

## Cut-price last minute online private school deals a reality



*Searching for last-minute deals on the internet is commonplace these days, but now parents will be able to find similarly discounted vacancies for their children at some of Victoria's and New South Wales' most elite private schools.*

Online marketplace, School Places, helps independent schools maximise student numbers by connecting them with families searching for eleventh hour school vacancies.

To date, there are close to 40 top private schools in the country signed up to the platform, but School Places believes many more schools will list their vacancies after the September school holidays, once they have a clearer idea of their enrolment numbers.

Once schools load their vacancies to the site, they can determine the intake year, gender, year level and discount they'd like to offer.

At present on the site, discounts are being offered of between 10 and 50 per cent, can last for two years at most of the schools and are often available at all year levels.

The website's chief executive officer, Natalie Mactier, said that schools are using the platform in different ways, according to their needs.

“We've got some schools that are looking to bolster early learning years or junior school years, we've got other schools that are looking at drop-off rates later in the senior school years and they're looking

to beef up the numbers later on in those years,” Mactier told *Australian Teacher Magazine* .

“We’ve also got schools that have a number of different campuses and they might be using it for specific campuses only and not for others.

“We also have co-ed schools that are using it to help address the gender imbalance, so where they’ve got exemption from the equal opportunity board to promote a vacancy just for a specific gender, they’re able to do that on School Places as well.”

According to School Places’ data, Prep and Year 7 tend to be the toughest years to secure a place at a private school.

“Each month we actually share high level insights into where the bulk of the searches are coming from,” Mactier said.

“So we know that Prep and Year 7 are the highest year levels searched by parents.

“And obviously schools would know this as well, because Year 7 tends to be the year when most families that have their children in the public school system move them over to the private system.”

According to Mactier, what they’ve also found is that people moving interstate or within a state are commonly looking for a vacancy for this year or next, so the benefits for them are obvious.

For schools however, the challenge of filling a last-minute vacancy can be difficult, particularly when this may be mid-way through the year.

“With traditional marketing means, there really isn’t a highly targeted marketing channel where you can focus on filling one vacancy at a particular year level at a particular point in time,” Mactier said.

Up until now, it has been difficult for schools to transparently promote a vacancy and then match it with someone who is willing to move then and there.

“So for a school, I think, finally, there’s an online marketplace, the internet really opens up this potential for schools where parents can search online and then schools can match their vacancies with those parents that are searching for that specific year level,” she said.