



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

SCHOOL ADMISSION POLICY

2027/28

PART ONE

ADMISSION POLICY

A. CHOOSING A SCHOOL

The entry of children to schools is controlled and administered by an 'Admissions Authority'. In the case of community schools, the admissions authority is Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council also known as the authority.

In the case of voluntary aided (faith) schools, the admissions authority is the governing body of the individual school.

Within the County Borough each school has its own designated catchment area. Most parents/carers send their child to the 'local' school, but some parents/carers exercise their right to state a preference for a different school. In all cases parents/carers of pupils who are due to change schools in September 2027 will need to indicate, on the official admission application, their preferred school. **No-one** has an automatic right to attend a school but all official applications submitted before the closing date will be considered. On-line admissions ([Apply for a school place | Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council](#)) will be open for **all relevant parents/carers in the week commencing 30th June 2026**. **Hard copy applications will be available upon request and will need to be returned to, School Admissions Team, Learning Directorate, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN in order to match parents'/carers' preferences with the availability of places at the school of their choice. The admission timetable is as follows:**

Admission cohort	Closing Date
Secondary School Year 7	31 st October 2026
Primary School Reception Class (age 4 before 1 st September 2027)	31 st December 2026
Primary School Nursery Class (age 3 before 1 st September 2027)	30 th November 2026
Primary School Pre-Nursery Class Spring Term – January 2027 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st September 2027 and 31 st December 2027)	28 th February 2027
Primary School Pre-Nursery Class Summer Term – April 2027 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st January 2028 and 31 st March 2028)	31 st May 2027

Parents/carers need to apply for a place:

- For admission to pre-nursery / nursery class. Please note that entry at pre-nursery and nursery are separate entries, but we will use the one application form for both entries unless a parent advises us otherwise;

- For admission to a reception class;
- For transfer from primary school to secondary school; and
- At any time they wish to transfer their child from one school to another.

Parents/carers may further express their right of preference for a Welsh-medium school, or a voluntary aided school.

The authority and school governors **must** comply with any preference expressed, provided there is room within the school. However, the decision to admit pupils must have regard for:

- the overall provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources;
- the 1998 Education Act, which allows an admission authority to refuse to comply with parental/carer preference for a period of two years following a second or subsequent permanent exclusion.
- Requests on behalf of pupils living outside the 'catchment' area must be considered in the knowledge of the future demand for places from within the school's local area;
- class size limits guidance which limits the number of pupils in primary schools to 30.

A pupil who attends a school outside his/her local designated catchment area and subsequently makes an application to attend the local area school will not have an automatic right of admission to that school. The decision regarding admission will depend upon the admission number of the school and the number of pupils in the particular year group i.e. whether there is room.

The catchment areas for schools providing primary education are normally grouped together to form a linked catchment area for each maintained secondary school. Pupils who reside outside a secondary school's catchment area **must** seek admission via the published arrangements. Admission/attendance of pupils at a feeder primary school does **not** provide automatic entry to the preferred secondary school.

All schools within the authority aim to provide their pupils with an educational opportunity best suited to the needs of each individual child. Some pupils will have learning needs requiring special educational provision and, in some instances, parents/carers will receive specialist support and guidance regarding the choice of school for their child. All parents/carers are encouraged to discuss possible areas of concern with their local Headteacher who also has access to specialist advice. The authority's policy takes into account the provision of the Additional Learning Needs (Wales) Act, and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will process the information you provide in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation, including the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Any personal information will be held in confidence with only the necessary people able to see or use it. The people who may receive the information you provide include: the current school (if any), the school to which the pupil is to be admitted to, ALN, Inclusion, Social Services, Children Looked After and any organisation, including other Council Departments, legitimately investigating allegations of fraud, other criminal offences or child protection. Please note that your information may also be crosschecked and verified against information held by other Council Departments. Information may also be used in an anonymous form for statistical purposes.

B. ADMISSION LIMIT

1. Every school has an admission number which is determined according to the physical size of the school in accordance with the Welsh Government's 'Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales' calculation. The admission number represents the number of pupils which should be admitted to the school's normal year of entry (i.e., reception in primary schools and Year 7 in secondary schools) if sufficient applications for admission are received. The admission number should not normally be exceeded. In all but the most exceptional circumstances, the admission number would be applied to year groups other than the normal year of entry.
2. A child will normally be offered admission to a school of the parents'/carers' preference unless the admission number has been reached. Where applications exceed places, the admission oversubscription criteria will be applied.
3. The size of infant classes is restricted by law to 30 or fewer pupils. If the relevant admission number has been reached, the authority will not admit a child to a year group where to do so would conflict with the class size legislation. However, certain children ('excepted pupils') can be discounted for the purposes of ascertaining whether or not the limit of 30 is exceeded. These now include:-
 - 'children looked after' and 'previously children looked after' admitted outside the normal admissions round;
 - reception pupils who are admitted out of the normal admissions round after the first day of the school year where the school has not reached its admission number but has already organised its classes.
 - where there is only one place available and children of multiple births (twins, triplets) have next priority, to conform with infant class size legislation, parents will be given a choice of place at time of application. The regulations can allow exceptions to the class size limits in these circumstances.
4. All primary schools in the County Borough also provide nursery education. However, there is **no automatic entry to:**
 - nursery class from a pre-nursery group (for pupils aged 3 by 1st September);
 - reception class for children (aged 4 by 1st September) who have attended a nursery class at a school

Applications for places will be required and oversubscription criteria will be applied if necessary.

The normal ages for admission in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough are:

Age 3-4 in nursery class or nursery schools,
Age 4-5 in primary schools,
Age 11-12 in secondary schools.

C ORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS

All schools in the authority are co-educational

1. Nursery Education

It has been the local authority's long-standing position that every child should have access to free **part-time** nursery education from the start of the term following the child's third birthday. In practice children start attending nursery education in school at the age of 3 or 4 years, depending on class number limitations and local demand.

The Nursery Education Admissions Policy is reviewed annually as part of the published admission arrangements and the following nursery education provision is intended to be offered for 2027/28

All Schools

- All pre-nursery (FPN1) places will be part-time for a minimum of two and a half hours per day.
- All nursery (FPN2) places will be full-time for a minimum of five hours per day.

Please note that all nursery education places will be offered subject to capacity limits as determined by the local authority. There is **no right of appeal** for nursery admissions as nursery education is non-statutory i.e. provided prior to statutory school age.

Although not able to directly control nursery education admissions offered by Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, the local authority determines the funding arrangements for all nursery education places across its maintained schools, including VA schools.

The current delegated arrangements require schools to receive funding in line with the Nursery Education Admissions Policy and therefore the following funding arrangements are proposed for all schools:

All pre-nursery (FPN1) places in both January and April to be funded as part-time only i.e. 50% of a fulltime place.

All nursery (FPN2) places to be funded as full-time.

Please note:

- Nursery age pupils do not qualify for free home to school transport
- For pre-nursery pupils (part time places), the allocation of morning and afternoon sessions is the responsibility of the Headteacher of the school.
- **A child's start date at Nursery may be delayed if they are not fully toilet trained. This can be discussed with the school once a place has been allocated to the child.**
- While schools play a vital role in supporting children's overall development, toilet training is an essential personal milestone that is best guided by parents or caregivers at home.
- Establishing these skills before starting school helps ensure a smooth and comfortable transition for both the child and the learning environment. In some cases, children who are not yet toilet trained may experience a delay in starting school, so it is important to ensure they have reached this stage before admission.

- In very few cases, where children may have emerging needs, a disability or a medical condition and are not toilet trained by the time of school admission, a bespoke transition arrangement may be considered.
- Support for parents / carers on bladder & bowel health and toilet training skills is available through your health visitor or via the following websites.
 - [Toilet and Potty Training Resources - Bladder & Bowel UK](#)
 - [How to potty train - NHS](#)

Pre-nursery Admissions (Rising 3's)

Children who turn 3 between 1st September and 31st March (Rising 3's) are eligible to apply for a pre-nursery place to commence the term after their third birthday i.e. in the Spring and Summer Terms each year. Pre-nursery places are provided subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed at any school. Once the nursery accommodation is deemed to be full, no further pre-nursery pupils may be admitted.

Those children who are admitted to a **pre-nursery class will not have an automatic right to continue education at that school**. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate these pupils to transfer into the Nursery class the following September, **there may be occasions when, due to oversubscription, it will not be possible for this transfer to take place**.

There is no right of appeal for pre-nursery and nursery places.

Key dates for applying

Admission cohort	Form returned by
Primary School Pre-Nursery Class Spring Term – January 2028 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st September 2027 and 31 st December 2027)	28 th February 2027
Primary School Pre-Nursery Class Summer Term – April 2028 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st January 2028 and 31 st March 2028)	31 st May 2027

As far as possible, the local authority will ensure that provision is available within the family's first preference school. However, where schools are unable to meet the demand, a place in an alternative school(s) will be offered.

Registered Education Providers (REPs) in Non-Maintained Settings

The local authority can provide Early Years grant funding for children to access a part-time nursery education place at one of the 3 Registered Education Providers (REPs) in Merthyr Tydfil as an alternative to attending nursery education in a school.

These settings are currently registered as Early Years Education Providers in Merthyr Tydfil and their details are:-

- Cylch Meithrin (Welsh Medium), based at Carmel Chapel, Twyncarmel.
- Little Rascals Pre-School, based at the Integrated Childrens Centre, Pentrebach
- Blossom Early Years, Heolgerrig Road, Heolgerrig, CF48 1RP

If you require any further information on Early Years Education Providers –the **Early Years Team** can be contacted on 01685 725000.

The local authority will not fund places in non-maintained settings in other county boroughs.

Working parents, or those in education/training of 3 or 4 year old children, are able to apply for government help with childcare costs.

Under the Childcare Offer for Wales, parents are able to claim up to 30 hours a week of early education and childcare in Wales, for up to 48 weeks of the year. In Merthyr Tydfil, for children receiving a part time Nursery place, the 30 hours is made up of 12.5 hours early education and 17.5 hours of childcare. Those children receiving a full time Nursery place will only be able to apply for Childcare Offer for the school holidays.

[Get 30 hours of childcare for 3 and 4 year olds | GOV.WALES](#)

Nursery Admissions (Rising 4's)

Important Information

Pupils who are admitted to a **nursery class will not have an automatic right to continue education at that school**. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate these pupils, a formal application **must** be made for transfer to the Reception class (upon transfer from nursery). **There may be occasions when, due to oversubscription, it will not be possible for this transfer to take place.**

Nursery places will be full-time and will be for a minimum of five hours per day.

Key dates for applying

Admission cohort	Form returned by
Primary School Nursery Class (age 3 before 1 st September 2027)	30 th November 2026

Criteria for Pupil Entry to a nursery class/school

For details of the over subscription criteria for pupil entry please refer to Section I - *“What happens when too many children apply for places?”*

2. Admission to Reception Class

Parents/carers of children attending a nursery class in a school, or a feeder nursery school, have to apply for a place in the main school when the child reaches the age for admission to primary school. **Children attending a nursery class do not transfer automatically to**

the school.

The key dates for applications can be found on page 3 of this booklet. On-line Admissions will be open during the autumn term and it is important that you do not miss out on a place due to a late application.

3. Admission to Primary Schools

In Merthyr Tydfil, children between the ages of 3/4-11 years are recognised as pupils receiving primary education.

Attendance at school between the age of three to the date of the child's fifth birthday is optional and parents have the right to defer their child's entry to school until the term following their fifth birthday.

All children are entitled to start school at the beginning of the school year (September) in which they become five. Children will be able to attend school when they are aged three or four and parents should discuss this provision with the staff at School Admissions Team.

Every child is required by law to receive a full-time education from the beginning of the school term after his/her fifth birthday.

If parents/carers choose to defer their child's start date until the term after they turn five, the parent should notify the local authority in writing by 22nd December 2026. This can be done by emailing school.admissions@merthyr.gov.uk, or by sending a letter to School Admissions, Learning Department, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN.

4. Admission to Secondary Schools

Children will transfer from primary school to secondary school at the beginning of the school year following their eleventh birthday. All such transfers must be made by means of a completed application form. For children born between 1st September 2015 and 31st August 2016 he/she will transfer to the local secondary school provision in September 2027. Headteachers of primary schools will be able to inform parents/carers of the secondary school which their children should normally attend and advise parents/ carers of the transport arrangements adopted by the local authority. If parents/carers wish their child to attend a secondary school which does not serve their locality, they should contact the School Admissions Team for advice (01685 725000). Applications for such admissions should be made as early as possible and as stipulated in "Applying for a Place" (page 3). The relevant criteria is listed in Section I - "What Happens When Too Many Children Apply for Places?".

5. Changing Schools

Changing schools at any point is a serious step for a child. Such a decision may be unavoidable, e.g. as a consequence of the family moving home, and parents in such circumstances will need to contact the local school as well as the School Admissions Team for assistance (01685 725000). If parents/carers would like their child to transfer from one school to another they should first discuss the position with the present Headteacher. If, following this discussion, parents/carers still wish to transfer their child to a new school they should contact the School Admissions Team for advice before making the application.

Please also refer to Section B (page 23) for information relating to home to school transport.

If the relevant year group in the receiving school has not reached the school's published admissions limit (including, where appropriate, the recognised number of reserve places) for children whose parents/ carers have already applied for a place at the school for them, then the child should be admitted to the school.

Primary Transfers - Classes may include more than one age group, in which case the Headteacher will have the task of locating the child in the most appropriate class. The Government has limited the number of children able to attend primary classes to a maximum of 30 pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes. This could result in no suitable vacancy being available.

Our Welsh Medium schools both have an immersion class within their school to support pupils who wish to transfer from an English speaking school to a Welsh speaking school. This class is available to pupils up to the age of 11 and pupils will be supported to fast track their Welsh language skills in order to fully integrate into a Welsh school.

As such, it may not be too late to switch to Welsh Medium.

Please contact the relevant Welsh Medium School of your choice for details.

Secondary Transfers - Parent/Carers should note that the availability of option choices and the curriculum being followed may vary from school to school, and this can present as a concern when moving schools, especially during years 10/11. It should not be assumed that the same option choices will be available in another school

6. Welsh Language Policy

Following the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales legislation, *'Headteachers and providers of funded non-maintained nursery education have discretion over whether and to what extent they introduce English to learners between the ages of 3 and 7. This is to facilitate Welsh language immersion in the early years'*.

For further information on the Curriculum for Wales, please visit [Summary of legislation - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/summary-of-legislation)

In accordance with the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (April 2010), it is the local authority's policy that every child should have the opportunity to learn and use the Welsh language.

There are two Welsh-medium primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil, and one Welsh medium Foundation Learning provision:-

- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhyd-y-Grug
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful Safle'r Gurnos

Education is available at Welsh-medium primary schools to all pupils whose parents select Welsh medium education. Although the main medium of instruction is Welsh, high standards in English are maintained.

As stated above, our Welsh Medium schools both have an immersion class within their school to support pupils who wish to transfer from an English speaking school to a Welsh

speaking school.

Pupils attending Welsh-medium primary schools will be able to continue their education in a Welsh medium secondary school, this will take place outside of the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. The local authority has a successful partnership with Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

There are also 5 Cylch Meithrins available in Merthyr Tydfil for parents who wish for their pre-school child to attend a Welsh language pre-school provision:

Cylch Meithrin Aberfan

Cylch Meithrin Gurnos

Cylch Meithrin Pentrebach

Cylch Meithrin Treharris

Cylch Meithrin Twyncarmel

For further information, please contact the Family Information Service on 01685 725000 or fis@merthyr.gov.uk

Welsh as a second language in English medium schools

- In Nursery to Year 2, Welsh is taught to all pupils. The emphasis is on using the language with purpose and in meaningful situations. In addition, the incidental use of the language during the school day is encouraged.
- In Years 3-6, the language is further developed orally and more attention is given to teaching, reading and writing skills.
- In Years 7-11, Welsh is taught to all pupils.

To find out more about the benefits of a Welsh Medium Education, please refer to the Becoming Bilingual Booklet, which can be found on the Council's website

www.merthyr.gov.uk.

<https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/media/6198/being-bilingual-booklet-2020.pdf>

D. ADMISSION TO VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS

Admissions Policy Blessed Carlo Acutis (BCA) Catholic School (3-16)

Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic school is a voluntary aided school in the Archdiocese of Cardiff. The admissions arrangements / admissions policy for BCA Catholic School are determined by the governing body, which has sole responsibility for admissions to the school and will act in accordance with all relevant provisions of the Welsh Government's 2013 Codes on School Admissions and School Admission Appeals and with the law on school admissions as it applies to maintained schools.

Blessed Carlo Acutis has a Catholic ethos. The school is governed as part of the Catholic church in accordance with its Trust Deed and Instrument of Government and seeks at all times to be a witness to Jesus Christ. We ask all parents applying for a place here to respect this ethos and its importance to the school community. This does not affect the right of parents who are not of the Catholic faith, or of no faith background, to apply for and be considered for a place as the school welcomes and encourages applications from all families.

The Admissions Policy for BCA for 2027/28 AY is required to be determined by 15th April 2026 but in line with the code, the governing body has until 1st June 2026 to provide a copy of its full admissions arrangements to the local authority in order to provide a composite prospectus for parents.

If there are more applicants than places available the school will apply the following oversubscription criteria in order to determine the allocation of available places:

1. Children who are looked after by a Local Authority or who were previously looked after by a Local Authority.
2. Baptised Catholic children residing in the school's catchment area which is the parishes of Merthyr Tydfil, Mary Immaculate Parish (St Margaret's Primary school catchment), Abertillery & Brynmawr, Tredegar, Ebbw Vale and Rhymney, or who attend any of the following Primary schools:
 - St Margaret's, Aberdare
 - St Mary's, Brynmawr
 - All Saints, Ebbw Vale
 - St Joseph's, Tredegar
3. Siblings of children attending the school at the time the applicant would join the school.
4. Other baptised Catholic children.
5. Other children whose parents seek a Christian education.
6. Other children

E. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

A small number of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) may require access to specialist provision, such as a Learning Resource Base (LRB) or a Special School. Admission to a LRB or Special School is determined by the ALN Panel and placements are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain the most appropriate provision for those placed.

Where a child has attended a LRB in year 2, there is no automatic entitlement to attend a Key Stage 2 LRB from year 3. This would be determined by the ALN Panel.

If a child has made sufficient progress in a specialist provision to return to mainstream education, an application for admission would need to be made to their catchment area school. Parent/carers would retain the right to express a preference. In such case, any application for admission would be treated in exactly the same way as any other application for mainstream education and would therefore be subject to the published admissions process.

Pupils with an Individual Development Plan (IDP) maintained by the school

Admission arrangements for children with ALN who have an IDP maintained by the school are treated on the same basis as other applicants. Applications are considered on the basis of the local authority's admission criteria.

Pupils with an Individual Development Plan maintained by the Local Authority

If a child has an Individual Development Plan maintained by the local authority, the ALN team within the local authority will be responsible for advising on the additional learning provision required and on discussions related to placement. However, unless a child requires placement in specialist provision, admissions arrangements are treated on the same basis as other applicants.

F. ARRANGEMENTS WITH NEIGHBOURING LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Parents may apply for their child to attend any school, in any local authority, subject to that school/ local authority's admission criteria and providing that the school has sufficient places. Enquiries should be made to the admission authority of that local authority in the first instance.

G. APPLYING FOR A PLACE

An application for a place at a school within the Local Authority **must** be made officially via the Online portal to the local authority. The published criteria in respect of Section I - *"What Happens When Too Many Children Apply for Places?"* will place all applicants in order of priority for admissions. The local authority offers admission places during the term before a child is due to start school. Parents/carers should apply by 31st October 2026 for admission to secondary school in September 2027 and by 31st December 2026 for admission to reception class in primary schools in September 2027; and 30th November 2026 for admission to nursery class in September 2027.

The authority will inform parents/carers whether or not it is possible for a child to attend the preferred school. Parents/carers should not hesitate to discuss their request with the Headteacher who will, if appropriate, arrange for parents/carers to visit the school.

Each school produces a prospectus which contains pertinent information including details of its aims and educational beliefs, organisation, curriculum opportunities, and any extracurricular activities. A school's prospectus is available from the Headteacher of the school.

H. TIMING OF ADMISSIONS PROCESS

For details on admission deadlines, please see page 2.

Any application for admission that is rejected will be offered an appeal which will need to be made by the following dates.

Secondary Admission – 15th March 2027

Reception Admission – 2nd May 2027

Should an appeal application be unsuccessful, you will be offered a hearing by an independent appeal panel.

Late applications will be accepted provided a suitable reason for submission after the closing date is given. However, applications in respect of 'children looked after' or children with an Individual Development Plan or a statement of SEN, naming a specific school, will be accepted when such applications are received.

I. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TOO MANY CHILDREN APPLY FOR PLACES?

If the number of preferences received for a school is below the school's admission number, all applications for admission to the school will be granted. Places cannot be reserved for 'in catchment' children unless they are children of reception age whose parents have applied for their entry to school to be deferred until a later date in the same school year.

If there are more applicants than places available the local authority will apply the following oversubscription criteria in order to determine the allocation of available places:

Priority Category 1: 'Children Looked After' (children in public care) and previously 'Children Looked After'.

Priority Category 2: Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, at the date of application, who will continue to attend that school in September 2027.

Priority Category 3: Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.

Priority Category 4: Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending from the same address, at the date of application, who will continue to attend that school in September 2027.

Priority Category 5: Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school. Children residing within MTCBC, will be given priority over out of county pupils.

For the avoidance of all doubt the reference to 'home' in the oversubscription categories above and the 'tie breaker' below refers to the actual location of the residential dwelling in which the child lives.

Children will be classified as siblings if:-

- a) They are full or half brother or sister
- b) They are an adopted or fostered brother or sister
- c) They are children living full-time/permanently in the same household i.e. stepbrother/stepsister

PLEASE NOTE THAT COUSINS, NIECES OR NEPHEWS ARE NOT COUNTED AS SIBLINGS

Childcare/childminding arrangements or a parent's place of work cannot be taken into account when applying admissions criteria.

For further information, please email us at school.admissions@merthyr.gov.uk, or call the Customer Contact Centre (01685) 725000 and ask for the School Admissions Team.

Tie breaker

Children will be admitted up to the Admission Number in order of priority as outlined above. Children residing within MTCBC will be given priority for admissions over out of county pupils. If, within any one of the priority categories listed, all the applicants cannot be offered a place, preference will be given to children living nearest to the school. Distance will be measured by the authority using the shortest safe walking route between the home address and the nearest open school gate. For the avoidance of doubt, in areas where no safe walking route has been identified by the authority, the shortest driving route between the home address and the nearest open school gate will be used. The distance will be measured by using the authority's 'mapping schools' electronic system only, in order to ensure equality of opportunity to all applications. Measurements calculated by any other system will not be considered. The home address in instances where parents have shared responsibility for children, will be the address to which Child Benefit is paid.

'Children Looked After' will also be admitted to a chosen school outside of the normal admissions round. The admission cannot be refused unless doing so would seriously prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources.

Appeals

Appeals Process

Parents/Carers will be notified, in writing, of the outcome of their application including the means of appealing against the decision. Where there is recourse to appeal, this can be done in Welsh or English.

On the application parents/carers are required to enter a first, second and third preference of school. If, having applied the admissions criteria, it has not been possible to admit the child(ren) to their first preference school, arrangements will be made for admission to the second preference. If parents/carers are unhappy with this outcome, they may lodge an appeal against the School Admissions decision.*

Where parents/carers have not stated a second or third preference, for compulsory school age applications, they will be contacted and asked whether, they wish to:

- 1) Make a second preference of their own choosing.
- 2) Accept an alternative school which can be offered by the Local Authority (LA).
- 3) Appeal against the decision not to admit the child(ren) to the first preference school. * Not applicable for applications for entry to nursery schools or classes, or pre-nursery provision.

Appeals Procedure

Parents/Carers wishing to appeal against the outcome of their application for the admission of their child(ren) to a school (other than a Voluntary Aided Church school) must;

1. Provide the Local Authority with a written letter of appeal within 10 working days of the admission decision.
2. Include the following information in the letter
 - a. Name and date of birth of your child.
 - b. Name of the preference school to which a place has been refused.
 - c. The grounds on which your appeal is being made.
3. Forward the letter of appeal to; The Director of Education, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN or e-mail school.admissions@merthyr.gov.uk

The LA's school admissions officer will arrange for any appeals to be heard by an independent panel. Appeals will be heard within 30 school days of the closing date for the receipt of appeals.

Parents/Carers will be given at least 14 days, from the date of posting i.e. 10 working days, written notice of the date on which the appeal will be heard. A shorter timescale may be operated with the agreement of both parties.

Parents/Carers may attend the hearing and make representation to the panel (written and/or verbal). Parents/Carers will be given the option to speak Welsh at the meeting. In such circumstances where the meeting cannot wholly be conducted in Welsh, simultaneous translation services will be provided.

If parents/carers choose to attend the hearing, they may be accompanied or represented by a friend, adviser, interpreter or signer who will be present in a supportive capacity only, unless the parents/carers elects that the friend/representative speaks on their behalf. If parents/carers intend to be accompanied they should inform the LA in advance.

Should parents/carers choose to be represented by a solicitor, the LA must be notified in writing at least 7 days before the date of the hearing (address as above).

Parents/Carers must not be accompanied by a member of the County Borough Council, a Local Authority Officer or local politician as this may lead to a conflict of interest.

Parents/Carers may choose not to attend the hearing, the outcome will then be decided on the content of the original letter (and any additional written supportive information) forwarded by the parents/carers.

Parents/Carers will be notified of the outcome of the appeal, in writing, within 5 working days of the conclusion of the appeal hearing.

Acceptance of a second preference offer does not prevent parents/carers lodging an appeal against the decision not to admit the child(ren) to the first preference school.

Please note it is the parent/carers responsibility to prove that an appeal request has been sent and therefore we strongly advise that all appeal requests are sent via **recorded delivery** or a tracked e- mail for evidence purposes.

Nursery Aged Children (age under 5).

There is no recourse to appeal the refusal to admit to pre-nursery or nursery aged children (on either a full-time or part-time basis) to a school.

Basis of Appeal

- 1) All permissible appeals will be considered in light of the LA's admissions criteria to determine whether the correct process has been followed in applying this criteria.
- 2) If it is found that the school is full, consideration will then be given to the strength of the parent's/ carer's case to determine whether the child(ren) should still be admitted to that school.
- 3) In respect of an appeal against admissions to reception classes, year 1 or year 2, that are affected by the infant class size legislation limit of 30, the panel must only look at whether the admissions criteria were applied correctly.

Appeals to Voluntary Aided (Church) Schools

Appeals against decisions in respect of admission(s) to Blessed Carlo Acutis 3-16 Catholic School must be made directly to the governing body of the school. This may be done by addressing the letter of appeal to the Clerk to the governing body and forwarding it to the school.

J. VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

Home address

Verification of address, for example one of the following - Council Tax Statement, recent utility bill, exchange of contracts, should be attached to the application form. This must be the child's permanent home address. Any place approved on the basis of residence will be withdrawn if the pupil is no longer permanently resident at the address at the beginning of the school term to which the application relates.

Parental Responsibility

Only persons holding parental responsibility for the named child on an admission application, can make an application and will be required to make a declaration as part of the application process. Typically, it is expected that the person applying, resides at the same address as the child and is referred to as the 'parent' for admission purposes. Where parental responsibility is equally shared, the council will ask the child's parents to determine which parent should submit the application. If parents cannot agree and neither party has obtained a court order stating who should be making the application, then the LA will accept an application from the parent in receipt of the Child Benefit for the named child on the application and proof of this will be required. Parents should resolve their differences privately and not expect the LA to intervene in disputes between parents.

Medical Need

Children recommended for placement for medical, psychological or special educational reasons (these must be confirmed by the local authority's professional advisers)

Multiple births

If when applying the oversubscription criteria the last child to be admitted is one of a multiple birth e.g. twins, triplets, then the Authority will also consider admitting the other sibling(s), but will have due regard to infant class size legislation.

UK service personnel

Children of UK service personnel will be treated as in catchment if their application for admission form is accompanied by an official Ministry of Defence (MOD) or Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) letter declaring a definite return and confirmation of the new address.

K. WHAT HAPPENS IF A CHILD IS REFUSED A PLACE?

All maintained schools (including schools with a designated religious character), that have enough places available must offer a place to every child who has applied. In the vast majority of cases children are offered places at their parents/carers first choice of school. If a child is unable to gain admission to a preferred school, parents/carers will need to decide whether they are willing to accept a place offered at an alternative school or whether they wish to continue with their first application. If parents/carers choose the latter course they may appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. The Independent Appeal Panel will judge whether there is a case for a child to be offered a place. Before parents/carers appeal, they

are advised to fully consider the school/LA's admission criteria. It should be noted that only pupils of statutory school age have a right of appeal.

PLEASE NOTE: there is no right of appeal for nursery places.

Since the introduction of the regulations regarding infant class sizes, admission authorities may refuse to admit a child to a school where that admission would force the school to take additional measures in order to comply with the new limits. These may include employing an extra teacher, or undergoing significant building work.

Acceptance of a second or third choice of school offer does not prevent parents/carers lodging an appeal against the decision not to admit the child(ren) to the first choice school.

Appealing a Decision

If you are refused a place for your child(ren) at your preferred choice of school, you will be notified by e-mail or post (applicable to Reception and Transfer to Secondary School – Year7). We will only refuse a place at a school if the number of places exceeds the admission number. Parents/carers may choose to appeal to an independent panel if they believe there is justification for further consideration. Parents/carers may submit a formal appeal against the LA, but this must be received within 14 days (10 working days) of being notified of the decision not to admit a child to their preferred school. Parents should submit their appeal in writing, stating the reasons for appeal, to: Director of Education, Education Department, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 8AN. The LA will then refer the appeal to the Independent Appeal Panel.

Parent/Carers are advised that:-

- they may attend the hearing and make representation to the panel, either in writing or verbally, should they wish to do so.
- they may elect not to attend the appeal meeting and, instead, allow the appeal to be considered on a written statement being submitted
- they can be accompanied by a friend, adviser or an interpreter. However, LA Councillors are not permitted to attend. Parents/carers are requested to inform the Clerk to the Independent Appeal Panel of any representations at least seven days before the hearing.

In an appeal against admission, the Appeal Panel will only be able to uphold an appeal if it is deemed that the admission authority had not properly implemented the admission policy.

L. MID TERM ADMISSIONS

There may be circumstances where a parent/carer considers that a transfer to a different school, outside of the normal admissions round, to be appropriate. Such a decision should not be taken lightly. Parents/carers should think carefully before making such a request. A change of school may not be the solution and may even worsen the situation. There is evidence to suggest that the attainment levels of children who move schools, particularly in Years 10 or 11, can be lower than those who remain at the same school throughout their secondary education. In deciding whether to apply for a transfer, it would be worth considering a number of very important factors:

1. **Current School** – Have the problems that the child is facing with their current school been discussed with the Headteacher? In many cases, schools can put measures in

place to deal with any problems that a child is encountering e.g. bullying or struggling with work. Whatever the problem, simply changing schools may not be the answer.

2. **Curriculum** – The Curriculum for Wales Framework is set out nationally and includes curriculum requirements set out in legislation, as well as guidance. Schools will use the Framework and guidance to develop their own school level curriculum. Curriculum for Wales is not an 'off the shelf' programme for delivery. As a result, there may be a difference to the topics and activities that schools teach.
3. **Exams** – During Year 10 and Year 11, learners will be asked to consider different learning pathways. This may be different across schools. If your child changes school, they may miss out on important work and exam results may suffer as a consequence. However, applications should not be refused because a child has followed a different curriculum in a previous school.
4. **Transport** – If a child moves to a school outside of their designated catchment area, the local authority will **not** provide free transport to that school. Journeys to a new school may well involve additional buses, extra costs and travelling time.

If parents/carers are still uncertain about moving their child – talk it through!

After considering all of these issues, and parents/carers still want their child to transfer schools, they will need to make an application to the School Admissions Team.

Parents/carers can complete an application online at Mid Term Admissions or Transfers | Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council or by emailing School.admissions@merthyr.gov.uk

Once the completed form is received, the application will be considered without delay and a formal decision either to offer, or refuse a place, will be notified to the applicant within 15 school days.

If parents/carers are applying for admission/transfer to a voluntary aided school, an appropriate application form should be requested from the governing body of the school concerned.

Our Welsh Medium schools both have an immersion class within their school to support pupils who wish to transfer from an English speaking school to a Welsh speaking school. This class is available to pupils up to the age of 11 and pupils will be supported to fast track their Welsh language skills in order to fully integrate into a Welsh school.

As such, it may not be too late to switch to Welsh Medium.

Please contact the relevant Welsh Medium School of your choice for details.

The Local Authority does not encourage transfers between schools, and a change of school mid-term can seriously disrupt the continuity of a child's education. If parents feel that a problem at school is so serious as to necessitate a change they are urged to take all reasonable steps to resolve the issue with the school first and then to seek advice from the Admissions Team if necessary before applying for a transfer. In cases involving school transfer requests that do not involve a house move the Local Authority reserves the right to arrange for the child to start the new school at the beginning of the next half term to minimise disruption to their own and other children's education.

Applicants should not assume that they will automatically be allocated a place at a local school. There is no guarantee of a place at any school, even if it is catchment, and the school is already full in the relevant year group, the application could be refused. Pupils must continue to attend, where possible, their home school until a suitable alternative place can be found.

M. SIXTH FORM ADMISSIONS (The College, Merthyr Tydfil)

There are no longer sixth form admissions to secondary schools within the authority. This provision will now be accessed via the integrated tertiary learning facility, The College Merthyr Tydfil. Admission queries can be sent via email to questions.college@merthyr.ac.uk.

Information is also available via www.merthyr.ac.uk/mtc

Pupils from Merthyr Tydfil who are taught through the medium of Welsh attend Ysgol Rhydywaun in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which has a sixth form provision.

N. WAITING LISTS

For those schools, which may become oversubscribed, the local authority maintains a waiting list. Following the allocation of places during the normal admissions round, any pupil that is refused admission to an oversubscribed school will remain on the list, which will be maintained until 30th September. Thereafter, parent/carers will be expected to make a fresh application for admission to their preferred school. Admissions in respect of pupils on waiting lists are determined by application of the oversubscription criteria, not by the length of time that a child has been on the waiting list.

O. CATCHMENT AREAS

A school catchment area is a geographically defined area of addresses which is used to ensure that all schools receive an appropriate number of pupils from within the community. Catchment areas are used;

- to give parents an indication of their local school.
- to help schools identify the communities they serve.
- to prioritise admission of local children to schools when there are more applications than places available.
- as a planning tool to enable the council to forecast demand for education in an area and to plan to meet that demand.
- to assist with the organisation of school transport.

The authority manages the admission intake to schools using oversubscription criteria which ranks catchment area children as a high priority in the event that there are more applicants than spaces available. From time to time a review of catchment areas is necessary to ensure they still reflect the needs of the schools they serve whilst recognising that parental preference is also important. This will ensure, as far as possible, that pupils living in an area will be able to secure a place at their local school. Changes are also designed to provide a closer geographical relationship with schools to receive an appropriate number of pupils from within the community.

P. SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The authority has a statutory duty to provide pupils with free transport to the nearest available school if they reside beyond 'walking distance' to that school. The law relating to 'walking distance' is defined as two miles for primary age and three miles for secondary age, measured by the nearest available safe walking route. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council currently provides transport as follows:

- for primary age pupils over 2 miles from their nearest catchment area primary school;
- for secondary age pupils residing over 3 miles from their nearest catchment area secondary school.

The latest information can be found on the authority's website, or by contacting the Customer Contact Centre (01685) 725000 and ask for School Transport

The distance criteria apply to all schools including Faith and Welsh-medium schools. However, where pupils attend, as a result of parental/carer choice, a school other than the catchment area school, it must be understood that parents/carers accept full responsibility for the transport costs and arrangements. If a child qualifies for free transport, a place will be provided on a contract vehicle serving the particular area.

Q. CHILDREN OF UK SERVICE PERSONNEL

Admission authorities must not refuse a place to the child of currently serving service personnel because the family is not yet living in the area. 'In year' movement should be treated the same as in advance of the school year. Whilst the parent/s remain in the armed forces the provisions of the Code that apply to children of UK Service personnel should apply. These are as follows;

Children of UK Service personnel and other Crown Servants (including diplomats)

Families of UK Service personnel and other Crown Servants are subject to frequent movement within the UK and from abroad, often at relatively short notice. School places must be allocated to children and their families in advance of the approaching school year if accompanied by an official Ministry of Defence (MOD) or Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) letter declaring a return date. Children of UK Service Personnel may be given excepted status for infant class size purposes when admitted to a school outside the normal admission round.