

TRANSFER OPTIONS HANDBOOK

Year 8-9 Pathways and Academic Requirements in NSW

A Comprehensive Guide to School Transfer Processes

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1. Purpose of this handbook

Many families ask:

"If this school is not the right fit, can we move in Year 8 or 9 – and what academic standard is required?"

This handbook summarises:

- The formal transfer mechanisms in New South Wales for Years 8–11, particularly into and between selective high schools.
- The types of evidence schools consider (school reports, NAPLAN, entrance tests, competitions, co-curricular achievements).
- The range of transfer options into independent and Catholic schools, including scholarship entry in later years.

It is based on:

- NSW Department of Education documentation for Years 8–12 selective entry.
- Public guidance and examples from highly competitive selective schools (e.g. James Ruse, North Sydney Boys/Girls, Baulkham Hills, St George Girls).
- Published scholarship information from independent schools (e.g. Pymble Ladies' College, Blue Mountains Grammar School).

Important Note: Exact cut-off marks are not publicly released, so this handbook focuses on processes and on what a "competitive profile" typically looks like, rather than promising specific scores.

2. Are mid-high school transfers actually possible?

2.1 Selective high schools (Years 8-11)

The NSW Department of Education operates a separate process for entry into selective high schools in Years 8-11:

- Parents may apply for up to three selective high schools for a given year of entry, using a standard application form (Years 8-12 entry to selective high schools).
- Applications open in June and close in late July in the year before entry.
- Each school manages:
 - its own vacancies (which are usually very limited),
 - any school-based testing (for example, HAST or EduTest), and
 - its own selection committee.

The official guidance emphasises that:

- Vacancies are small and variable (some year levels at some schools have no places at all).
- Some schools do not accept entry at particular year levels (for example, some do not accept Year 10 or Year 12 transfers).

2.2 Independent / Catholic schools (with or without scholarships)

Most independent and Catholic schools accept "in-year" enrolments for Years 8 and 9 if places are available. However:

- Scholarships (academic, all-rounder, performance) tend to have defined entry points, often Year 7 or Year 11, although some schools (e.g. Pymble Ladies' College, Blue Mountains Grammar) also offer scholarships for Years 8-10 or 8-11.
- The selection process typically involves:
 - a scholarship examination (e.g. Academic Assessment Services, ACER, Edutest),

- • recent school reports and NAPLAN, and
- • documentation of co-curricular involvement.

Some schools (e.g. Sydney Grammar, Knox Grammar, Shore) focus their main academic scholarships at Year 7 and do not routinely award new academic scholarships for Years 8–11.

3. Common transfer routes in Years 8-9

In practice, families most often consider the following pathways:

- • **Comprehensive → Selective**
 - e.g. local high school to North Sydney Girls, Hornsby Girls, Girraween, Manly, etc.
- • **Selective → Selective**
 - e.g. moving from one fully/partially selective high school to another that is a better geographical or academic fit.
- • **Selective → Comprehensive / Catholic / Independent**
 - often for reasons of wellbeing, distance, or desire for a broader co-curricular program.
- • **Non-selective → Independent with scholarship**
 - e.g. local high school to a school such as Pymble Ladies' College, Abbotsleigh, or Blue Mountains Grammar via academic/all-rounder scholarship.
- • **Independent / Catholic → Selective**
 - students who did not sit or did not accept Year 7 selective places, but now seek a transfer into a fully or partially selective environment.

4. Selective high school transfers: processes and examples

4.1 Standard documentation

The NSW Department of Education's application information indicates that schools will usually ask for:

- The standard Years 8–12 application form for each selective high school (up to three schools).
- Evidence of residency and identity (e.g. birth certificate, citizenship or visa).
- Recent school reports (often the last two to three semesters).
- Recent NAPLAN report(s).
- Any additional documentation specified by the school.

Individual top selective schools then add their own supplementary requirements. Examples collated by Matrix Education include:

James Ruse Agricultural High School

- Accepts Years 8–10 (no routine Year 12 intake).
- Requires the DoE application form plus a school-specific form.
- Requests:
 - the most recent three school reports,
 - recent NAPLAN,
 - results in external competitions (e.g. ICAS, Australian Maths, science competitions),
 - evidence of co-curricular participation.
- For Year 11 entry there is an additional EDU-Test examination.

North Sydney Boys High School

- Accepts Years 8–11 (no routine Year 12 intake).
- Requires:
 - the DoE application form,

- a supplementary achievements summary,
- the most recent three school reports,
- NAPLAN,
- external academic achievements and co-curricular evidence.
- Applicants sit a Selective Entrance Exam run by the school.

North Sydney Girls High School

- Accepts Years 8–11.
- Requires the DoE form plus a school application and the Higher Ability Selection Test (HAST).

Hornsby Girls High School

- Accepts Years 8–11, uses HAST as the selection test.

Baulkham Hills High School

- Accepts Years 8–12.
- Requires the DoE form, a supplementary form, and extensive supporting documents:
- the previous two years of half-yearly and yearly reports,
- NAPLAN results,
- competition certificates (e.g. ICAS, AMC),
- evidence of excellence in extracurricular activities.
- At the time of the Matrix guide there was no additional exam, with selection based on the written application.

Fort Street High School, Girraween High, St George Girls

Typically require the DoE form, recent reports, NAPLAN, and evidence of co-curricular achievement; some also use HAST or other tests, particularly for Year 11 entry.

4.2 Number of places available

Public data on vacancies is limited, but the Matrix guide gives a useful example for St George Girls High School: in one year, the school offered:

- 2 places in Year 8,
- 4 places in Year 9,
- 3 places in Year 10,
- and 18 places for Year 11 entry.

The same guide notes that some schools (e.g. James Ruse) may admit up to 30 students in Year 9 or Year 11, while others may accept no new students in particular year levels.

Implication: Transfer is possible, including at Year 9, but usually only for small numbers of high-performing applicants.

5. "What marks are needed?" - interpreting the evidence

No selective school or official Department of Education document publishes a fixed minimum average mark for Years 8–11 entry.

However, from:

- The documentation required (multiple years of reports, NAPLAN, external competitions),
- The extremely small number of places at top schools,
- And community guidance that emphasises "very strong" reports for competitive applicants,

it is reasonable to make the following careful inferences about a competitive academic profile.

5.1 School reports

For highly ranked selective schools (e.g. James Ruse, North Sydney Boys/Girls, Baulkham Hills, Hornsby Girls, Girraween):

- Successful applicants typically present consistently high results in English, Mathematics, and Science on their most recent reports.
- In practice this usually means grades at or near the top reporting band used by the school (for example, "A" or "Outstanding" in the New South Wales common grade scale), over several reporting periods, rather than a single strong semester.
- Community advice (e.g. selective school forums) often describes a "strong report" for transfer as one with predominantly top-band grades, and notes that regular "C" grades can materially weaken an application.

This is not an official rule, but it is consistent with the limited number of places and the level of competition.

5.2 NAPLAN

- Most selective schools explicitly request the student's most recent NAPLAN report as part of the package.
- Schools do not publish required band levels.
- Given that Year 9 NAPLAN Bands 8 and 9 represent the higher performance categories, it is reasonable to assume that very competitive applicants often sit in the higher bands in Reading, Writing and Numeracy; however this is an inference, not a formal cut-off.

5.3 School-based or external tests

For schools that use HAST, EDU-Test, or internal entrance exams (e.g. North Sydney Boys/Girls, Hornsby Girls, some partially selective schools):

- Test scores are not disclosed to families.
- The tests are used to rank applicants on academic merit in conjunction with school reports and other evidence.

The practical implication is that for students entering at Year 8 or 9, the combination of strong reports, strong NAPLAN, and strong test performance must be competitive against a very small pool of available places.

6. Independent and Catholic transfers and scholarships

6.1 General mid-high school entry

Most independent schools do accept new students into Years 8 and 9 if space is available. The typical documentation is broadly similar to selective school applications:

- Recent school reports,
- NAPLAN,
- References or portfolios (depending on the school).

However, the process is school-specific and usually does not involve the centralised selective high school placement system.

6.2 Scholarship entry in later years

The pattern at academically focused independent schools is:

- Main academic scholarships often target Year 7 (e.g. Sydney Grammar, Knox, Shore).
- Some schools provide additional scholarship entry points in Year 9 or 11, particularly for:
- Senior Academic Scholarships (e.g. Pymble Ladies' College Year 11 entry via Academic Assessment Services exam).
- All-rounder or performance scholarships (e.g. Pymble scholarships open to internal and external students entering Years 7–11).
- Academic scholarships up to Year 11 at schools such as Blue Mountains Grammar, where candidates must sit an exam and submit an application and portfolio.

Selection is generally based on:

- Strong examination performance,
- Very good school reports,
- Evidence of sustained co-curricular involvement or specific talents.

The schools rarely publish "marks required", but scholarship information frequently refers to "strong academic performance" and the expectation that recipients will maintain high standards.

7. Worked scenarios: what is realistic in Year 8-9?

Scenario 1: Local comprehensive → top selective at Year 9

Student profile (illustrative):

- Current Year 7 in a comprehensive high school.
- Reports show mostly top-band grades in core subjects.
- Strong Year 5 and Year 7 NAPLAN performance.
- Participation in mathematics or writing competitions with some merit/distinction results.

Possible route:

- Apply in June of Year 7 for Year 8 or Year 9 entry to up to three selective schools (for example, Girraween, Normanhurst, Hornsby Girls, North Sydney Girls).
- Sit any required school-based selection tests (HAST, EDU-Test, or school exam if specified).
- If unsuccessful at Year 8/9, consider re-applying for Year 11 entry, when some schools release a larger number of places (e.g. the St George Girls example with 18 places at Year 11 in one year).

Scenario 2: Fully selective → different selective, or out of selective

Student profile (illustrative):

- Currently in a fully selective school but experiencing social, wellbeing, or subject-fit issues.
- Academic performance is solid but not necessarily at the very top of the cohort.

Possible options:

- Apply for transfer to another selective school via the Years 8–11 process, noting:
 - after enrolment in one selective school, you cannot simply "transfer"; you must re-apply as a new applicant to the other school using the standard process.
- success is contingent on vacancies and comparative academic profile.
- Move to a local comprehensive, Catholic or independent school without going through the selective placement process, if priority is wellbeing rather than competitive academic environment.

In practice, families often move out of the selective system first (to improve wellbeing or shorten travel), and may then consider Year 11 selective entry once the student is settled and academic results are strong again.

Scenario 3: Independent school → selective at Year 9

Student profile (illustrative):

- Student in an independent school in Year 7 or 8.
- Reports show strong results; family wishes to reduce fees and/or increase academic focus.

Possible route:

- Apply via the Years 8–11 selective process to up to three schools.
- Provide:
 - the last two or three reports,
 - NAPLAN,
 - any external academic competition results,
 - co-curricular evidence if requested (many selective schools explicitly ask for it).
- Sit any required entrance tests (HAST, EDU-Test, school exams).

The core question becomes whether the student's academic profile is strong compared with other applicants for a very small number of

positions.

8. Risks and constraints of changing schools in Year 8-9

Regardless of academic capacity, mid-high school transfers carry structural constraints:

Very limited vacancies in selective schools

Many schools have zero or only a handful of places in Years 8–10, with more spots typically opening at Year 11.

Subject lines and prerequisites

For Year 11 entry, schools may expect certain Stage 5 subjects or levels (e.g. strong performance in advanced mathematics for extension courses), even if this is not formalised as a published prerequisite.

Adjustment cost

Changing schools in Year 8 or 9 involves disruption to friendships, routines, and co-curricular commitments. This can be positive or negative, depending on the child and the nature of the current difficulty.

Timing

Application windows are strict. For selective schools, late applications are not accepted.

9. Summary: What this means for Year 8-9 transfer decisions

- Yes, it is possible to move schools in Year 8 or 9 – both into and between selective schools, and into independent or Catholic schools, including some scholarship pathways.
- For top selective transfers, the main constraint is not whether applications are allowed, but how few places are available and how strong the applicant pool is.
- A realistic, data-respectful description of a competitive selective transfer applicant is:
 - consistently high grades in core subjects over several reports,
 - strong NAPLAN performance,
 - strong performance on any required selection tests,
 - and documented engagement in academic or co-curricular activities.
- For independent school transfers and scholarships, the requirements vary by school, but always hinge on:
 - examination performance (where a scholarship test is used),
 - recent school reports, and
 - documented strengths or potential contributions.

Families considering a move in Year 8 or 9 should therefore:

- Map which entry windows are still open (Years 8, 9, 11).
- Check the specific requirements of each target school's website for Years 8–11 entry or scholarships.
- Compare their child's actual reports and NAPLAN against the kind of profile that is realistically competitive for that tier of school.