

Meet the parents

Secondary school applications are now open. With more Lewisham families choosing local secondary schools as first preference, we spoke to three parents to get their top tips.

Sarah Withe is mum to Year 8 twins at Forest Hill School

Look local

"The most important thing to us when looking at secondary schools for our twin boys was proximity to home. Being able to walk to school and not have to get up at the crack of dawn to commute on several modes of public transport was a high priority. With Forest Hill School being so local, there are a number of boys from their primary school who also go there,

so they are all able to meet and walk in together, which in their first term was so reassuring for me. And the new friends they have made are local, so they're able to meet up easily outside of school hours."

Talk to other parents

"It's important to listen to parents of children who actually attend the school, rather than hearsay from people who don't have anything to



do with the place! We have friends with children there who have always been honest and informative about everything we've asked."

More information

If you are applying for a secondary school place this autumn, you can sign up to get free date reminders, information and advice about the process at: lewisham.gov.uk/secondary-school-signup

Pay attention to the Headteacher talk

"At the Forest Hill School open morning we were bowled over by the Headteacher. He spoke so openly about his school. He was honest and genuine, totally down to earth with no frills or fancy sales pitch, which was massively appealing. He obviously cares about his students, instilling values and decent work/life ethics, you can tell he wants each and every one of them to be the best they possibly can be."

Trudi Wilkes is mum to a Year 8 pupil at Sedgehill Academy

Don't be swayed by opinion of others – make your own decision

"I struggled to find anyone who had a good thing to say about Sedgehill, so when I visited I was really just doing it as a tick box exercise, I had already decided that I didn't want my child to go there, but quite quickly into the Open Evening I changed my mind and it became one of our favourites. A good tip someone gave me (if you can) is to spend time outside the school to see how the pupils walk to and from school, how are they

behaving, could you see your child there? Would they fit in?"

Ask about student support and pastoral care

"We were keen to find a school that nurtured and supported all children, not just those who are going to do well academically. Academic success is of course important but we wanted a school that worked hard to develop happy and well-rounded young adults who will be assets to their community, whatever they end up doing post-school."



Charles Olojugba has a son in Year 9 at Sedgehill Academy

Does the school match your expectations?

"We knew that we wanted our son to be educated in a safe and supportive environment, one with an understanding of the specific needs of a black boy growing up in London and in an environment where he would be pushed to excel.

"We were pleased that Sedgehill instils a spirit of high expectation in its pupils, through regular testing, reward systems and competency checking."

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Consider the demographic

"It was important for us that the school he attended was representative of the community in which he lived. We wanted him to go to a school that had significant

diversity both in terms of the pupils and staff. We recognised that teachers are role models and the importance in positive examples of black and white men in the school environment."

Think about the journey

"We considered practical safety challenges including how our son would travel to and from school, what the culture of the school was like and what the reputation of the school was in regards to safety."



A message from Cllr Barnham



"Secondary schools in Lewisham are exciting places to learn. They are modern, vibrant and stimulating, with dedicated and skilled staff who are determined to help all of our students to thrive and reach their full potential.

"I'm proud that we provide a comprehensive education system here in Lewisham that doesn't select some children over others, but aims for

everyone to succeed. Wherever your child goes, we wish all those starting secondary school next year the very best for the future."

Cllr Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Performance