, try to visit on a school day such that your child can meet and chat to other boarders. Of course, your child will be anxious and nervous, but meeting new friends who will

invariably having great fun and the time of their lives will go a long way to settling their nerves.

3. Academic Track Record

3.1 How do you assess exam performance?

The IB schools measure the success of their pupils at the DP by the number of points they achieve. The maximum points are 45 and amazingly a small number of very bright children achieve the maximum. We show the average points achieved per pupil as a simple yardstick. We would expect most independent schools to beat 30 points.

There are many factors that parents may take into account when trying to choose what they consider to be the *'best school'* for their children. However, the truth is that there is no school that is best for every child. We can look at exam successes to determine which is the *"best school measured by academic achievements"*, but the real challenge for parents is to choose the *"right school"* which will take into account lots of factors in addition to exam results and we will come back to these later.

However, academic results can be tabulated and that is where most parents start their evaluation. It is not possible to have an endless list of criteria, and perhaps the most common approach is to look at the academic standing of a school and judge whether or not it meets the expectations of parents. Certainly there are other factors that parents might wish to see, such as sports facilities, strong departments in the creative and performing arts and perhaps the provision of special needs teaching. However, for the purpose of the league tables on this website, we have taken strictly academic criteria and applied them to produce lists of best schools in terms of academic success. We feel that this is a good starting point for parents setting out to choose a school for their children, *as long as they are academically gifted*. Remember that not all children will thrive in highly focused academic environment and you could be doing your child a disservice simply by trying to pick a school with the best exam results – we will revert to this point later.

Quite a few independent schools have specialist units for children with special needs such as dyslexia. It could be surmised that the inclusion of such children "dilute" their overall results. Interestingly, this is not usually the case. The mere fact that such schools devote more time to small group tuition usually benefits the rest of the children and everybody's standards rise at the same time.

4. Accommodation Options

4.1 Rooms

At the youngest boarding ages, children will often be accommodated in modest sized rooms or dormitories of 4 to 8 pupils. They are usually encouraged to bring home comforts such as duvets, toys and games.

As they get older, rooms tend to get down to dual or single use – usually very well furnished with private space and storage. Schools are increasingly installing media and internet access so that they can regularly speak to home. In fact some parents say that boarders tell their parents more what is happening at schools than day pupils!

Sixth form colleges are often in university cities and tend to treat the sixth formers to similar style university accommodation – either halls of residence or home stay with local families.

At the end of the day you are going to “pay for what you get”, but if there is a choice, you should at least weigh up the options of degree of comfort/privacy v. price.

5. Ethos of School

5.1 Ethos

Every independent school establishes its own ethos, which can best be evaluated by observing the behaviour of pupils both in and out of class. Are they well behaved in class? Were they working hard? Did they greet you in a polite way? Do they look happy? Are they neat and tidy?

If a school follows a particular religious denomination, that will heavily influence the school ethos. However, the most important factor is the Head, because he or she sets the entire tone for the school. You will only find out by meeting the Head and asking lots of questions, after which you will know if you like the ethos or not!

5.2 School Discipline

Areas such as the school policy on discipline can be an important consideration when you are trying to choose between schools. There can be very big differences between schools with a highly traditional approach and those that put the emphasis on self-development and learning by experience. What you will find is that there is generally a more structured environment in independent schools than in the state sector, but nevertheless quite big differences exist, as for example between schools such as Bedales and Milton Abbey on the one hand, and traditional schools like Wellington and Winchester on the other.

Only you can be the judge of what you prefer for your children. You should have that discussion with the Head of the schools you approach.

6. How good is the teaching?

6.1 What is the quality of the teachers and what is the staff turnover

In many smaller schools, the Head will also teach and thereby set the standards and tone for his/her staff. Good schools will list their teaching staff and their qualifications. Hopefully you will be allowed to meet a few and form your own impressions. A measure of a good school is low staff turnover. You should be able to get impressions of these factors by looking at the school inspection report.

6.2 How big are class sizes and the overall school

You are “buying” small class sizes and individual attention by using private education – so you want to know that there are 20 or less to a class. However, you also want to know that the school is not too small. There are failing schools which can have less than 5 pupils in a year group. Then parents start to withdraw their children, making matters worse. Conversely, by the 6th form, you might want class sizes down to 8 per subject.

6.3 What do the school inspection reports say?

All schools are subject to regular school inspections, but they are up to 6 years apart. They are carried out by different bodies, depending on a school’s affiliation. The majority in England are done by the Independent Schools Inspectorate on much the same principles as OFSTED. In Wales it is usually done by ESTYN. In Scotland it is done by HM Inspectorate of Education working for The Scottish Executive. These reports are usually available online, (see <http://www.isinspect.org.uk/> or http://www.estyn.gov.uk/inspection_arrangements/arr_independent.asp) but since it is sometimes difficult to find them, just ask the school for a copy. Some schools print abbreviated versions, which tend to highlight the good bits. Ask to see the full version even if you do have to wade through 60 pages.

7. Pastoral Care and Guardianship

6.1 Pastoral Arrangements

Pastoral care very naturally follows on from school discipline. The school attitude to boarding organisation or day pupils may be rated by some parents as being paramount and parents should also find out how academic work is monitored, whether or not there is a personal tutor for each pupil and how the grading system works. It is helpful to know what support systems are available if your child gets into trouble and who should be contacted if you need help and advice.

Parents also need to know how to get information about their child. Are there regular meetings with pastoral and teaching staff? Are there school functions that parents can attend during the term? Is there an association for parents to join, or a regular newsletter or magazine that tells them what is happening in the school? Parents should enquire about the arrangements for health care such as, how many trained nursing staff are available and how often is there a doctor’s surgery?

Lastly, parents need to be assured that if their child is boarding they need to be safe and secure and that the school managers and staff take all reasonable care to see that this is attended to.

6.2 Guardianship

If a parent is outside of the UK, whether they are UK or Foreign Nationals, arrangements must be made for each full boarding child to have a guardian, who can take responsibility for the child, particularly outside of school hours at half term and school exeat. For UK nationals, there is often a relative to undertake the role. For others, the services of a Guardian must be secured. Some schools are prepared to undertake the role themselves. Others will have teamed up with a guardianship services company. Such services are not cheap – so remember to factor in the costs. Also it is vital to ensure that guardianship provider organisations are reputable – such as members of AEGIS (www.aegisuk.net)

8. School Facilities

8.1 School Facilities

Today most schools in the independent sector spend a great deal of their budgets on the fabric of their buildings and in providing outstanding facilities for their pupils. Parents should ask to see the school library and enquire about the sports area and whether or not the school has a sports hall. Most schools today have well-equipped IT centres but parents should also ask about the provision of computers in boarding houses, as well as in teaching departments. If your child is interested in the creative arts you should ask to see the Art School and find out whether computers are used in graphic design and what different types of materials can pupils use in their studies.

Many schools offer enrichment programmes, which is sometimes called General Studies. This can be a mixture of examined and non-examined study, but its common feature is that it offers a range of life skill subjects, such as motorbike maintenance, debating, yoga, musical appreciation and the like. Some schools will have an extensive programme for Duke of Edinburgh awards while others will have a Combined Cadet Force. These can be very important to a pupil when applying for university as it enables them to say quite a lot about themselves on the UCAS form outside the confines of academic subjects. All IB schools are required to have a module of Creativity, Action and Service programme which is central to the DP.

9. Location

9.1 Where to choose?

Although there are 2,300+ independent schools, currently only 39 offer the IB and most are in the Greater London area. So if you are looking elsewhere the choice is restricted.

10. Value for Money

We have included school fees in the league table, but only for the top ranked schools.

Parents should also take into account the other costs, or 'extras', that can add a substantial amount to your bill.

School uniform and kit for school games is probably the first of these extras that you will encounter, and this is usually an unavoidable cost. However, you should ask how inclusive the fees are and what extra costs are likely to be incurred. For example music lessons and school trips are not usually included in the fees, neither are school textbooks and essential stationery. There will also be some subjects, such as Home Economics, and A-Level Theatre Studies that can add sizeable amounts to your bill because of the nature of these courses.

It has been estimated that extras can add between 5% and 15% to the school fees you are paying, so it is always wise to ask for a complete breakdown of fees and extras when considering a particular school.

If you are a non UK resident, you also have travel costs home during the holidays or extra accommodation and guardianship fees.

It is wise to check out costs **before** you visit any school.

Most schools offer a limited number of bursaries and scholarships. However, beware that most schools are oversubscribed with applications for admission and always receive more requests for such discounts than they have places available.

For UK residents who are higher rate taxpayers, please check out www.education-fees.co.uk for ways to reduce your cost.

Most interested parents are committed to an independent education as long as it fits their budget. However, we all want to feel we are getting value for money. Part of this evaluation is to compare what one school provides against another in relation to cost.

Some extra issues for International Parents

1 English Language

UK boarding schools will expect you child to speak English reasonably fluently on arrival. However a number of schools will be able to provide additional English Language tuition so that they can cope with the school curriculum.

If your child speaks little or no English, it will be better for them to start in an International Study Centre to prepare them for entry into a mainstream boarding school.

2. International Admissions

As you will already have read, most UK children gain entry to senior independent boarding schools by passing The Common Entrance Exam, which typically only take place in January or February.

International students will often be considered for admission on the basis of existing school reports, a reference from their previous Head plus an Interview. Sometimes a school might wish the child to sit a test on the visit to the school. Some schools might be prepared to allow that test to be taken on the previous school's premises.

UK schools will want to ensure that the pupil fits in with the academic standard of the pupils they will be joining.

So, how do you decide? What next?

After researching the school profiles, forming a short list and requesting brochures, get yourself a questionnaire to evaluate your shortlist during school visits. We give you our own free questionnaire in the appendix to this eGuide.

If you are a UK resident, never forget to ask the Head of your child's existing school. He or she will likely know the local schools which will suit both your child's academic progress and temperament.

There is absolutely no substitute for a personal visit – did you like the school, the premises, the facilities, the atmosphere, the headmaster, the teachers and the manner of the pupils? You will be invited to attend on an Open Day, but is it possible to visit on a normal school day, when you can experience the daily routine?

Lastly, after doing all of your research, go back to basics. The real starting point for choosing a school has to begin with you and your hopes and aspirations for your children. You know them better than anyone else and can best judge their strengths and weaknesses. You are in the best position to know what type of school will work best for them. Although your schooldays were some time ago, the essentials in the 21st Century remain the same as when you were at school. Literacy and numeracy plus knowing the difference between right and wrong count for as much in the modern world as they did when you were a schoolchild. You need to match the qualities you consider right for education with those offered by the *right school*.

It's a huge decision. If you need help, then avail yourself of our bespoke consultancy service at <http://www.best-schools.co.uk/expert-assistance.aspx>.

APPENDIX



The Education Advisers 30 Point Check List

**Questions and Points to consider
for Parents
in choosing an International Baccalaureate School**

**A Check-List of Recommended Questions from the Parent's Perspective
Note – this is an *aide-memoire* to help you to remember what to ask.**

1. Is this school ideally suited to the academic aspirations, which you have for your child?
 - Common Entrance Exam to gain access to Senior School?
 - GCSEs?
 - GCE A Level
 - International Baccalaureate?
 - IB plus A Levels
 - An all round quality education?
2. Would your child be better suited to an academic environment (with emphasis on traditional subject tuition in a disciplined environment) or a less academic approach (with opportunity to excel in skilled crafts, sports or the performing arts)?
3. What is the School Curriculum? Is it the National Curriculum or wider – if so, how? Does it offer your child a sufficiently wide and balanced choice? Which elements of the IB curriculum does it offer – PYP, MYP and/or DP? If you are contemplating switching you child back to the State sector later, what are the implications?
4. *For boarding* - Make sure you visit the dormitories or boarding bedrooms and the common areas? Are the facilities modern and comfortable or spartan like an outward bound course? Can the children personalise their space with their own mementos?
5. *For boarding* - Make sure you meet the Housemaster/mistress. How do they get on with the pupils? What arrangements are made for boarders at weekends?
6. *For boarding* - Would you consider weekday boarding and weekends at home?
7. *For boarding* - Does the school offer taster day boarding for your child to find out?
8. Do you need guardianship – will the school provide/arrange for this?

9. Do you and your child want single sex or co educational schooling? If co-ed, what is the male:female ratio? Is the smaller gender group well integrated into the prospectus of the whole school?
10. What are the costs?
 - Per term
 - Boarding
 - Meals
 - Extra curricula subject charges
 - Uniform – what is compulsory?
 - Kit
 - Musical instruments
 - Books
 - Other typical extras
11. Are there bursaries or scholarships which might be applicable to you? What are the criteria? Is there published information?
12. What are the qualifications and experience of teachers?
13. What is the turnover of teaching staff?
14. What are the examination successes track record? What are the average points scored for the DP?
15. Will your child have to sit an entrance examination? Is there a waiting list? Is it first come – first served?
16. If you are considering a prep school from which your child will switch to senior elsewhere, what is the success record on Common Entrance exams. What proportion of children get their first choice senior school?
17. Did you like the Head? Did you feel you received straight answers to your questions? What are his/her principles, policies and obsessions? How do the pupils react to the Head – respect? warmth? fear? Did the Head take an interest in YOUR child?
18. Did you like the other staff you met?
19. What is the school attitude to parental contact, especially in Boarding School? How often are parent's meetings? Is there a Parents' Association? Is there a regular newsletter? How are the parents advised or consulted with on disciplinary matters?

20. What is the typical class size for the various age ranges? Ask to see some of the children's current workbooks.
21. How much has the school invested in technology? What are its ICT facilities? Does it teach pupils how to use up to date software? Do pupils get their own email addresses? What does its own website look like? Does it communicate with parents by email?
22. What quality of facilities does the school have?
 - Main buildings
 - Classrooms
 - Hall
 - Accommodation
 - Sports
 - Arts
 - Drama
 - Computing
 - Media
23. What is the school approach to discipline? Is it published? Will it suit your child's temperament? Does it match your own views?
24. Are there sets of published Rules – e.g discipline, bullying, drug abuse, dress code?
25. Is religious affiliation important? Are aspects of religion compulsory?
26. What proportion of 6th formers go to Uni? What are their destinations? Does the school have dedicated higher education and careers advisers?
27. Ask to see the Regulator's school inspection reports
28. Ask to see the latest annual financial report (is it adequately funded to attract quality teachers and expand facilities if necessary?)
29. What was your gut feeling on a personal visit on a normal school day?
 - The staff
 - The premises
 - The facilities
 - The atmosphere
 - The pupils

30. What did you think of the children? Were they happy? Were they well mannered? Did they rush about ? Were they neatly dressed in school uniform? Were they polite to teachers and visitors alike?

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