



## Don't Panic!

### A guide to secondary school admissions from The Royal Alexandra and Albert School

Choosing a secondary school is one of the most important decisions that you and your child will make, so it's vital that it's the right one, and most importantly that you're both happy with the final outcome.

**Here are some helpful pointers to ensure a 'happy household' at such a nail-biting/testing time:**

- Make sure you involve your child in the decision-making process. It's vital that he/she has their say and feels like their opinion really counts.
- Children can be highly sensitive so try not to make them feel like a failure or that the admissions process is their fault, should they not get into their chosen school. This could greatly dent their confidence and could have serious repercussions later on.
- Stay calm! Refrain from making any rash decisions, such as putting your house on the market! For the sake of your child, it's important not to make a drama out of a crisis and maintain calm.
- Remember, it is not the end of the world and that there are alternatives available, some of which you may not even be aware of (see section 3).

## WHERE TO START WHEN THE NEWS IS NOT GOOD

If your child doesn't get into their secondary school of choice, stay positive! There are still a number of options to consider:

### 1. YOUR RIGHTS:

- Every child aged between five and 16 is entitled by law to a place at a state school
- Wherever possible you will be offered a place at one of your preferred schools, but this can't be guaranteed
- Many schools receive more applications than they have places to offer. Every school has an admissions limit and this determines the number of applicants they will accept\*

### 2. AN APPEAL:

If your child does not get a place at their desired school, you have a legal right to appeal. Your local authority will have details about how to go about launching an appeal against a school admission via an independent panel. But, please bear in mind this can be a very slow process and the vast number of appeals are unsuccessful (at the end of the process which could be July, the majority of parents end up with the school they were initially allocated back in March).

### 3. WAITING LISTS:

If you do not get into the school of your choice first time round, it is possible to be put on their waiting list – some children do not take up their places, or other families move house or area. Telephone the school of your choice and ask them more details about how their individual waiting system works.

#### 4. THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS:

Do not simply discard the school you are allocated. Forget what you think you know and take an open-minded approach. Phone up, log on to the school's website or even pay the school a visit to find out more – you may be pleasantly surprised. Another good way of finding out more about a school is by talking to parents and children already there.

#### 5. SOME SCHOOLS YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE CONSIDERED:

##### *State boarding schools*

On average, state boarding schools as a group, tend to be higher performing than other state schools. Modern state boarding schools are very different from the schools that many parents may have read about or experienced in the past. One particularly attractive attribute is the fact they, and the classes, tend to be slightly smaller, therefore promoting a much more child-centred education.

There are 35 state boarding schools in England and Wales. Tuition is free, but parents need to pay for boarding costs. Many of these schools have superb facilities and offer a whole host of extra curricular activities. They can help to instil a huge amount of confidence and independence in children.

##### *Private schools*

Independent schools – often referred to as 'private' schools – set their own curriculum and admissions policies. There are approximately 2,300 in England\* and are funded by the pupils' parents. They are extremely popular, and in London it is estimated that a child applying for a place at an independent school, typically applies for five different independent day schools at any one time. These schools all run waiting lists, so if you have been unsuccessful with your preferred choice, check other schools' waiting lists carefully before making your next preferred option to avoid any more disappointment.

\*direct.gov.uk

### THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES PROVIDE A RANGE OF USEFUL INFORMATION:



[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

– Online resource created by the Central Office of Information



[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

– Department for education and schools



[www.isc.co.uk](http://www.isc.co.uk)

– Independent Schools Council



[www.sbsa.org.uk](http://www.sbsa.org.uk)

– State Boarding School Association



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SCHOOL**

Set in Gatton Park, Reigate, Surrey, The Royal Alexandra and Albert Boarding School is a high achieving, co-educational voluntary aided boarding and day school for boys and girls aged 7 to 18.

For more information about the school or to request a prospectus, please visit:  
[www.raa-school.co.uk](http://www.raa-school.co.uk)