



Feltonfleet

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

CHOOSING A SENIOR SCHOOL

A Guide for Feltonfleet Parents



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CHOOSING YOUR CHILD'S SENIOR SCHOOL

The importance of the choices we make about our pupils' education can never be underestimated. The aim of this booklet is to highlight some of the factors worth considering as you weigh up these decisions, so that, together, we can steer your child in the direction that is best for them.

Our relations with Senior Schools are diverse, and we have successfully fed to over 30 different schools over the past 10 years. While this variety means we seek schools that are well suited to each individual, it also makes the process seem daunting.

The priority is to find the school which is right for your child, right for you and right for your family. Above all, this must be a school in which you feel that your child will flourish.

We are keen to support you and your child in this process as thoroughly and informatively as we can. This booklet aims to map out how you might carry out this decision-making in the coming Terms and put in mind some of the key aspects to be considered.

Crucial throughout is open, honest dialogue. Senior Schools will be asking you, and us, for your honest intentions regarding applications. It is important to understand from the beginning of the journey that there is very high competition for senior school day places and demand exceeds capacity for many of our local day schools. This is why it is important and worth considering the broader options. This, in part, explains the current growth in demand for weekly boarding (where selection parameters are often not as fierce) and co-education (often linked to boarding).

We are confident we can steer you to a school well-suited academically to your child, based on ongoing assessment here at Feltonfleet, and what we know to be the academic profiles of Senior Schools. We want to sustain the joy of childhood and reduce the pressure at the same time as ensuring that pupils are fully prepared for the various entrance processes and transition to senior school. Feltonfleet is committed to supporting every child in the process of finding the right school and achieving for him or herself a well-earned place at that school. We look forward to liaising with you in this exciting process.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Before embarking on the process of selecting a Senior School for your child, there are many considerations to make related to your own education, values, and desires for your child's future education. The following are some of the most important aspects to consider in respect of your choice of senior school.

Visit the Senior School

It is extremely important that your child visits the Senior Schools you are considering. Invariably extremely astute, young people will quickly identify some of the strengths and weaknesses that are a little less obvious and which won't be shown to you on the school tour. Your child's 'gut feeling' for that school is perhaps the single most important factor.

The school's website will give you a feel for the school and is essential information. However, you will only get a true steer through the experience of others you trust and through seeing it for yourself.

The School's Reputation

What are others saying about Senior Schools?

Word of mouth is undoubtedly the most influential marketing factor. Particularly important are the views of current or past parents of pupils at that school. See if your friends' views support this, but do feel able to make up your own mind, with your child's best interests at heart, regardless of what path most of your friends, or their children, are choosing. Also consult sources of information such as The Good Schools' Guide, whose views will be impartial, based on thorough research and carefully considered.



Gender

Would my child be best suited to a co-educational or a single sex school?

We would suggest that the co-educational provision that has suited them well at Feltonfleet might steer you towards a co-educational senior school, but some students may be well-served by a single sex environment.

The School's Profile

Do we want a day school or do we want boarding?

This is the factor which is most personal and down to the child and you as a family. If your child has sampled boarding here at Feltonfleet, he/she will have a taste of what it involves and the independence required. Equally, 11+ or 13+ may be the time to step into the boarding life. It is also worth bearing in mind that a school might be more inclined to offer a certain pupil a boarding place, where a day place is more competitive.

If boarding, should it be full boarding, or weekly boarding?

This is likely to be dictated by the location of home/school, and will again depend upon family preference.

Would a mix of day and boarding be best?

The flexible boarding many of the pupils taste here at Feltonfleet suggests that this might be an attractive option. While flexible boarding is increasingly available at Senior Schools, many of the traditional boarding schools still loyally adhere to full boarding.

The School's Location

How far do we want to travel?

On a daily or weekly basis, or less frequently, what is the comfortable distance you would travel from home to school? Does the school run a bus service? Is it logistical in terms of siblings' needs and the commute to work if applicable?

How close does a day school need to be?

Check on the times of the start and end of the school day, with the associated flexibility. Ask about the provision of school bus runs and of public transport links. Remember that the daily commute on a school bus offers a more social and enjoyable experience for pupils than the daily commute we may experience as adults.

How do we manage the school run?

Often, a little collaborative thinking out of the box and combined effort makes life a lot easier: that which seemed beyond you, can become achievable.

How far are we prepared to travel for sports matches on Saturdays?

Often overlooked, this is an aspect that is worth important consideration ahead of selection of school.

Style of the School

What sort of place do we want our child to grow up in?

This is a central question that you will want to have clear in your mind as you approach schools: try to clarify those 'non-negotiables' in terms of what you seek from the senior school. It is extremely important to have this clear in your mind.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS continued

Is it our absolute priority that our child progresses purely academically, or are the pastoral care and extra-curricular aspects more significant?

You will be keen for the blend of academic rigour with the immersion in extracurricular pursuits to be that which best suits your child. Do aim for your child to be stretched academically, although we ask that you be prepared for us to keep you realistic about your academic aspirations for them to ensure you find the very best fit.

What are the academic standards like?

This is a key consideration. Consider the GCSE and A-level or IB results, and, perhaps more importantly, seek a feel of the teaching ethos: look for signs of innovation, progression and, of course, inspiration in the learning environment.

Can you measure the value added?

It is difficult to accurately measure value added but it is worth pursuing, so it is worth asking: What are the academic results like in relation to the initial entry requirements?

What does the league position of the school tell you?

It is generally a fair indicator of the standard of pupil academic attainment at the top of the school, which is reflected, of course, by the entry requirements.

The Ethos – Things to look for

Are the pupils happy?

This is of fundamental importance because future happiness and success depends on it. It is important to listen to your instincts in this area.

Do the Staff (including the Head and senior staff) know the pupils' names?

It is reasonable to look out for personal interactions although this is not as easily achieved in a larger school.

Do you get a sense that the school has an achievement culture?

Look for this on your tour – displays and classroom notice boards, as well as pupil comments are a good indicator, rather than what the Headteacher will tell you.

The 'Fabric'

Is the school clean, well-maintained and smart?

Basics that ought to be in place, but sadly often overlooked. Use peripheral vision as you tour, for the route will invariably be carefully planned to show you the best, cleanest and most glamorous bits.

Is the boarding house well cared for, with suitable recreation areas?

If you are considering boarding, you will be picturing your child living there: are the facilities adequate?

What level of recent, current or planned development is evident?

A fair indication of a school's state of financial health and progress. You would be hoping to see development projects underway, as well as evidence of recent developments and/or plans for the future.

The Cost of the School

A significant question to ask yourself is: Does it seem good value for money?

All independent Senior Schools are charities and therefore offer Bursaries and Scholarships of some form. This information should be available on request from the schools' Admissions teams.

The Suitability of the School for your Child

Is it a natural move on from all that is Feltonfleet for my child?

This is certainly the question we would most readily identify with in assessing Senior Schools. Generally speaking, the range of Senior Schools to which Feltonfleet pupils have been progressing hold fast to all that we believe in, so you can feel assured of a relatively smooth transition.

Will our child cope there, academically and socially?

Our main aim will be to steer you as knowledgeably as possible, based on your child's performance in all aspects at Feltonfleet, as to appropriate Senior Schools for which you might aim. As previously mentioned, this might mean our having to manage expectations regarding Senior School choices. Please know that when we do this, we simply wish for your child not to find themselves either failing completely in their bid for a place or struggling to keep up with the academic pace when there.

Does it feel right?

Only you – and, more importantly, your child – will be able to answer this. This is where the visit to the school with your child is so crucial.

Does it provide fully, across the age ranges, for the things my child likes doing, and achieves in?

Your research into Senior Schools, from visiting and listening to the opinions of others as well as viewing the website, ought to inform you.

Do they cater for different characteristics of pupils?

Some pupils may seek opportunities that are less well promoted. Ensure you gauge what the broader curriculum looks like to fulfill your child's interests.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO GUIDE DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR SCHOOLS

- What are the features and strengths of the pastoral care framework?
- What is the relationship like between staff and pupils?
- What percentage of your school are: boarders/day, overseas students, boys and girls?
- Where are you geographically and how would my child get to your school?
- What makes your school stand out?
- What sort of pupil thrives at your school?
- Does this school have a particular educational philosophy or mission?
- Is there Saturday school?
- How does the school prioritise the wellbeing of its students?
- How does this school encourage and monitor students' academic progress?
- How is technology used to support teaching and learning at this school?
- How do the arts fit into the curriculum? What facilities & opportunities are available?
- What sporting opportunities are available? How well does the school perform in relation to others?
- How does this school support students who have academic, social or emotional difficulties?
- What are some of the school's greatest accomplishments?
- What are some of the biggest challenges this school faces?
- What percentage of your pupils stay the course to the end of your school?
- My son/daughter particularly enjoys _____. How is this activity accommodated at your school?
- What do you feel are the strengths of the school?
- What do you feel are the weaknesses of the school?
- If you could change one thing at the school, what would it be?
- What are the class sizes? How big is the school and does it feel "big"?
- What are the results like at the school?
- How important are league tables to you?
- How selective is the school academically and what are the current entrance requirements?
- What Scholarships and financial support are available?
- What are the plans for developing facilities at the school?

11+ OR 13+ DECIDING THE BEST TIME TO TRANSFER TO SENIOR SCHOOL

Do I want my child to stay at Feltonfleet until 13, or leave at 11?

Naturally, we will point you to the enormous, irreplaceable benefits of the final two years of Prep School life: Years 7 and 8 offer the pupils such a huge amount of academic and pastoral development, not least in their assumption of leadership roles. In fact, a surprising number of Senior Schools who start at 11 so appreciate those benefits that they would support a delay of transfer until 13. It varies between Senior Schools as to whether a start at 11 is actually less competitive than a start at 13, and the academic progress we see pupils making in our final two years is terrific and not easily replicated.

In Years 7 and 8, pupils achieve exceptional returns academically, in scholarships, in concerts and on the sports field. But above all they grow as citizens and leaders. They leave Year 6 as pupils and emerge from Year 8 as balanced, fully rounded and mature young men and women. Senior Schools are exciting, but big, confusing, grown up places and we know that some pupils are not ready at the end of Year 6.

For what reason would a Senior School suggest we moved at 11?

The majority of Senior Independent Schools, including those who have their own attached Prep Schools, will encourage students to remain at their Prep Schools until 13, acknowledging the significant benefits of the final two years in terms of intellectual and emotional maturation and personal development. Local state schools however, are dependent upon government funding and therefore transition is at Year 7 entry.

So what does Feltonfleet offer in the Upper School (Year 7 & 8)

- A secure, safe, confidence-building environment and campus where they can discover who they are and grow intellectually and emotionally;
- A broad curriculum where there is a focus on critical thinking, applied learning and agile intelligence;
- Scope for enrichment and development in all areas: academic, personal, emotional, social, sporting etc;
- A place where they are known, valued and understood as individuals and where boys and girls can be children for longer;
- The very best specialist staff that are experienced in teaching the 11-13 age bracket and who use language and methods which the pupils understand and to which they relate;
- A range of extra-curricular activities, i.e. an excellent and broad sports programme, quality music, dynamic drama and after school clubs;
- The opportunity to develop important life skills such as self-reliance, sharing, collaboration, independence etc;
- The Year 8 Leavers Programme that includes a multitude of exciting activities to extend and expand their skillset;
- Far more Scholarships are available at 13+ because a pupil's talents and abilities are more identifiable and developed at this age rather than at 11+ (Academic, Sport, Music, Art, Drama, DT, All-Rounders);
- Feltonfleet pupils have gained over 90 awards at 13+ to Senior Schools in the last eight years;
- Pupils have enjoyed the opportunity for leadership at an age when they can be responsible citizens, Heads of School, Prefects and Team Captains, all of which enable them to discover who they are, have confidence in their own abilities, develop leadership skills and the strength and courage to resist some of the cultural dangers and threats of the adolescent years.
- Pupils receive a child-centred education focussing on their needs, in a parent friendly environment.

SENIOR SCHOOL ENTRANCE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

Entrance to independent co-educational or single sex schools is through competitive Senior School entrance exams, set by Senior Schools or the ISEB (Independent Schools Examination Board).

Feltonfleet aims to support all parents and prepare all pupils whatever their destination school and whenever they depart. It is important that parents keep Feltonfleet informed as to their intentions.

The Admissions Process:

What form do the Pre-Tests take?

Generally, Pre-Tests will involve online tests in English and Maths, Verbal and Non-Verbal Reasoning, as well as a group or, more likely, an individual interview.

Pre-Tests are effectively a set of Cognitive Ability Tests which are standardised to gauge the pupils thinking ability against a national average of 100, similar to the annual CAT4 assessments your children experience at Feltonfleet. Schools utilise these tests as they provide a more accurate measure of ability than a written exam paper set by the individual school. Importantly, they are a test of pupils' cognitive ability and so are not likely to be affected much by practice, although experience of the format and familiarity with the type of questions asked and time management is highly beneficial.

Do all Senior Schools hold Pre-Tests?

All Senior Schools are now using Pre-Tests to determine their intake at Year 9 at an earlier stage. Their timing varies, although most are in the Autumn Term of Year 6. It is important to establish this factor from the outset, particularly if you have reservations about your child sitting Pre-Tests. Some pupils may need to sit equivalent and similar exams at 12+ (Spring of Year 7).

What is the ISEB Common Pre-Test?

The Common Pre-Test is designed to enable the pupils to sit the Pre-Test once at their current Prep School. The relevant Senior Schools will then collect the data from a centralised source, managed by the ISEB. This is beneficial for the pupil as they are comfortable sitting the tests in their own familiar environment: this can reduce the stress of doing examinations at an unfamiliar Senior School. However, if the child does not perform well, they only have one opportunity.

If my child fails to perform to the best of their ability in the Pre-Test, are their chances of a place in the Senior School over?

Not by any means. Senior Schools are running the Pre-Tests as a means of narrowing their field of applicants down, but they are perfectly aware that pupils can make significant progress late in Year 6 and during Years 7 and 8, so they are open to Prep Schools informing them of such progress. We will also encourage you to have more than one option available, especially if you are considering the highly academically selective schools.

What are their likely entry requirements?

This varies significantly between Senior Schools and can be hard to predict. They are dictated, of course, by the academic reputation and standard of a school, but also by the demand for places in any given year: the entry requirement therefore fluctuates on an annual basis depending upon the entry cohort applying.

How will I know each school's entry requirements?

As entry requirements change regularly, and are highly dependent upon the standard of applicants each year, these are published separately by Feltonfleet. The Feltonfleet Team (Miss Wright, Mr Smith and Mrs Lance) will guide you on their entry expectations and you can consider your own child's data alongside this.

Do I choose one school, or register for several?

It is always advisable to keep your options open by having at least two or three schools in mind. If we suspect that your child might be a borderline candidate for the preferred school, then we will suggest a more secure option by registering with a 'safer choice' of school.

When will we receive school offers and at what point do we need to make a decision?

Pre-Testing will normally take place in the Autumn Term of Year 6, usually by the end of November, and the majority of schools will make offers between January and March. Parents, at this point, can accept a place if they are completely decided on their school of choice. However, pupils will likely be offered places at two or three schools and parents then have choices. A parent could accept more than one place and pay the deposit for both. Although this is an expensive option, parents are entitled to a refund on the deposit, as long as the place is declined by March of Year 7. We advise parents against this unless there are exceptional circumstances in order that places can be released and offered to pupils on waiting lists.

Best Fit

Schools vary enormously in their selection processes and it is vital to consider schools that would be the very best academic and all-round fit. Getting into the school may be one thing, but will your child really be happy when they get there if they will struggle to sustain the pace at which the curriculum is delivered. No one school is better than another; they are all just different and they will suit different pupils accordingly.



HOW WILL FELTONFLEET PREPARE MY CHILD FOR PRE-TESTING?

From the start of Year 5, teaching in English and Mathematics is increasingly geared towards Pre-Test skills, using 11+ papers as part of our continuous assessment. Lessons in reasoning also take place and an online platform "BOFA11+" is used to give pupils experience of digital assessments. Pupils sit CAT4 tests in Year 5 and Year 6. These tests are designed to assess the pupil's ability to reason with and manipulate different types of material. They provide an understanding of core abilities related to learning and suggest what a pupil's academic potential might be. CAT4 tests are all completed online.

The interview is important. A good Senior School will be more interested in your child's broad education, attitude, interests and involvement in activities both in and out of school, rather than simply scrutinising test results. Life outside the classroom will be carefully considered. The Headmistress's report is often very influential in this process.

Discover You

To help pupils prepare for their interviews, we provide them with a programme of self-discovery and self-awareness. This programme is known as "Discover You". It is designed to inspire pupils to identify their own strengths and talents and to confidently build their self-awareness. Pupils will engage in workshops designed to recognise their unique talents within their own personal success stories. They are encouraged to identify underlying skills that they may not have been aware of.

The "Discover You" process helps pupils build confidence and ultimately better understand themselves. They then spend time articulating potential responses to interview questions and being comfortable in both individual and group settings.

Interview Practice

We ensure every pupil receives guidance in the interview process. A booklet on how to prepare for an interview is provided, and we go through this with the pupils. All pupils in Year 6 participate in practice interviews with a member of SLT.

For later entry or for Scholarship assessment, interview practice is arranged, usually in the weeks immediately before the actual interview, in order that advice and pointers for success are fresh in the pupils' minds.

Feedback and Communication to Parents

Parents are regularly updated on their child's progress as a natural part of Feltonfleet's assessment and reporting processes.



STAGES OF THE PROCESS OF CHOOSING A SENIOR SCHOOL

The following might form the stages of the process, with suggested times:

Year 5 Information Talk and Pre-Test Presentation - Autumn Term

| | Action | When |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Talk to friends, recent leavers and Staff but try to be objective, impartial and independent | All years |
| 2 | Think through the key considerations listed in this booklet; seek to draw up a long list of schools that might suit your criteria and would be the best fit for your child | |
| 3 | Contact the schools and ask for their prospectus and enquire about their admissions process | Year 5 |
| 4 | Visit their website | |
| 5 | Visit the schools (possibly without your child initially) | |
| 6 | Discuss your long list with one of the school's senior members of Staff: - Head of Middle School - Amanda Wright (Years 5 & 6) - Head of Upper School - Ed Smith (Years 5, 6 & 7) | Years 5 & 6 Second half of Autumn Term onwards |
| 7 | Seek to narrow your list down to a small group of three to five schools <u>maximum</u> | |
| 8 | If you are still unsure and need to discuss your final choices, arrange a meeting with the Headmistress | Year 6 |
| 9 | Make sure your child is entered on time for tests, where appropriate | |
| 10 | Make your decision and <u>keep Feltonfleet fully informed and updated throughout the process</u> , so that we can support you as much as possible | Year 6 |





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