

Selective high schools and opportunity classes: some facts

NSW Public Schools - Leading the way

Information for parents and carers

What are selective high schools?

Selective high schools are government high schools that cater for highly-achieving, academically talented students by offering an educationally enriched environment.

The fully selective, partially selective and agricultural high schools are listed at http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/schoolfind/types/shs_ahs_details.php

What are opportunity classes?

These are classes in some government primary schools for students in Years 5 and 6 that cater for highly-achieving, academically talented students by offering an educationally enriched environment. The schools with opportunity classes are listed at <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/ocplacement>

How do you qualify for entry?

For Year 7 selective high school entry, students are considered on the basis of academic merit which is determined by the students' performance on the school curriculum and in the Selective High Schools Placement Test which is held each year. School marks are provided by the child's school at the time of application. The Selective High Schools Placement Test is conducted in March of the year following the year of application. The test consists of reading, writing, mathematics and general ability components.

For Years 8 to 12 selective high school entry, students are considered on academic merit using criteria determined by the selection committee for each school. These criteria can include internal or external testing, careful evaluation of academic competition results and interviews.

The procedure for Year 5 opportunity class entry closely resembles that applicable to Year 7 selective high school entry. The relevant test is called the Opportunity Class Placement Test and is conducted in late July or early August each year. This test contains test items in reading, mathematics and general ability.

Past test papers for opportunity class entry and selective high school entry are available at:
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/ocplacement>
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/shsplacement>

Who can apply?

Students from government and non-government primary schools in NSW may apply for selective high school and opportunity class entry. Interstate and overseas students may apply if their family will be living in NSW at the time of enrolment and intends to live in NSW for the time of their schooling.

Students must be citizens of Australia or New Zealand or permanent residents of Australia to enrol in a selective high school or opportunity class.

Applicants who are unable to meet the residency requirements but believe that there are extenuating circumstances applicable to their case may apply, provided that they are already living in Australia. Applicants who qualify for selective high school entry on academic grounds but do not meet the residency requirements, including those who hold diplomatic visas, will have the opportunity to appeal for special consideration through the appeals process.

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How do I apply for Year 7 selective high school or Year 5 opportunity class entry?

- Fill in **either** a paper or an online application (**not both**). You may pick up a paper application form from your child's school or school education group office. You can complete an online application by going to the website listed above.
- Fill out the form in English.
- Parents who have completed a paper application form must submit their application form to their principal for inclusion of school assessment scores. Parents of students enrolled in a non-government school who applied online must submit a downloaded copy of their online application to their principal for inclusion of school assessment scores.
- All principals of government primary schools will complete processing of all applications from their school online. Principals of non-government schools who wish to provide school assessment scores will do so in a paper application or a downloaded copy of an online application.

When do I apply ?

Application packages for Year 7 entry to a selective high school are available in October when the students are in Year 5. Application packages for Years 8 to 12 entry in the following year are available in June. Application packages for opportunity classes are available in May when the students are in Year 4.

What schools can I apply for?

For selective high school entry you may apply for up to four schools. For Year 7 entry put your choices in your preferred order on the application form. If you qualify for more than one school you will be offered a place only in the school which is highest on your list of preferences.

For Years 8 to 12 entry you will need to complete up to four application forms and send them separately to the individual schools you have chosen.

For opportunity class placement all applicants may apply for up to two schools with an opportunity class.

What if my child can't sit the Selective High Schools Placement Test or the Opportunity Class Placement Test?

The tests are held on only one day per year and only in NSW government schools. If a child is ill or suffers some other misadventure parents can submit an illness/misadventure claim for consideration. A claim for illness must have a medical certificate for the day of the test attached. The student may be assessed on school assessment scores if these are available or on other evidence such as an individual IQ (intelligence) test if they are not.

If the child is not in NSW at the time of the test you can use the Interstate or Overseas Report of Academic Merit. Such applicants must provide a standardised test of reading, a standardised test of mathematics, a writing sample (selective high schools only) and an individual IQ test conducted by a qualified practitioner.

Who makes the placement decisions?

All decisions are made by selection committees for each individual school. The selection committees consider the scores obtained by each student and any other evidence available. Each student will be advised if they have been successful, unsuccessful or have been placed on a reserve list.

Can I appeal against the selection committee's decision?

If there is evidence that factors may have prevented students from doing their best in the test or from gaining higher school assessment scores, parents may lodge an appeal. The appeals panel will consider the evidence provided and may endorse or change a selection committee's decision.

Where can I get more information?

- Read the application information.
- Speak to the principal of your child's primary school.
- Contact the Selective High School and Opportunity Class Placement Unit on Telephone 9707 6262.
Email: ssu@det.nsw.edu.au
- Find information about selective high schools on the Internet at:
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/shsplacement>
- Find information about opportunity classes on the Internet at:
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/ocplacement>

If you need an interpreter to assist you to contact your principal or the Selective High School and Opportunity Class Placement Unit, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450 and ask for an interpreter in your language. The interpreter will call the principal and stay on the line to assist you with your conversation. You will not be charged for this service.