



Association of Independent Schools NT

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS NT

PARENT CHOICE REPORT

2026

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Who is AISNT?

The Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory (AISNT) represents and promotes the diverse interests of Independent schools throughout the Northern Territory.

Independent Schools have offered high-quality educational options for Northern Territory families since 1989, and AISNT takes pride in its role of representing and supporting these schools.

There are 26 Independent Schools located across the Northern Territory that provide choice and diversity

to the communities they serve, ensuring all young people have access to quality education and the ability to pursue educational excellence.

AISNT represents and advocates for Independent Schools to governments, education stakeholders and the greater community to ensure diversity in educational opportunities for students.

AISNT is a member of Independent Schools of Australia (ISA), which is representative of all State and Territory Independent School Associations.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS



10
PARTICIPATING
SCHOOLS



575
RESPONSES



REPRESENTING
AT LEAST
654 STUDENTS



TRANSITION
TO **YEAR 12**

Ten schools took part in 2026, five of which also took part in 2023. Five schools are new to the survey and two 2023 participants did not take part. The 2026 sample is 575 responses, up from 528 in 2023.

SCHOOL	2026 RESPONSES	2023 RESPONSES	YEAR LEVELS ON OFFER	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Good Shepherd Lutheran College	134	150	T - 12	1,117
The Essington School	124	Did not participate	T - 12	782
Haileybury Rendall School	84	205	T - 12	970
SEDA College	61	11	10 - 12	150
Milkwood Steiner School	44	19	T - 8	118
Living Waters Lutheran School	38	42	T - 6	131
Palmerston Christian College	33	Did not participate	T - 10	365
Sattler Christian College	32	Did not participate	T - 10	245
Araluen Christian College	15	Did not participate	T - 10	104
Nhulunbuy Christian College	10	Did not participate	T - 10	138
St Phillips College	Did not participate	91	7 - 12 (only 8-12 participated)	502
Alice Springs Steiner School	Did not participate	10	T - 8	162
TOTAL	575	528		

AISNT CONDUCTED ITS SECOND SURVEY OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS AT NT INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS TO ARTICULATE THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTS. INSIGHTS FROM THE SURVEY ARE SHARED TO ASSIST INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN STUDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION.

Background

There are 26 Independent Schools located across the Northern Territory that provide choice and diversity to the communities they serve, ensuring all young people have access to quality education and the ability to pursue educational excellence. Within the confines of the Education Act 2015, Independent Schools operate with autonomy in decision making, including allocation of resources towards student attraction and retention.

The Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory (AISNT) takes pride in its role of representing and supporting these schools. To support member schools in their decisions around student attraction and retention, AISNT has undertaken a survey of parents of students at NT Independent Schools to better understand when and how parents make decisions as to which school their children will attend, and what parents want from their schools.

Survey

The survey is the second survey delivered by AISNT and follows from the first survey undertaken in 2023.

All NT Independent Schools were invited to participate in the survey, with 10 schools opting to circulate the survey to families for completion. The survey was open for a period of 3 weeks early in Term 3, 2026.

The survey elicited 575 responses and was designed such that an entire family's views were captured on a single survey. The survey repeated the 2023 question set to allow analysis of change in parent choices over time and added four new questions in 2026. New questions sought to understand the impact of school infrastructure on parent choices when selecting a school, views about independent schooling as an investment in their child's future, whether parents considered other schools at the time of enrolment, and the degree of sacrifice parents make to send their child to their chosen school.

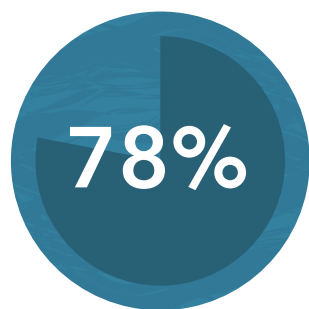
Reporting of results

Key insights are found on the following page and detailed throughout the report.

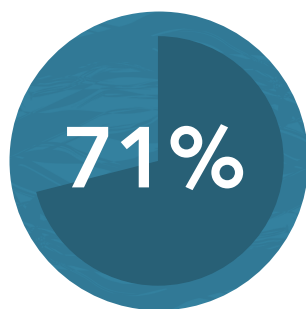
This is the second time that AISNT has delivered this survey. Wherever possible the report shows the movement in responses from 2023 to 2026.

Prior to 2021, Independent Schools Australia (ISA) had delivered a similar survey multiple times. ISA's findings were last published as "School Choice: A Research Report" in 2021. Since then, ISA has not delivered another similar survey, so comparisons in this report are limited to comparison back to AISNT's 2023 survey only.

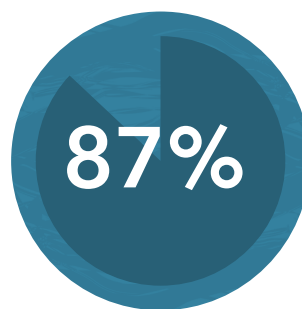
KEY INSIGHTS



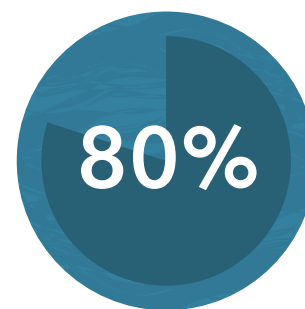
78% OF STUDENTS
ENROL IN THE **12**
MONTHS PRIOR TO
COMMENCEMENT.



71% OF FAMILIES
CONSIDERED
OTHER SCHOOLS
WHEN ENROLLING.



87% OF FAMILIES
SAW INDEPENDENT
SCHOOLING AS AN
INVESTMENT.



80% OF FAMILIES
MADE SOME
SACRIFICE TO PAY
SCHOOL FEES.

Overall, parents seek 'fit' over 'performance', but each school has its own value proposition.

1

**ALIGNMENT WITH
FAMILY VALUES**

Most parents (77%) enrolling in independent schools are seeking difference from the public schooling sector. They test a school's fit for their family primarily through interpersonal relationships, one-to-one discussions and recommendations.

Once a child is at school, their wellbeing, happiness, safety and engagement with teachers remain most important in retaining them at the school.

For the majority (72%), it is important that their child stays at their school for all available year levels on offer.

2

**DEMONSTRATED
RECORD OF HIGH
ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE**

Continuity is important, but a compromised value proposition will drive change

30% of parents are considering moving their child to a different school. Student's moving away (16%) and difficulty paying fees (13%) are less prominent reasons for considering a move in 2026 than they were in 2023. Where parents are not forced to change by circumstance, they are likely to consider moving when the school's value proposition no longer holds true for their child - their child may be unhappy at school, teachers may be unable to motivate a child, the child's wellbeing may be in doubt, or a school may not have managed student behaviour well.

3

**CONVENIENCE
OF SCHOOL
LOCATION**

What parents want from schools' changes in focus and as their children grow:

IN YEARS T - 6

Parents place highest importance on learning and love of learning:

- Essential skills of reading, writing and numeracy
- Developing confidence and self-esteem
- Developing a love of learning and curiosity
- Their child's happiness at school

IN YEARS 7 - 9

Parents are less aligned in their needs, but most highly value:

- Developing confidence and self-esteem
- Developing skills for critical thinking
- Their child's happiness at school
- Essential skills of reading, writing and numeracy

IN YEARS 10 - 12

Divergence of need continues, with parents most highly valuing:

- Developing confidence and self-esteem
- Developing skills for critical thinking
- Development of responsibility and accountability
- Preparation for employment

EVERYTHING IS PERSONAL - FROM THE PEOPLE PARENTS TRUST, TO THE EXPERIENCE THEY WANT FOR THEIR CHILDREN - AND THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SECTOR IS TRUSTED TO DELIVER TO THEIR NEEDS.

Parents are deciding which school to attend later than they were in 2023. 54% now apply within six months of commencement, up from 47% in 2023.

Parents largely make joint decisions about which school their child will attend, although slightly less so than in 2023: 84% of choices were made by both parents, down from 88% in 2023, while sole-parent decisions rose from 12% to 16%.

Word of mouth remains the strongest single driver in attracting families to a school, with 45% of families citing that the opinions of family, friends and colleagues matter to them. A further 37% were influenced by the recommendations of other parents. Beyond the pre-filled survey options, there were 91 families that identified other sources of influence – most commonly family connections through sibling attendance at the school.

As in 2023, the theme of preference for personal connection continues once a parent inside the school. 37% of parents were influenced by the personalised interaction of a one-on-one school visit. However, within the school, the relative importance of other parent recommendations has decreased significantly, and the influence of teachers has lifted since 2023. Teachers and other parents are now on par as the most influential voices within a school, followed by the school principal.

In 2026, the survey sought insight into the degree of influence that infrastructure and facilities had on the decision to enrol. Whilst physical appearance of the school was rated as being less important than interpersonal connections overall, when asked about their physical appearance and facilities within a school, 31% of respondents said that this either 'highly' or 'totally' influenced their decision to enrol. A further 42% identified that they were somewhat influenced by appearance. Remaining parents cited minor or no influence.

Overall, the most important factors in choosing a school have shifted from performance in 2023, to fit in 2026. Reliance on a demonstrated record of high academic performance fell significantly from 45% to 29%. In its place, alignment with family values rose significantly from 36% to 47% and is now the most influential factor in choosing a school. Teaching approach rose from 16% to 21%, convenience of location rose from 21% to 28%, and affordability rose from 6% to 9%.

Alignment with religious beliefs remains the single least important factor for a third of parents (33%), followed by socio-economic status of other families (23%). This is unchanged from 2023.

Written comments from parents further cemented the theme of personal attention as important - through small class sizes and the ability to adapt to a child's needs, as well as highlighting the importance of a school's strong stance on bullying. At a sector level, this is supported by parent consideration of other schools - only 23% of parents considered public schooling as an option for their child. Of parents that did consider multiple schools, the majority were making a choice between independent schools rather than looking outside the sector.

It is important for schools to recognise the trends above as being 'overall' trends. The data highlights that individual schools have unique value propositions. For example, families practicing a religion at home were significantly more likely to choose a school that aligns with religious beliefs, and the importance of academic record increases as family income increases; only 12% of families earning under \$120,000 rated academic record as most important, versus 36% of families where income rose to over \$200,000.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN CHOOSING A SCHOOL?

BOTH PARENTS	84% (↓ 88%)
ONE PARENT	16% (↑ 11%)
GRANDPARENTS	3% (↑ 1%)

Where 1% respondents identified additional participants to the decision, it was generally grandparents or the child enrolling in addition to one or both parents.

INFLUENCE - OVERALL

THE OPINIONS OF FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES	45% (↓ 48%)
ONE-ON-ONE SCHOOL VISIT	37% (↑ 35%)
OTHER PARENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS	37% (↓ 39%)

OTHER SCHOOLS CONSIDERED

NO	29%
YES, OTHER INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	51%
YES, PUBLIC SCHOOLS	32%
YES, CATHOLIC SCHOOLS	17%

WHEN ARE APPLICATIONS MADE RELATIVE TO COMMENCEMENT?

LESS THAN 3 MONTHS PRIOR	25% (↑ 22%)
3 - 6 MONTHS PRIOR	29% (↑ 25%)
6 - 9 MONTHS PRIOR	11% (↓ 14%)
9 - 12 MONTHS PRIOR	12% (↓ 15%)
12 MONTHS - 2 YEARS PRIOR	11% (↓ 25%)
2 - 3 YEARS PRIOR	4% (↑ 3%)
GREATER THAN 3 YEARS PRIOR	3% (↓ 5%)
WHEN/BEFORE MY CHILD WAS BORN	4% (- 4%)

INFLUENCE - AT THE SCHOOL

TEACHERS	30% (↑ 25%)
OTHER PARENTS	30% (↓ 38%)
PRINCIPAL	23% (↑ 21%)

IMPACT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

NO INFLUENCE	13%
MINOR INFLUENCE	13%
SOMEWHAT INFLUENCED	2%
HIGHLY INFLUENCED	27%
TOTALLY INFLUENCED	4%

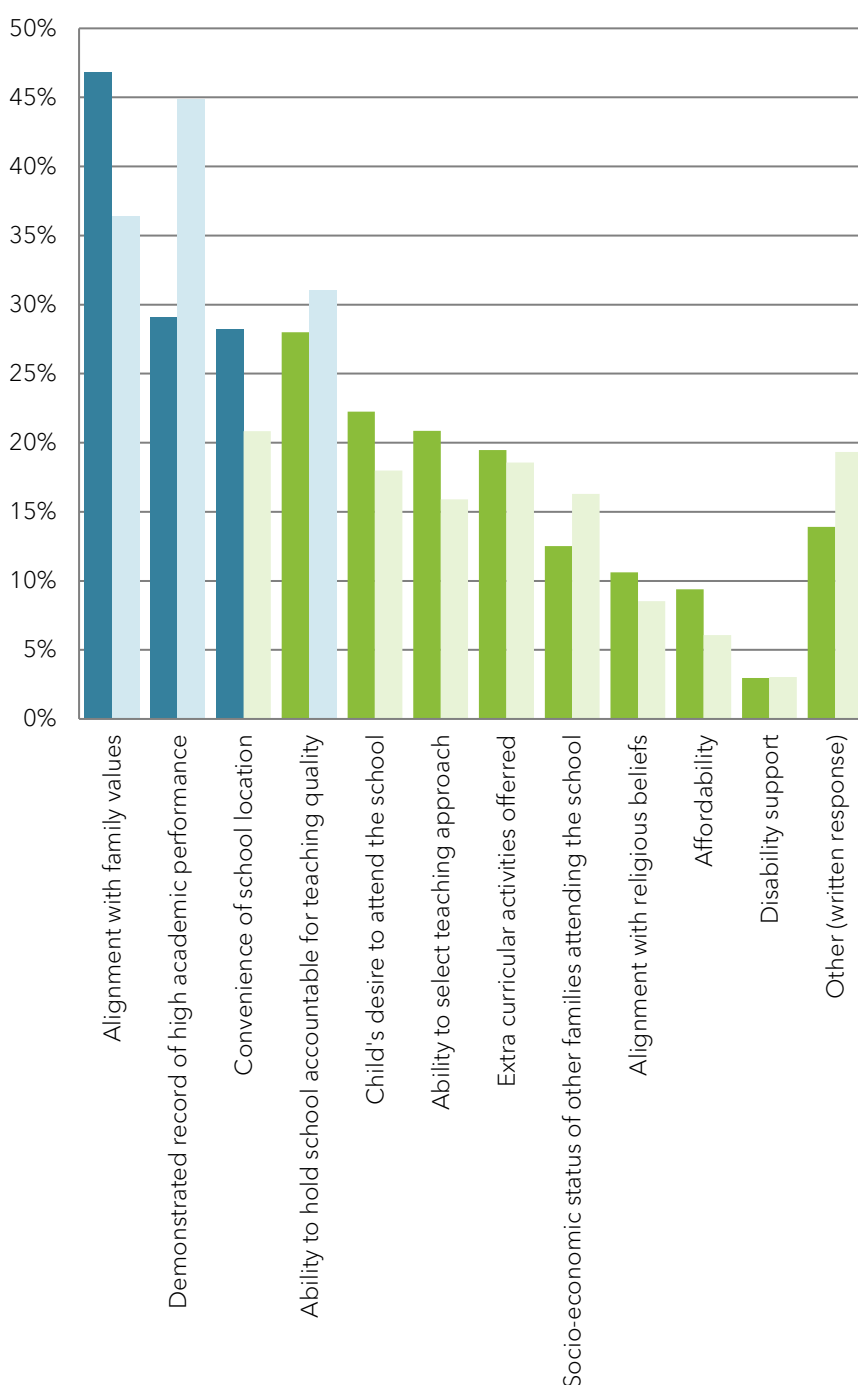
LEAST IMPORTANT FACTORS

ALIGNMENT WITH RELIGIOUS BELIEFS	33% (↓ 34%)
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF OTHER FAMILIES ATTENDING THE SCHOOL	23% (↓ 27%)
CONVENIENCE OF SCHOOL LOCATION	14% (↓ 16%)



Extract: Results to question: "From the list below, select the most important factors in your decision to select your school." (2026 n=575, 2023 n=528)

Most important selection factors - % of respondents selecting: 2026 (2023 comparative)



2026% 2023% TOP 3 for 2026% TOP 3 for 2023%

WHAT PARENTS WANT FROM SCHOOLS

ONCE A SCHOOL IS SELECTED, A CHILD'S HAPPINESS, SAFETY AND WELLBEING KEEPS THEM THERE.

72% of parents said that it was important that their child stays at their selected school for all year levels on offer.

Since 2023, the reasons for continuing enrolment have strengthened around wellbeing. "My child likes being at school" remains highest rated, with 68% of parents citing happiness as most important, up from 60% in 2023. "My child feels safe at school" has moved into second place (48%) and staff interest in wellbeing (47%) follows in third place by a narrow margin.

By contrast, "A strong emphasis on improvement and progress" fell from 33% to 27%, and "Rules and expectations are clear" fell from 27% to 21%. When reviewed alongside what attracts parents to schools, these shifts are consistent with the move away from performance and structure, to how a child experiences school.

Overall, 30% of parents are considering moving their child to another school; unchanged from 2023. The rate is highest in the middle years (Years 7-9) and comments suggest this is largely as parents consider the most appropriate programs, facilities and setting for their child to spend their final years of schooling in Years 11 and 12. For those considering a move, "Other" received the largest response (51%), with consideration of senior years, facilities (or lack thereof), teacher turnover, bullying and the lack of extension programs as key causes for re-evaluation of options.

Trouble paying school fees fell significantly from 22% to 13%. Taken together with the increase in consideration of affordability at enrolment, a trend towards increasing number of families using salary as the primary source of fee payment (and majority of the time, the only form of fee payment), and the shift towards enrolment closer to commencement, this may indicate families are more carefully considering affordability prior to enrolment in tighter fiscal conditions faced in 2026, relative to 2023.

The 2026 survey showed that propensity for parents to consider moving was less in those parents that valued continuity in education or believe that independent schooling is an investment in their child's future.

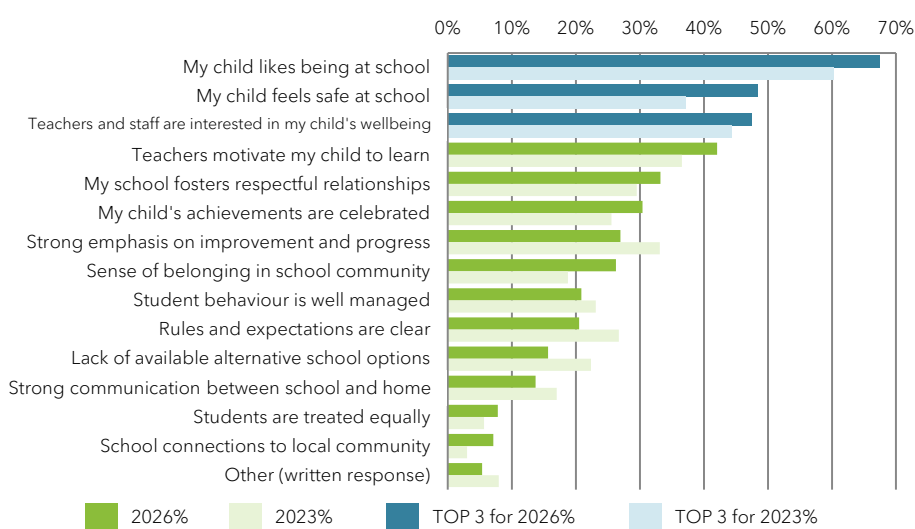
Programs matter in continuing enrolment, with school camps (45%), excursions (41%) and sporting programs (38%) leading in popularity. Consistent with the move to experience over performance, the importance of tutoring support fell from 34% in 2023 to 25% in 2026.

IMPORTANT TO STAY AT THE SAME SCHOOL FOR ALL YEAR LEVELS ON OFFER?

YES: 72% (2023: 76%)

NO: 28% (2023: 24%)

Extract: Results to question: "From the list below, select the reasons that you continue your child's enrolment at the school" % of respondents selecting (2026 n=575; 2023 n=528)

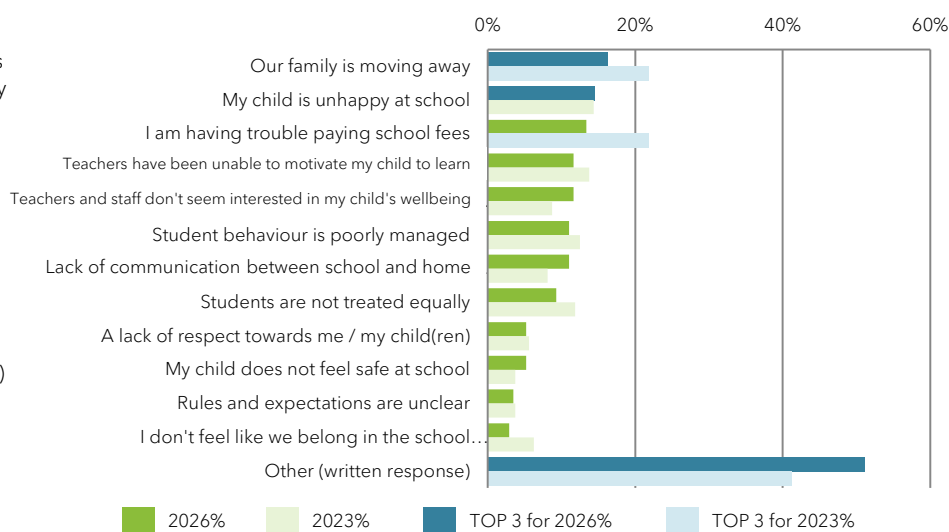


CONSIDERING MOVING SCHOOLS BEFORE CHILD COMPLETES ALL YEAR LEVELS ON OFFER?

YES: 30% (2023: 30%)

NO: 70% (2023: 70%)

Extract: Results to question: "What are the reasons for you considering moving your child(ren) to a different school?" % of respondents selecting (2026 n=172; 2023 n=160)



WHAT PARENTS WANT FROM SCHOOLS YEARS T-6

PARENT NEEDS FOR STUDENTS IN YEARS T - 6 ARE UNCHANGED IN 2026. PARENTS CONTINUE TO SEEK FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS FOR LIFETIME LEARNING, STABILITY AT SCHOOL, AND A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

Years T - 6 results are largely unchanged from 2023. Of families surveyed, 304 had a child in Years T - 6. The essential skills of reading, writing and numeracy are most important. The basic skills and readiness for lifetime learning through developing confidence, self-esteem, curiosity and a love of learning round out the most highly rated responses. Child happiness is important but does not displace the importance of building a strong foundation.

Years T - 6 saw a reduction in the number of parents that ranked "Development of responsibility and accountability" as important; down from 20% to 14%. This same measure increased in the later years, suggesting that parents regard this as a skill that best belongs in later schooling.

High academic achievement is cited by just 10% of parents in this cohort, developing leadership skills by only 8% with other areas rated lower again.

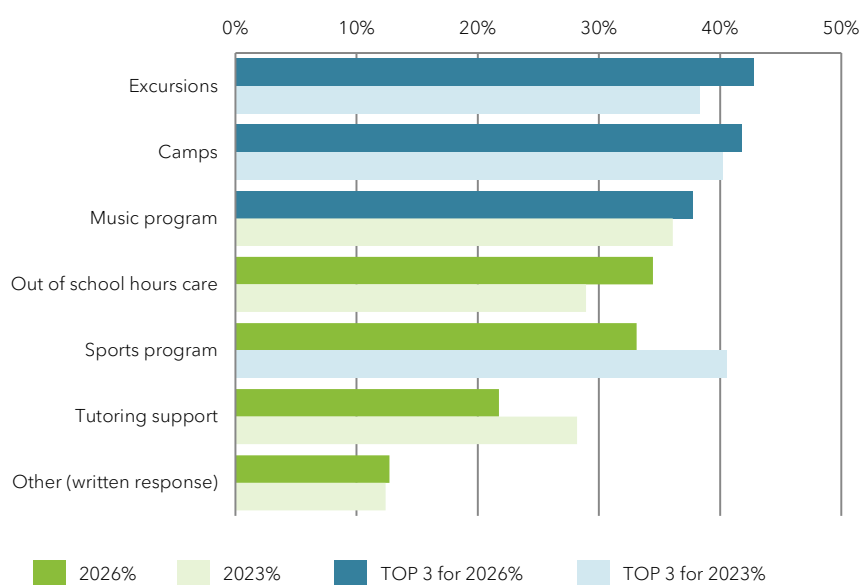
30% of families in this cohort are considering a move, against 33% in 2023. Where reasons were given, they centred around unmet expectations of tailored support, and for schools that do not offer high school years, the absence of senior year levels was cited.

Programs that support the decision to continue enrolment have changed since 2023. In 2026, excursions are cited as most important in maintaining enrolment (43%), followed by camps (42%) and music programs (38%). Sports programs have decreased in importance relative to 2023.

Extract: Results to question: "What do you want for your child(ren) in Transition to Year 6?" % of respondents selecting (2026 n=304; 2023 n=269)

WHAT PARENTS WANT - YEARS T - 6			
2026 Rank	Response option	2026 %	Movement/ 2023 rank
#1	Essential skills of reading, writing and numeracy	60.9%	- #1
#2	Developing confidence and self-esteem	53.3%	- #2
#3	Developing a love of learning and curiosity	52.3%	- #3
#4	For my child to be happy at school	39.1%	- #4
#5	Developing skills for critical thinking	36.8%	- #5
#6	Development of responsibility and accountability	13.8%	- #6
#6	Developing an ability to think for themselves	13.8%	↑ #7
#8	High academic achievement	9.5%	- #8
#9	Developing leadership skills	7.6%	- #9
#10	Learning an additional language	3.0%	- #10
#11	Developing an appreciation and knowledge of ATSI history and culture.	2.6%	- #11

Extract: Results to question: "Select the programs on offer at your school that are important to you in continuing your child's enrolment" % of respondents selecting (dissected by age cohort to identify programs important to Years T - 6). (2026 n=299; 2023 n=266)



WHAT PARENTS WANT FROM SCHOOLS

YEARS 7-9

IN YEARS 7 – 9 EMPHASIS TURNS TO CONFIDENCE, CRITICAL THINKING AND HAPPINESS – AND THIS GROUP IS AT HIGHEST RISK OF MOVEMENT WHEN FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES APPEAR RESTRICTIVE.

The Top 3 ranked priorities of parents with students in Years 7 – 9 have remained unchanged from 2023 across 234 respondents with a child in Years 7 – 9. Whilst there is greater diversity in priorities for this cohort, the highest ranking are developing confidence and self-esteem, developing skills for critical thinking, and for the child to be happy at school.

40% of families with a child in Years 7 – 9 are considering a move. This is the highest of the three age cohorts; up from 35% in 2023, and appears to be driven by parents considering where a student will best-spend their time in Years 11 and 12. This is decided based on alignment between a school's breadth of pathways and personal needs of the student.

Considerations include vocational choices and program offerings to support success.

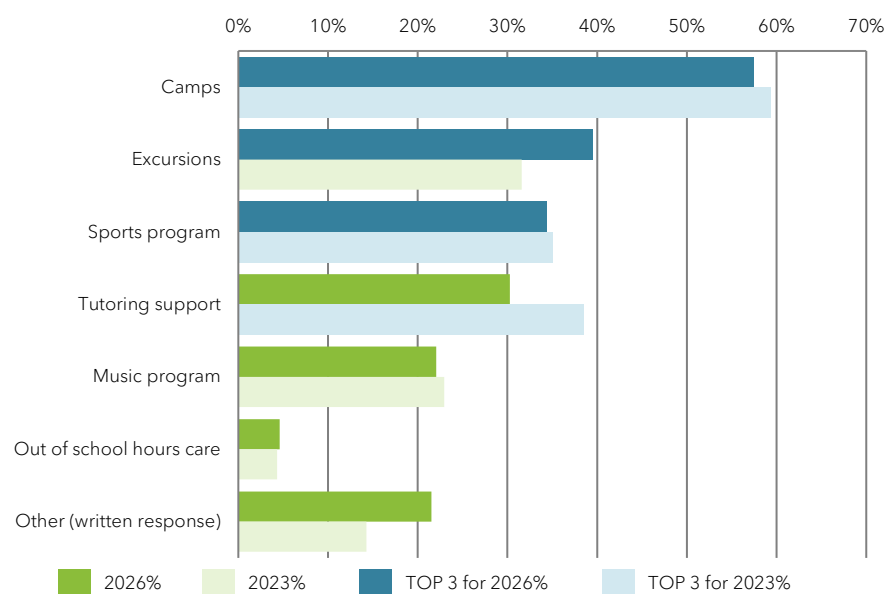
Camps ranked as the most highly valued program for Years 7 -9 students, followed by excursions, sports and tutoring programs (although tutoring programs fell significantly in preference between 2023 and 2026).

Extract: Results to question: "What do you want for your child(ren) in Year 7 to Year 9?" % of respondents selecting (2026 n=199; 2023 n=234)

WHAT PARENTS WANT – YEARS 7 - 9

2026 Rank	Response option	2026 %	Movement/ 2023 rank
#1	Developing confidence and self-esteem	49.2%	- #1
#2	Developing skills for critical thinking	45.2%	- #2
#3	For my child to be happy at school	38.2%	↓ #2
#4	Essential skills of reading, writing and numeracy	36.2%	- #4
#5	Development of responsibility and accountability	26.1%	↑ #6
#6	Developing a love of learning and curiosity	25.6%	↓ #4
#7	High academic achievement	23.1%	↑ #9
#8	Developing an ability to think for themselves	20.6%	↓ #7
#9	Developing leadership skills	15.1%	↓ #8
#10	Preparation for employment	11.1%	- #10
#11	Learning an additional language	2.5%	- #11
#12	Developing an appreciation and knowledge of ATSI history and culture	1.0%	- #12

Extract: Results to question: "Select the programs on offer at your school that are important to you in continuing your child's enrolment" (dissected by age cohort to identify programs important to Years 7 – 9). % of respondents selecting (2026 n=149; 2023 n=128).



WHAT PARENTS WANT FROM SCHOOLS YEARS 10-12

IN THE SENIOR YEARS, PARENTS WANT INDEPENDENCE - RESPONSIBILITY, CONFIDENCE AND READINESS FOR ADULTHOOD.

Developing confidence and self-esteem were most important for the 131 respondents in this cohort, selected by 47% of parents, closely followed by skills for critical thinking (45%) and the development of responsibility and accountability (42%).

Preparation for employment (34%) is a clear point of difference for this cohort, and academic achievement ranks 9th at 19%. It should be noted that there is a correlation between family income and importance of high academic achievement in Years 10-12. Within higher income families, importance of academic achievement ranks 3rd behind developing confidence and self-esteem and developing skills for critical thinking, which highlights the importance of schools understanding their value proposition to their school community.

Only 15% of families of students in Years 10 - 12 are considering a move, down from 24% in 2023 and by far the lowest of the three age cohorts. Family relocation has dropped significantly as a reason to move in Years 10 - 12 and sits at just 4.5% in 2026. Where families do seek to move, the reasons for the move centre around staff and teachers who are unable to motivate the child, or who seem uninterested in a child's wellbeing. In this age group, the child's happiness at school is the most prominent reason for parents to consider a move (32%).

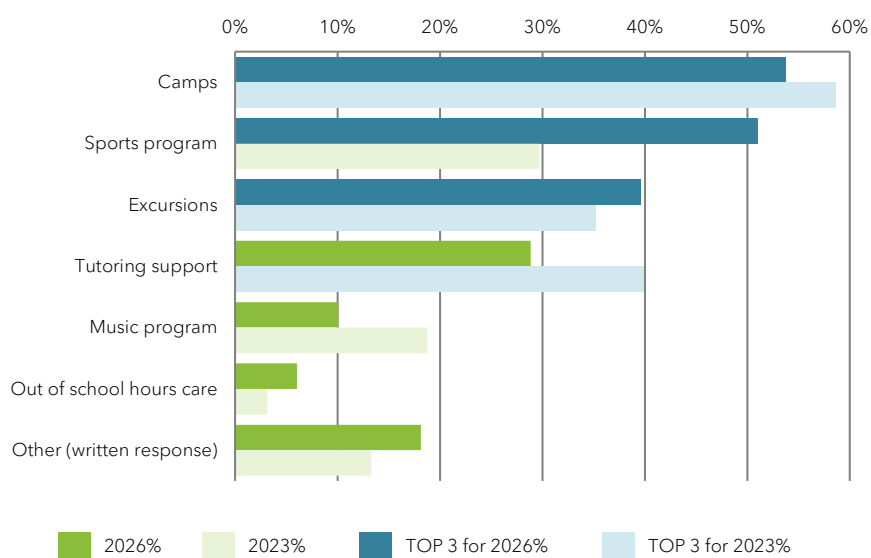
Programs remain important in the senior years with camps retaining the top position, followed by sports programs, excursions and tutoring support. Tutoring support and music programs have reduced relevance in 2026, aligned with the reduction in focus on academic achievement in this survey.

It should be noted that this is another area of the survey where each school has its unique value proposition. In those schools where academic performance ranks more highly, tutoring support also ranks more highly.

Extract: Results to question: "What do you want for your child(ren) in Year 10 to Year 12?" % of respondents selecting (2026 n=151; 2023 n=131)

WHAT PARENTS WANT - YEARS 10 - 12			
2026 Rank	Response option	2026 %	Movement/ 2023 rank
#1	Developing confidence and self-esteem	47.0%	- #1
#2	Developing skills for critical thinking	45.0%	↑ #3
#3	Development of responsibility and accountability	42.4%	↑ #4
#4	Preparation for employment	33.8%	↑ #6
#5	Developing an ability to think for themselves	30.5%	↓ #2
#6	For my child to be happy at school	29.8%	↓ #4
#7	Developing leadership skills	23.8%	- #7
#8	Developing a love of learning and curiosity	21.9%	- #8
#9	High academic achievement	18.5%	↓ #8
#10	Developing an appreciation and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture	0.7%	- #10
#11	Learning an additional language	0.0%	- #11

Extract: Results to question: "Select the programs on offer at your school that are important to you in continuing your child's enrolment" (dissected by age cohort to identify programs important to Years 10 - 12) % of respondents selecting. (2026 n=149; 2023 n=128)



MOST FAMILIES SEE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLING AS AN INVESTMENT IN THEIR CHILD'S FUTURE AND PAY FEES FROM SALARY ONLY - THEY ARE SENSITIVE TO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, BUT WILLING TO SACRIFICE FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

For most families (87%) salary is the primary source of payment of school fees, up significantly from 2023. For 76% of those families, it is the only source of funds for school fees. Other sources increased in 2026 and included direct payment by an employer or government payments.

Consistent with 2023, only 8% of families did not include salary in either their primary or secondary source of funds for payment for school fees, highlighting a continued sensitivity of fee income to household income.

25% of families started saving before their child commenced at their school. Of those, only 25% indicated that they still used savings as either the primary or secondary method of fee payment.

For those that set aside savings for school fees, the majority (69%) only did so in the year prior to commencement.

For the most part, the period for which savings were set aside to pay school fees was loosely aligned to the period of prior application for enrolment.



PRIMARY SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR SCHOOL FEES

SALARY	87% (↑81%)
SAVINGS	7% (↓ 9%)
OTHER	5% (- 5%)
OTHER FAMILY MEMBER	1% (↓ 3%)



SAVING FOR SCHOOL FEES

YES	25% (↑ 20%)
NO	75% (↓ 80%)



SECONDARY SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR SCHOOL FEES

N/A. ALL PAID USING PRIMARY METHOD ONLY	72% (↑ 69%)
SALARY	11% (- 11%)
SAVINGS	10% (↓ 11%)
OTHER	7% (↓ 4%)



WHEN DOES SAVING COMMENCE, RELATIVE TO COMMENCEMENT AT SCHOOL?

3 - 6 MONTHS PRIOR	37% (↑ 33%)
6 - 9 MONTHS PRIOR	15% (- 15%)
9 - 12 MONTHS PRIOR	17% (↑ 14%)
12 MONTHS - 2 YEARS PRIOR	15% (- 15%)
2 - 3 YEARS PRIOR	6% (↑ 3%)
GREATER THAN 3 YEARS PRIOR	3% (↓ 4%)
WHEN / BEFORE MY CHILD WAS BORN	7% (↓ 15%)

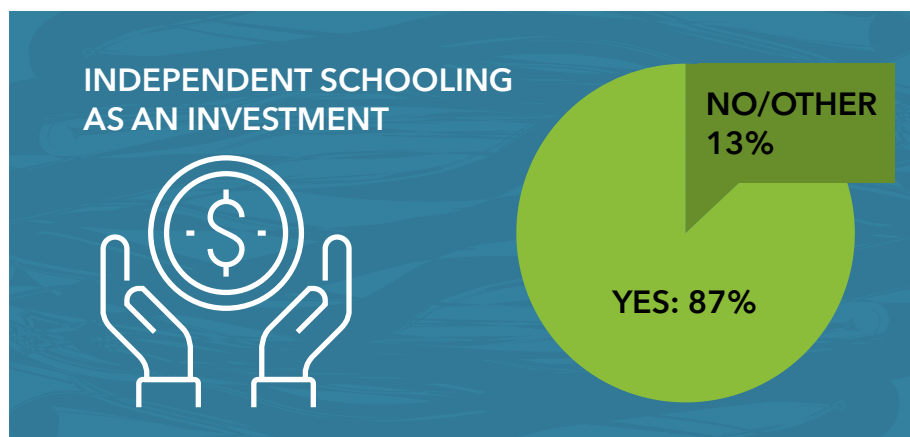
Two additional questions were asked in 2026 to understand whether parents perceive independent schooling as an investment in their child's future, and the degree of sacrifice they feel they make for their child to attend.

The perceived difference in independent schooling drives retention; of parents who see independent schooling as an investment, only 26% are considering a move, against 61% of those who do not.

Parents' desire to do what they believe is best for their child comes at a cost. Only 20% of parents report making no sacrifice to pay school fees. Other families make minor sacrifices (18%), some sacrifices (36%) or significant sacrifices (26%) for their child to attend school.

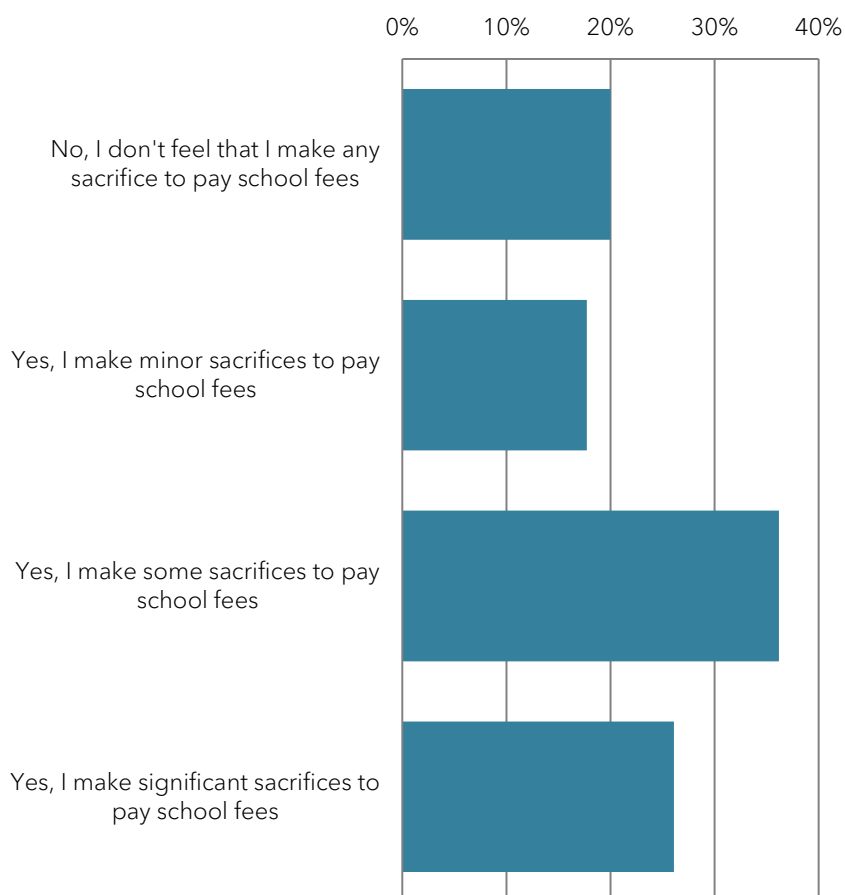
The burden of sacrifice falls more heavily on those with lower family incomes. Significant sacrifice is reported by 52% of families earning under \$120,000, 30% of families earning \$120,000 to \$200,000 and 15% in families earning over \$200,000.

Families that began saving before commencement reported more sacrifice than those who did not. Lower income families were more likely to start saving early, indicating that saving appears to be driven by necessity rather than capacity; indicating a willingness to prioritise education through sacrifice motivated by the value that parents put on independent schooling.



Extract: Results to question: "Do you feel you make sacrifices to meet the costs associated with independent schooling?" (2026 n=575)

**Sacrifices made to pay school fees -
% of respondents: 2026**





Association of Independent Schools NT