Choosing a Secondary School for your Children

Meeting for parents with children in Years 4 and 5

Tuesday 20th January 2026

When to start thinking about the process

- In Year 3, children may start talking about Secondary School options.
- This is usually because in this location there is the option of ‘ selective’ education and to apply to the Grammar Schools. This involves preparation and signing up with a tutor. To do this, parents need to make contact with the tutors in the Summer term of Year 4 and the children start the tutoring in the Autumn Term of Year 5.
- Therefore conversations start in homes and these usually continue in school. The children then start to have conversations with each other.
- **Is this too early?**
- It is good to have a plan, but to be aware that the children are not going to be able to look around the schools until much nearer the time. It is a good idea to fact-find yourselves, and get an idea of the children’s strengths and interests so that you can make the best choice according to the individuals.
- It is a good idea to be prudent about the level to which you discuss the pros and cons of different schools, to avoid making assumptions until you look at them all.

Times to apply

- When your child is in Year 6, you will need to apply for a place.
- The application process opens in mid-September and closes 31st October.
- You will need to apply in the county in which you live, but can apply to a school in a different county.
- By the time the application date opens, it is a good idea to have visited the schools that you are considering.
- The visits are advertised on the School websites and it is a good idea to see when these are. They are usually in the Autumn term of Year 6, but some schools may offer opportunities when the children are in Year 5, in the Summer Term, so keep a look out.
- There is a lot of merit in going along to the Open days a year early.

Things to consider

- Your catchment is from where you live, not where you go to school.
- Catchment criteria is decided principally on distance. Other criteria may differ according to the type of school. E.g. Is it an Academy, selective (grammar), Faith School etc ?
- Other criteria may include: SEND, siblings, faith.
- You can choose any secondary school, regardless of where you live, if there are spaces available.
- You need to be aware of how your child will travel to the school.
- What subjects does it offer? Will it give your child the option to study the ones they may be interested in?
- What qualifications does it offer GCSE's/ Btec's etc how will it meet your child's academic needs?
- How is it governed- LA or a Trust, this can affect how decisions are made and how much money the school has.

- The very best way to decide which will best suit your child is to visit and look around as many as you can.

Options to consider

There are a range of schools in Hampshire and Wiltshire that you may wish to visit, The following are in no particular order.

Danebury

- The catchment school for Broughton and West Tytherley is Danebury School.
- This has the advantage of being small - currently 326 pupils (capacity for 780)
- Currently offers a wide range of GCSE's
- Buses run from both villages.
- The School is part of the HISP academy chain, which gives more support and can draw on expertise from across the different schools in the chain, these include: Thornden (Chandlers Ford), Highcliffe (Dorset), Crofton (Fareham)
- Last OFSTED inspection:As a new school having joined HISP they are awaiting their first OFSTED.
- They organise events for the cluster schools for the children to take part in, which helps with transition.

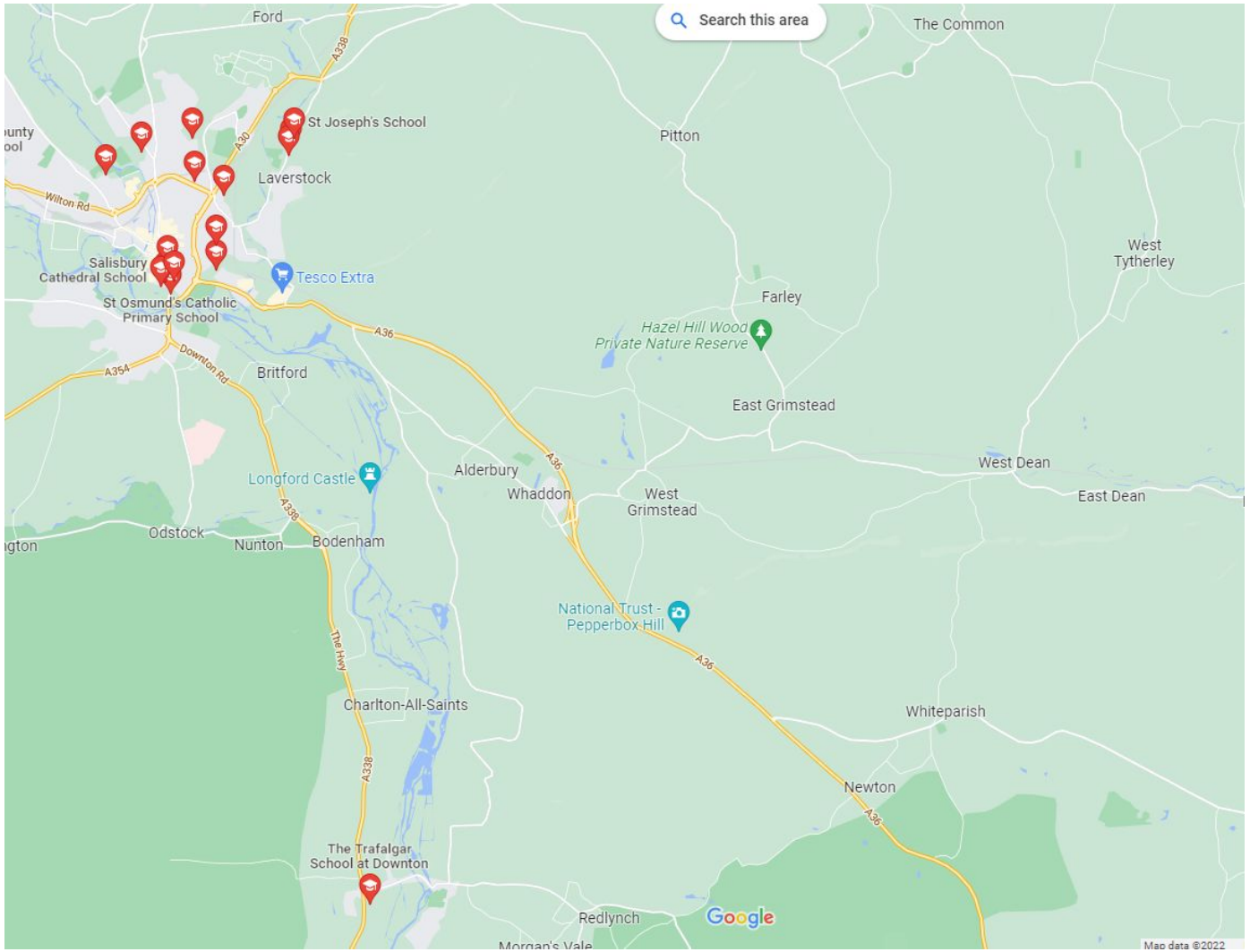
John Hanson-Andover

- We have had children who live towards Andover attend this school. It is co-educational and is over- subscribed with 993 pupils and a capacity for 980.
- It serves part of Andover and has a good reputation.
- Offers GCSE’s and other level 1&2 qualifications
- Local progress 8 and GCSE scores show strong performance compared to many state schools in the county.
- Last OFSTED March 2024: Good

Harrow Way- Andover

- This has a good reputation and offers a lot of extra curricular activities
- Broad curriculum including GCSE's and BTEC's
- Specialist strengths in maths and computing
- It is the other side of Andover
- Approximately 998 pupils with a capacity for 900 (over- subscribed)

Most Recent OFSTED- July 2022- Good



Schools in Wiltshire

Wyvern St Edmunds

- Amalgamated into a co-ed school from two single sex schools. Part of an academy chain, ‘The Magna Learning Partners’.
- Large school: 1335 pupils with a capacity for 1400
- It has a good reputation for sports and extra-curricular activities.
- Last OFSTED Received a “ Requires improvement” in latest framework for Quality of Education. Good in other areas.

St Josephs-Laverstock

- A smaller school than Wyvern St Eds, it is also a co-educational, Catholic school. (You do not need to be Catholic to attend, but will be an advantage if the school is over-subscribed).
- Currently 597 pupils out of a capacity 625
- Offers GCSE's and BTEC pathways
- Last OFSTED Feb 2024 "Requires Improvement" in Quality of Education. Good in all other areas

South Wilts and Bishops Wordsworth Grammar Schools

- Require children to pass the 11+
- The children take this in the September prior to admission in Year 7, the following September.
- Results are available in October/November time.
- Application is done through the same process as for all the other schools.
- Most pupils have tutoring for a year prior to the test. There are tutors who are considered to be good at preparing the children.

The Trafalgar School - Downton

- This is another school in the Magna Learning Partnership. It has 794 pupils out of a capacity for 630
- This is a catchment school for those who live in Whiteparish but a child did go there last year from West Dean.
- Offers GCSE curriculum and wide co-curricular opportunities.
- Last OFSTED July 2022: Good with strengths noted in quality of education, behaviour and personal development



Schools in Hampshire- Romsey

The Romsey School

- Part of the Gateway Multi Academy Trust.
- A co-educational school with 1,130 pupils with a capacity 1,173
- One of the larger schools
- Offers GCSE’s across a broad curriculum
- The catchment goes as far as Carters Clay.
- It has a good reputation with an additional provision for children with ASD
- Current OFSTED rating June 2023: Good



Winchester Schools

Henry Beaufort-Winchester

- This is a Winchester school that children living in Broughton have been able to secure places.
- State secondary
- It is co-educational and there are 1,005 pupils currently with a capacity for 1015
- Wide range of GCSE options
- Good extra- curricular offer
- Strong academic outcomes with above- average progress scores.
- Last OFSTED Rating June 2023: Good- strengths in leadership, student progress and pastoral care.
- Only school that is currently offering open day and taster sessions Year 5 taster day (19th June 2026)- apply through the school.
- Open morning- 23rd June 2026

The independent sector

<u>Schools that go up to 13 years</u>

- Farleigh- Andover (Catholic Co-ed)
- Chafyn Grove- Salisbury (Co-ed)
- Salisbury Cathedral School- Salisbury (Co-ed)

<u>Schools that go up to 18+</u>

Godolphin- Salisbury

Leehurst Swan (co-ed)

Embley (Romsey) (co-ed)

Rookwood (Andover) (co-ed)

King Edwards VI (Southampton) - selective co-ed.

Before Visiting Schools - advice

- Think about your child carefully, their strengths and weaknesses.
- What do they need to set them up to succeed in their secondary school? Try to be honest about what they are like as learners and in their interactions with others.
- What are your priorities?
- Then look at each school website through this ‘lens’. The website will tell you a lot of information about the school offer: exam results, subjects taught, extra-curricular activities, sports and team games, residential trips and outings. It will talk about the ethos of the school and its vision and values. It is worth noting all these things and looking for evidence of them when you visit.

Open Days

If you attend open days, try to look beyond what you are being shown.

The school will be showcasing the best that they can offer. I always think it useful to also look at other things as well, such as:

- Levels of engagement and behaviour in classes – is this what happens day in and day out?
- How do the pupils behave as they move about the school? (Be realistic but with high expectations).
- What does that atmosphere feel like?
- How do the adults and pupils interact with each other?
- Ask your guides what would they change? How do they feel respected? What is the best thing? Are they proud to attend this school?

When you have narrowed it down

- Arrange to visit on a non-open day and see the school as it runs on a daily basis. Do you still feel the same way, see the same things? Is there a consistency from the open day, or does it feel very different?
- And finally:

There is no perfect school, and what is right for your child may be different for another. Please talk respectfully about all schools with your children so that they do not tell other children that some schools aren't good etc…