

Transfer to secondary school

Frequently asked questions for LB Merton residents

What is the role of local councils and schools?

All school admissions applications for state funded schools (Community schools, Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies are all state funded) should be made to the local council that you are resident (i.e. London Borough of Merton for residents of this borough) and the council has a coordinating role to ensure you are offered one state funded school place on national offer day to your highest preference possible, whether the school is within your resident borough or not.

For Community Schools the council also sets the admissions policy to priorities admissions applications. For Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies this is undertaken by the schools. All School Admissions authorities must abide by a nationally set Admissions Code of Practice.

What is an order of preference?

This is the order in which you name the schools you are applying for. You should name the school that you want your child to attend the most as your first preference. So, if more than one of the schools you have named are able to offer places, you will be allocated the school you want the most. Please think about the order in which you name your schools very carefully. If you change your mind at a later date it may not be possible to offer a place at a lower preference school.

Are first preference applications considered before all others?

No. All applications for places are considered at the same time; this is called an equal preference scheme. Once all applications for schools have been ranked, if a place can be offered at more than one preference, an offer will be made for the school named as the highest preference out of those that can be offered.

How are places allocated?

If the school is oversubscribed, that is there are more applicants than places available, all applications will be ranked in the order described in the admissions criteria. Once all applications have been ranked we can see if a child's name is high enough on a ranking list to be offered a place. If a child can be offered a place at more than one school we will offer a place at whichever of these schools is the higher preference.

Am I entitled to apply only for single sex schools?

You may express a preference for single sex schools, however by law, the authority is under no obligation to consider only single sex schools for any applicant. All places are considered according to the published criteria which cannot, by law, give priority to parents who only name single sex schools.

My partner and I are separated but have joint access or responsibility. Which address should we use?

We consider the home address to be the address where the child lives with their parents or legal guardian. If you have joint access the parent who looks after the child for most of the school week should make the application and give their address. This address is always checked for oversubscribed schools and documentary proof may be requested. It will normally be the address of the parent who receives Child Benefit. If you are unsure, please contact the School Admissions Team at admissions@merton.gov.uk for advice.

My family or childminder looks after my child during the week. Can I put their address?

No. We cannot accept the address of childminders or a family who may help you with the care of your child. It must be the child's home address.

We are living at a temporary address. What should we do?

If you are living at a temporary address, changing your address before your child attends the school you choose, or will be returning to this country from an HM Forces posting overseas or temporary employment overseas, please contact the School Admissions Team for advice.

We are hoping to move in the next few weeks. What do we do?

If you change your permanent address after 11 December 2018, but before your child is admitted to the school, you should inform the School Admissions Team in writing. It is not sufficient to tell the school only. Please note that change of address details will only be accepted upon receipt of a new Council Tax bill or a new tenancy agreement. Other documents may also be requested to support a change of address. If you move after the form is submitted, but before 11 December 2018, please contact School Admissions at admissions@merton.gov.uk as soon as possible.

Please note, the offer of a place may be withdrawn if it is discovered that a parent has given an incorrect address or an 'address of convenience', such as a deliberate temporary address, business address, the home of a relative, a childminder's address or the address of a parent whom the child does not live with for most of the school week.

What happens if I do not get the place I want?

You are entitled to reject any place offered. However, if you reject an offer it will then become your responsibility to secure an alternative. If you are offered a place at a school that is not your first preference, you will automatically go on the waiting list for your higher preference schools. Any preferences that are lower than your offered preference are withdrawn. You will also have the right of appeal against any school that does not offer a place, providing it was named as one of your preferences.

If you are offered one of your lower preferences, we recommend that you accept the place while waiting to see if a higher offer can be made. This ensures that your child will have a school to go to in September and does not prejudice your right of appeal or your place on higher preference waiting lists.

I am a Merton resident. What happens if I don't get any of my preferred schools?

All parents have a right of appeal against a decision not to offer a place for a child. For community schools, appeals should be lodged with the local authority. For voluntary aided, academies and free schools, they should be lodged directly with the governing body of the particular school.

For schools in other boroughs, you will need to contact that local authority for further information on their appeal procedures.

Information about how to appeal will be sent to all applicants who do not get offered their first preference school on 1 March 2019. Appeals are likely to be heard during May and June. Please note that you can only appeal for schools for which you have applied.

If I do not get a school offer that I am happy with, can I educate my child at home?

You may choose to take this option but we do not recommend that you do so. If you decide that this is the best option for you, you must notify the local authority in writing. You must provide a curriculum suitable for a pupil of secondary age and the local authority has a duty to ensure that the education you provide is appropriate. The local authority will ask for full details of your arrangement and advisers will make monitoring visits while you are educating your child at home. We do not provide materials, tutors or funding and cannot support you educating your child at home.

I am thinking of sending my child to a private school for secondary education. What should I do?

If you definitely do not wish to send your child to a state funded secondary school (Community schools, Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies are all state funded) there is no need to make an application to School Admissions. However, if you do not apply on-time and change your mind you will be treated alongside other late applications where places are allocated after the initial offer day in March.

I have been offered a place at a private school. What should I do?

Accept or decline the state funded school place as per your application outcome. If you are accepting a place at a private school and you have already accepted a place at a state funded school, please inform us of this as soon as possible. It is very important that you do this as, if you don't let us know, you may be preventing another child from receiving an offer of a place. Also, if your child is expected to start at a school in September and does not arrive, an Education Welfare Officer will visit you to find out what arrangements you have made for his or her education.

If my child starts secondary school, can I apply for a move to another school?

We do not recommend a child changes school unless there is a house move involved which makes travel to school particularly difficult. If you wish to consider a change of school, please contact the School Admissions Team for advice and to discuss the options available.

I live in Merton. Is my child entitled to free school travel?

Children can travel free on the buses and trams provided that they have a child photo Oyster Card. An information leaflet and application form can be obtained from the Post Office or on-line via the Transport for London (TfL) website. Some families who have a low income may qualify for assistance if it is essential that their child travels by train or underground, the school is a long distance from home, and no placement can be provided locally. More information can be found on the Free School Travel page on our website.

I don't live in Merton. Is my child entitled to free school travel?

You will need to contact the local authority in the borough where you live for further information, as each borough is responsible for the travel arrangements of its own residents.