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Private school deals on web

Parents offered discounts

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SOME of Melbourne's most elite private schools are cutting tuition fees by up to 30 per cent in a bid to lure students via a new website.

The discounts — typically for places where existing students are unexpectedly moving or for hard-to-find boarders — could lock in savings worth thousands of dollars for several years. But parents are advised a good deal shouldn't be the only factor driving their schooling choice.

Former Melbourne Grammar School headmaster Paul Sheahan, who is behind a new website offering the discounts, said it was a way of helping schools avoid the financial pain of empty places while making private schooling more affordable for families who hadn't considered it or planned to delay entry.

Eleven Victorian institutions, including Xavier College,

Wesley College, Ivanhoe Grammar School and Geelong College, are on board, with more expected to follow.

"This is really targeting the last-minute unexpected vacancies," Mr Sheahan said.

"In fact, it won't and it can't. It's not designed at all to take over the normal enrolment procedure."

The site, called School Places, allows parents to search for availabilities based on class, region and enrolment year.

Vacancies are immediate or for the following year.

Discounts will be at each school's discretion and generally apply for two years.

Mr Sheahan, a former Test cricketer, said discounting unforeseen vacancies benefited families paying full price because it reduced the pressure for fee hikes.

It was estimated filling one in early learning alone could reap more than \$350,000 in revenue over the child's entire schooling.

Waiting lists "dissolved" over time, making it difficult for even sought-after schools to fill empty places.

Regent Consulting managing director Paul O'Shannassy, an independent schools adviser, said parents needed to be mindful of levies and other charges when considering education costs.

These could add up to \$5000 to tuition bills.

Independent Schools Victoria chief executive Michelle Green urged parents to research schools that best met their children's education needs and family values.,

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