**CHOOSING A SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**Tips for Parents**

Remember

- Reserve the right to change your mind.
- You make the best decisions with the information available to you at the time.
- No school is the ‘perfect’ match

The Federation of Catholic School Parent Communities is an active voice for families with children in South Australian Catholic Schools.

Visits the Federation’s website for other useful parent resources

www.parentfederation.catholic.edu.au

*in this brochure, the term ‘parent’ includes carers and legal guardians

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Brochure last updated March 2015
Is choosing a secondary school for your child a daunting task? 

Having a clear sense of what you are looking for could make it easier.

**What are your options?**
- Catholic school? Government school? Independent school?
- School ethos/culture? (e.g. Dominican)
- R-12? 8-12?
- Co-ed? Single sex?
- Special needs unit?
- SACE? International Baccalaureate?

**What things are important to you & your family?**
- The school’s focus: academic, music, art, sport, community service?
- Specialist programs or facilities?
- Fees/levies?
- Close to where you live? Is transport available?
- Boarding?
- Wellbeing and safety? (e.g. processes for responding to bullying)
- Pastoral care/support offered?
- Range of subject choices?
- Vocational education pathways?
- Communication with families?
- Professional development for staff?
- Community outreach programs?
- Yr 12 completion rates & post school pathways?
- NAPLAN results/trends?

**Talk with and listen to your child about what is important to them.**
- What do they want? Why?
- What do they think their strengths are?
- What do they need to build on these?
- What are their particular interests?
- What concerns them?

**What do you know about your child?**
List five characteristics you believe are relevant to their learning and wellbeing.
*For example:*
- Is sporty
- Finds maths challenging
- Is deeply compassionate
- Is a natural leader
- Excels at science

**Think of a question for each characteristic**
*For example:*
- Is there a strong focus on sports?
- What support could my child receive for maths?
- What opportunities for community service are available?
- What leadership opportunities would be available to my child?
- What extension opportunities are offered for children?

**Considering your options and factors important to you, make a short list of schools.**
- Check School Websites
- Attend Open Days
- Make an appointment for a tour and interview
- Go with your list of prepared questions
- Talk to students and staff you meet
- Talk to the school leaders

**Talk with other parents who have children at the school.**

Questions you may ask:
- What are the school’s strengths?
- What about the community ‘feel’?
- What concerns do you have?
- Would you recommend this school to other families—why/why not?

Look past the personal stories and get to the points that matter most to you and your family.

**Ask your key questions in every school you visit.**
- Give each school a rating out of 5 (see matrix overleaf)
  1= not met  5= completely met
- Take notes.