



MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

SCHOOL ADMISSION POLICY

2024/25

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 2024 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 (<http://merthyr.gov.uk/ApplyForASchoolPlace>) will be open for **all relevant parents/carers in the week commencing 11th September 2023**. **Hard copy applications will be available upon request and will need to be returned to, School Admissions Team, Education Department, 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	22 nd December 2023
Primary School Reception Class (age 4 before 1 st September 2024)	22 nd December 2023
Primary School Nursery Class (age 3 before 1 st September 2024)	30 th November 2023
Primary School Pre-Nursery Class Spring Term – January 2025 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st September 2024 and 31 st December 2024)	28 th February 2024
Primary School Pre-Nursery Class Summer Term – April 2025 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st January 2025 and 31 st March 2025)	31 st May 2024

Parents/carers need to apply for a place:

- For admission to a pre-nursery class;
- For admission to a nursery class/school;
- 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 church 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;
 - pupils for whom education at a school of a particular religious character is desired and who are admitted to such a school 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. Most 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 2024/25

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.

Pre-nursery Admissions (Rising 3's)

Children who turn 3 during the academic year (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. Pre-nursery places will be part-time and will be for a minimum of two and a half hours per day.

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 2025 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st September 2024 and 31 st December 2024)	28 th February 2024
Primary School Pre-Nursery Class Summer Term – April 2025 (3 rd birthday falls between 1 st January 2025 and 31 st March 2025)	31 st May 2024

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.

Three settings are currently registered as Early Years Education Providers in Merthyr Tydfil and are located in Cwm Golau Integrated Children's Centre, Pentrebach:-

- Cylch Meithrin Pentrebach (Welsh Medium)
- Little Rascals Pre-School
- Funtazia Day Nursery

If you require any further information on Early Years Education Providers –the **Early Years Team** can be contacted on 01685 727387 / 727374.

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

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 2024)	30 th November 2023

Criteria for Pupil Entry to a nursery class/school

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

2. Primary Education

Every child is required by law to receive full-time education from the beginning of the school term after his/her 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, People and Performance Directorate. Children between the ages of 3/4-11 years are recognised as pupils receiving primary education. In Merthyr Tydfil primary education is provided in a primary school with pupils aged 3/4-11 years of age.

Attendance between the age of 3 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.

3. Admission to Reception Class

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

4. Admission to Primary Schools

Pupils who reach the age of five during the school year may be admitted to infant departments at the commencement of the school year in September.

Parents/carers should notify the local authority in advance if they have a child, who will reach the age of 4 years by 31st August, 2024. 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 late application. If parents/carers are unsure which school normally serves their locality they should contact the School Admissions Team for advice (01685 725000).

If parents/carers wish their child to attend a primary 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 with the published arrangements.

5. Changing Schools: Primary Education

Changing schools during primary education is a significant step for a child. Such a decision may be unavoidable, e.g. as a consequence of the family moving home, and in such circumstances parents/carers will need to contact the School Admissions Team for assistance (01685 725000) and advise their current school. 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. If there is a suitable vacancy, a child will be admitted to the school. 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.

6. 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. If a child was born between 1st September 2012 and 31st August 2013 she/he will automatically transfer to the local secondary school in September 2024. 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 authority. If parents/carers wish their child to attend a secondary school which does not serve their locality, they should contact Schools Department, School Admissions Team, for advice (01685 725000). Applications for such admissions should be made as early as possible and as stipulated in the published arrangements.

7. Changing Secondary Schools

Changing schools during secondary education is a significant 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 or 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.

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 reserved 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. Parent/Carers should note that curriculum option choices may vary from school to school and this can present as a concern when moving schools during years 10/11, due to GCSE's

8. Welsh Language Policy

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. Provision is made for this in the following way:

- Welsh as a second language in English medium schools:
 1. Welsh is taught to all pupils at Foundation Phase. Emphasis is placed on the development of oral skills within a meaningful context. The incidental use of the language during the school day is encouraged.
 2. Welsh is further developed at Key Stage 2 with a greater emphasis on reading and writing skills.
 3. Since September 1999, Welsh has also been taught to all pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Provision for Welsh-Medium Education:
 1. Education is available at Welsh-medium primary schools to all pupils whose parents select Welsh medium education:

There are two Welsh-medium primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil and a satellite provision attached to Ysgol Santes Tudful has opened to form the foundation of the third Welsh Medium school within the LA:-

- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful
 - Safle'r Gurnos
 - Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhyd-y-Grug
2. Although the main medium of instruction is Welsh, high standards in English are maintained.
 3. Pupils attending Welsh-medium primary schools will be able to continue their education in Welsh medium secondary schools outside the County Borough. The local authority has a successful partnership with Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Headteachers of Welsh-medium schools, in consultation with the local authority, have to apply the admissions criteria set out previously to determine priority for admissions.

Pupils living outside a school's designated catchment area, who are admitted to a nursery class, will not have an 'automatic' right to continued education within that school. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate such pupils, a formal application must be made for transfer into the infant department at the appropriate time. To find out more about the benefits of a Welsh Medium Education, please refer to the *Being Bilingual Booklet* via the following link.

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

D. ADMISSION TO VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS

Admissions Policy 3-16 school

This policy refers to admission in September 2024. Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic school is a voluntary aided school in the Archdiocese of Cardiff. The Temporary Governing Body 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 admission number for the school is **193**, split across the four separate sites as follows:

Year 7 (Blessed Carlo Acutis - Bishop Hedley campus)	120
Reception (St Aloysius campus)	23
Reception (St Illtyd's campus)	22
Reception (St Mary's campus)	28

Where there are more than 120 applications for year 7, and 73 in Reception, places will be allocated in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed below.

E. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

Pupils with additional learning needs may require access to specialist provision, such as a Learning Resource Base (LRB). Admission to a LRB is determined via a multi-agency panel and is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains the most appropriate provision for the child. Where a child has attended an Early Years LRB, there is no automatic entitlement to attend a Key Stage 2 LRB, this would be determined by the authority's Admission authority.

If a child has made sufficient progress 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.

As a result of Welsh Government reform of special educational needs, from September 2022, Statements of Special Educational Needs will start to be converted to Individual Development Plan's (IDPs). This will be a 2 to 3 year rolling programme.

Pupils with additional learning needs but without statements

Admission arrangements for children with additional learning needs but without statements are treated on the same basis as other applicants. Applications in respect of such children are considered on the basis of the local authority's admission criteria.

Pupils with statements of additional learning needs

If a child has a statement of additional learning needs maintained by the local authority, the local authority will be responsible for advising on special educational provision to be made by the school, and for considering the school's suitability when either finalising the statement or following an annual review.

All schools are appropriately resourced to meet additional learning needs through their own budgets. Some schools are further resourced with integral units addressing certain additional learning needs.

If the parent/carer of a child with a statement wishes to appeal against the school named in the statement, or that no school has been named, an appeal can be made to the SEN Tribunal for Wales, via their web page: <http://sentw.gov.uk> If you require a copy of the Additional Learning Needs Policy, it is available on the website www.merthyr.gov.uk of contact Customer Contact Centre, Tel (01685) 725000.

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 particular school **must** be made officially via the On-Line portal to the local authority or direct to the governing body of a voluntary aided school. The published criteria in respect of "*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 22nd December 2023 for admission to secondary school in September 2024 and by 22nd December 2023 for admission to reception class in primary schools in September 2024; and 30th November 2022 for admission to nursery class in September 2024. 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

Secondary school admissions

Applications for admission to secondary school (Year 7) are to be submitted to Schools Department by no later than 22nd December 2023 and parents/carers will be informed on the 1st March 2024.

Any secondary application that is rejected will be offered an appeal which will need to be made by 15th March 2024.

Primary school admissions

Applications for admission to reception class are to be submitted to the Schools Department by no later than 22nd December 2023 and parent/carers will be informed on the 17th April 2024.

Any application for admission to reception class that is rejected will be offered an appeal which will need to be made by 01st May 2024.

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 statements 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 2024.

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 2024.

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. **Please note that:**

- childcare/childminding arrangements or a parent's place of work cannot be taken into account when applying admissions criteria.
- the date a parent/carer requests with a school that their child's name be put on their school's initial list is not a criteria for entry and does not guarantee a place; it merely enables an application form to be sent out at the correct time.
- children will be classified as siblings if-
 - (a) they are half or full brother or sister
 - (b) they are an adoptive brother or sister
 - (c) they are children living full time/permanently in the same household
- Please note that cousins, nephews and nieces are not counted as siblings.
- In relation to secondary school, siblings must be in years 7 to 11 of the relevant school in September 2024.

Tie breaker

Children will be admitted up to the Admission Number in order of priority as outlined above. Children residing with 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.

J. VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Medical Need

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

4. 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.

5. 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 the school is full and, if that is the case, whether the parents/carers plea is so strong that the child should still be offered a place. Before parents/carers appeal, they are advised to fully consider the school/local authority's admission criteria. It should be noted that only pupils of statutory school age have a right of appeal.

The local authority has a statutory power to direct the governing body of a maintained school for which it is **not** the admissions authority to admit any child where the child has been refused admission to each school which is a reasonable distance from the child's home. It is not necessary for the local authority to use this power for community and voluntary controlled schools as such schools do not have the power to refuse admissions.

Since the introduction of the regulations regarding infant class sizes, admission authorities may refuse to admit a child to a school where admission would oblige the school to take measures such as employing an extra teacher or building an extra classroom in order to comply with the new limits. In an appeal against admission, the Appeal Panel will only be able to uphold an appeal if the decision was not one which a reasonable admission authority would make in circumstances of the case or the child would have been offered a place if the admission policy had been properly implemented.

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.

Please note: there is no right of appeal for pre-nursery and nursery places.

L. MID TERM ADMISSIONS

Where there are pupils that move into the County Borough, other than the normal admissions round (September of each academic year), the Local Authority will endeavour to meet parental preference as far as possible. If a school is oversubscribed, parents/carers will be offered a place at an alternative school.

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/Exams** – Although there is a National Curriculum that every child is expected to follow, schools may teach parts of the curriculum in different stages and at different times of the year. If your child changes school, they may miss out on important work and exam results may suffer as a consequence. This is particularly relevant in Years 10 or 11. However, applications should not be refused because a child has followed a different curriculum in a previous school.
3. **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!

There are a number of individuals within the school who parents/carers can talk to about a transfer.

If parents/carers have considered all these issues and feel that the problem at the school is so serious to necessitate a change, you are urged to take all reasonable steps to resolve the issue with the school in the first instance, and then to seek advice from the Local Authority, before applying formally for a transfer. Further information from the School Admissions Team, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 8AN (Tel. 01685 725000), or by emailing ICS.school.admissions@merthyr.gov.uk

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.

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 schools. 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

This provision is now accessed via The College Merthyr Tydfil. 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 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 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.