

South African curriculum. International examinations are offered at some schools, such as the Cambridge International examinations or the International Baccalaureate.

- **Range of curricular options and extracurricular activities:** Member schools are noted for their value-adding, holistic education aimed at developing the whole child.
- **Special focus:** Some schools cater well for the gifted child, while others accommodate those with physical or learning challenges; some have a strong focus on mathematics and science, while others are known for their excellence in the arts or sport.
- **Freedom to introduce innovative approaches** to teaching and learning and develop and test new educational concepts.
- **Community service opportunities** which promote the ethic of service and responsible citizenship.
- **International links** with independent schools in other parts of the world, allowing pupils to participate in global events and exchanges.
- **Access to support:** An ISASA school is not alone. It receives substantial support from ISASA's services and peer groups within a collegial community.

How should I choose an independent school for my child?

ISASA recommends prospective parents use its website (www.isasa.org), on which details of all member schools appear.

Visit the schools you have selected and arrange an interview with the head or senior staff to find out whether the school's ethos, values and mission will be a good fit for your child's personality, needs and talents.

Please remember that there is no such thing as the 'top school' or the 'best school' for all children: parents should choose the school that best suits their child.

A checklist for parents

Parents who are interested in enrolling their children in an independent school should:

- ✓ Ask the school for its Education Management Information System (EMIS) number to check whether it is registered with the provincial education department and thus legal.
- ✓ Find out if the school has a provisional accreditation number from Umalusi, the statutory body that quality assures independent schools.
- ✓ Check if its teachers are registered with the South African Council for Educators.
- ✓ Ask if the school belongs to an independent schools association, such as ISASA.
- ✓ In the case of a high school, ask for its school-leaving examination results for the last few years, especially the percentage of BD (university entrance) passes.
- ✓ In the case of a primary school, ask for the results of the state ANAs or other benchmarking tests.
- ✓ Check if a pre-primary school is registered with the provincial Health and Social Welfare departments.
- ✓ Ask a pre-primary about its particular educational approach and into which primary schools its children are accepted.

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ISASA

Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa

WHY CHOOSE AN ISASA SCHOOL?



Quality Values Diversity

What is an independent school?

There are two categories of schools in South Africa: public and independent. Public schools are state controlled and independent schools are privately governed. Prior to 1996, independent schools were known as private schools. Ex-Model C schools are not independent but public schools.

The Constitution guarantees independent schools the right to exist, but they are required to be registered with their provincial education department to operate legally, may not discriminate on the basis of race, and must provide education that is not inferior to that of comparable public schools.

The state provides subsidies to only non-profit low-fee and mid-fee independent schools that serve disadvantaged communities.

What is the nature of the sector?

Apartheid took away the universal right of parental choice of education from all South Africans. However, our democracy restored this and the independent school sector has grown and changed significantly.

- **Rapid growth:** Official figures are an undercount, but experts estimate that in 2015 there are 2 500 or more registered primary and secondary schools, a significant increase from 518 in 1994.

Today independent schools make up some 6,9% of the schooling sector in South Africa. Growth in enrolment has also been dramatic: between 2000 and 2015 the number of pupils in independent schools more than doubled from 256 283 to 566 194.

- **Huge post-apartheid shift:** Whereas in the early 1990s, the sector consisted of predominantly white, traditional high-fee schools, today official figures show that the majority of learners are black (77%) and most schools are either mid-fee, or low-fee ones that serve disadvantaged communities.
- **Increasing choice:** The range of schools continues to increase, given the parental demand for “more better and different” independent schools: “more”, because they are needed in areas where there are no government schools; “better” because of the desire for quality education; and “different” because there is an increasing demand for values-based education and alternative philosophies.

The sector now serves a wide socio-economic spectrum. Because such a range of fee levels is available, there are more options for parents who prioritise education in their budgets and want quality education with a strong values-base.

What is ISASA?

ISASA is the largest and oldest independent (private) schools association in Southern Africa, with over 760 member schools in South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, Angola, Lesotho and the DRC. Its members employ some 13 000 teachers and educate over 167 000 pupils.

ISASA is a non-profit organisation that supports its members by providing them with more than 50 services. Its mission is to promote the value of independent education, represent and protect the common interests of its members, and provide professional services that will enhance their sustainability, quality and contribution to the public good.

What does the ISASA brand mean?

ISASA's brand is a hallmark of high standards of educational and ethical practice. **Quality, Values, Diversity** characterise its membership. Not all schools can become members of ISASA because its conditions for membership are rigorous. These include on-site inspections and commitment to a code of ethical practice.

Quality: No matter its type or fee-level, an ISASA member school has been quality assured before it is accepted for ISASA membership, and every six years thereafter by the Independent Quality Assurance Agency.

Values: ISASA schools have a strong values base, providing sound discipline in a structured learning environment, where pupils learn the importance of hard work, personal responsibility and shared norms. Ethical education, community service and responsible citizenship are promoted among ISASA member schools.

Diversity: ISASA's growing and diverse membership provides parents with a wide choice. Members represent all school phases (from pre-primary to post matric). They include religious and secular, traditional and alternative, day and boarding,

single-sex and co-educational, rural and urban, large and small, local and international, and old and new schools.

ISASA is committed to promoting transformation and diversity in the organisation and within its members. An ISASA school must publicly display its membership certificate which indicates that it has “committed itself to a democratic, non-discriminatory society and a school community based on fairness and diversity”.

Affordability: The wide range of fee-levels among ISASA schools makes them increasingly affordable to many families. In 2015 about 31% of its members charged tuition fees of more than R55 000 per year; 50% between R19 000 and R55 000; and 19% between R0 and R19 000.

Why choose an ISASA school?

ISASA members share important common features:

- **Safe, structured, nurturing learning environments** with good discipline, sound values and pastoral care.
- **Individual attention for pupils** in smaller classes than public schools.
- **Committed, high-quality teachers** with strong subject knowledge.
- **High academic standards:** On average across all fee levels, independent schools produce a higher percentage of senior certificate passes and BD (university entrance) passes than public schools. ISASA schools strive to provide an excellent, world class education that focuses on developing high-level competencies in languages, mathematics, science and technology, as well as critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork skills.
- **Choice of school-leaving examinations:** Most ISASA members offer the National Senior Certificate examinations of the state or those of the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) that are based on the

The South African Schooling System

