



# Should Your Child Attend a Selective School If They Barely Qualify?

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Considerations for Parents Making Educational Decisions

*"It's better to be a big fish in a small pond than to be a small fish in a big pond"*

Based on insights from an educational specialist

# The Central Question

"If my child just scrapes into a selective school, should they attend?"

A question that many parents face when their child qualifies for a selective school, but is near the bottom of the admission rankings.

## Why This Matters

This decision significantly impacts your child's academic journey, self-esteem, and future opportunities.

*Based on experience with thousands of students over the past decade*

## What We'll Explore

The benefits and challenges of selective schools, and how to determine what environment will best support your child's development.



# The Expert Recommendation

"I personally think it is **not a good idea** to scrape into a selective school."

## ! Exceptions to Consider

- ✓ Child didn't do much preparation for selective tests
- ✓ Didn't prepare enough but has untapped potential

## ⚠ When to Be Cautious

- ✗ Child worked extremely hard just to qualify
- ✗ Already pushing the limits of their abilities

*"It's better to be a big fish in a small pond than to be a small fish in a big pond."*

# Challenges of Being in the "Bottom 50"

## Extreme Competition

Top selective schools are intensely competitive environments. Students who just barely qualify must work exceptionally hard just to keep up with their peers.

## Difficult Internal Assessments

To differentiate between high-performing students, top schools set internal assessments at a much higher level than standard HSC requirements.

## Higher IQ Requirements

Today's top selective schools typically require students to have an IQ of 130+ (top 1%). A decade ago, students could get in with 110-120 IQ levels.

## Psychological Impact

Being consistently in the lower ranks affects self-esteem, well-being, and can create unnecessary stress. It's "not a pretty sight" to be in the bottom 50.

## Real-world Example:

Some students have transferred from one selective school to another, only to transfer back because they couldn't handle the increased pressure and competition.

# The Changing Landscape of Selective Schools



## Then vs. Now

### 10 Years Ago:

- ✓ Lower entry requirements (110-120 IQ sufficient)
- ✓ Less intensive preparation needed
- ✓ More accessible with basic preparation

### Today:

- ! Higher entry requirements (130+ IQ needed)
- ! Extensive preparation essential
- ! Near-perfect scores required for top schools



## Better Alternatives

### Schools Ranked 11-20:

A "more palatable" option for many students with reasonable requirements.

- ★ Less pressure, still excellent education
- ★ Room for 5-6 mistakes on assessments
- ★ Better balance of challenge and support



**Expert advice:** "There are way too many parents aiming for the top five schools" when schools ranked 11-20 offer excellent opportunities with less extreme competition.

# Performance Requirements for Top Schools

What scores are needed for top selective schools today?

## Mathematics

Top 5 Schools: **33-35/35**

Near-perfect scores required with minimal to zero mistakes

Schools Ranked 11-20: **29-32/35**

Allows for 5-6 mistakes, more achievable for most students

## English & Thinking Skills

English: **85-90%**

Extremely high proficiency required for top schools

Thinking Skills: **80-85%**

Advanced cognitive abilities essential for top performance

### Key Insight:

"To get into a top five selective school, you need to be very well trained and very accurate. It's not possible with just natural intelligence alone."

# School Selection Based on Student Performance

Results from a representative mock test provide guidance on appropriate school targeting

## Assessment Findings from 500+ Test Participants

Based on a selective mock test open to both Year 5 and Year 6 students, with results analysed and mapped to the 2024 selective school test requirements.



Top 100 Rank

Top 5 Schools

Very good chance of getting into the most competitive selective schools



Rank 100-150

Schools Ranked 11-20

Excellent schools with more balanced competition and support

Rank 150-250

Schools Ranked 20-30

Strong academic environments with achievable entry requirements

Below 250 Rank

Schools Ranked 30-50

Solid selective schools with supportive learning environments



### Expert Recommendation:

"Schools ranked 11-20 are much more palatable to most parents and students. The process of getting into these schools is not as tricky, but they still offer excellent education."

# Be Realistic About Your Child's Abilities

Finding the right balance between challenge and support for your child

## Finding the Right Balance

Parents often either push too hard or don't push enough. Find the middle ground that respects your child's actual abilities and potential.

## Avoid Outdated Information

Be cautious of basing decisions on experiences from several years ago. The selective school landscape has changed dramatically in recent years.

## Track Academic Progress

Monitor your child's academic performance to understand their genuine potential and appropriate school level. Look for patterns rather than isolated achievements.

## Aim Appropriately

Most children with moderate training are capable of accessing schools ranked 11-30. Top 10 schools require both exceptional ability and intensive preparation.

“Be a little bit more gracious with your children. Understand what their actual levels are. There's no point forcing a child into an environment where they'll struggle unnecessarily.”

## Key Insight:

The right school environment allows your child to thrive academically while maintaining good self-esteem and well-being. Being above average in a mid-tier school is better than struggling at the bottom of a top school.



# Decision-Making Framework

How to make the right selective school decision for your child



## Assess True Potential

- ✓ Use standardised assessments
- ✓ Consider IQ and natural abilities
- ✓ Evaluate genuine work capacity



## Weigh the Environment

- ✓ Consider competition intensity
- ✓ Evaluate internal assessment difficulty
- ✓ Assess emotional support available



## Prioritise Wellbeing

- ✓ Value self-esteem and confidence
- ✓ Consider stress management
- ✓ Aim for academic enjoyment



## The Ideal Position

Aim for your child to be in the **top half** of their chosen school rather than the **bottom quarter** of a more prestigious school.



## Positive Outcomes When Right-Matched

- ✓ Higher confidence and academic motivation
- ✓ Better HSC scores from appropriate challenge level
- ✓ Leadership opportunities within peer group



## Negative Outcomes When Mismatched

- ✗ Decreased self-esteem from constant comparison
- ✗ Anxiety from excessive academic pressure
- ✗ Lower relative HSC performance despite good school

# Key Takeaways: Making the Right Decision

Final guidance on selective school decisions for your child's future

## Remember

- ✓ Position in class ranking matters more than school prestige for a child's wellbeing and academic development
- ✓ Today's top selective schools require both exceptional natural ability (130+ IQ) and intensive preparation
- ✓ Schools ranked 11-20 offer excellent education with more reasonable entry requirements

## Actions to Take

- Assess your child's genuine abilities through standardised mock tests
- Target schools where your child is likely to be in the top half of the cohort
- Balance academic ambition with consideration for your child's mental wellbeing

“The goal isn't just getting into a prestigious school. The goal is finding an environment where your child can thrive academically, develop confidence, and enjoy their educational journey.”

— From experienced educators



Success comes from the right match between student and school

For more guidance, seek advice from educational specialists  
who understand the current selective school landscape

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