

London Borough of Merton In-Year Admissions Protocol Reviewed October 2021

Introduction

This Protocol sets out the minimum processes for in-year admission to schools within Merton.

Any timescales included within this protocol are in line with those contained in the School Admissions Code 2021.

The overriding principles of this protocol are to allocate children without a school place quickly, to allow the Local Authority to track each resident child into education, and to communicate with other Local Authorities where there are cross border applications.

All state schools within Merton have agreed to work within the principals of this protocol. Any school wishing to withdraw from this protocol must notify Merton School Admissions by 1 August in each year.

Schools should include reference to this protocol in their admissions information/on their website. Schools should also advise parents that in-year applications are made via the application form provided by Merton Council. A copy of the in-year application form will be made available by School Admissions on the Merton website - <https://www.merton.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools/admissions/in-year-school-admissions-junior-applications-and-transfers>

Schools requiring a supplementary information form as part of their admission/ranking process in addition to the main in-year application form must publish these on their websites.

School Admissions will maintain a register of vacancies within the borough. All schools will provide updated vacancy information through agreed processes, or within two working days of a request.

Process

Applications for schools in Merton will be made via Merton Council's in-year application form. These will be supplemented by any additional information and supplementary forms which are deemed necessary by Merton Council or individual admission authorities.

Where applications are made relating to children already on a school roll within a reasonable travelling distance from home (transfers), School Admissions may encourage parents to consider the benefits and disadvantages of a change of school, or to resolve issues with the existing school, before an application is processed. Continuity in education has many benefits for children so reducing mobility will have possible advantages.

School Admissions will carry out the following checks prior to an application being complete:

- address verification;
- 'looked after' or 'previously looked after' status (where relevant);
- relevant background information checks (including information from previous school where in the UK);
- supporting information where the child has been educated outside their normal year group

An application will not be processed until all necessary information is received, checks completed and the application is confirmed as valid.

Should any Merton school receive an application directly, it will be forwarded to School Admissions to register and process.

Any order of preference given on the in-year application form will not be revealed to schools prior to an application being ranked and an outcome being issued. Application information may be released after admissions decisions e.g. for appeals purposes.

Application data and relevant background information will be shared with schools through agreed secure methods once all relevant forms are received and enquiries completed.

School Admissions will aim to register applications within two days of receipt and complete all relevant checks as soon as possible.

Admission authority schools will aim to issue the outcome of an application as soon as possible, but no later than within ten school days of receiving it from School Admissions. The outcome of the application will be shared with School Admissions. Where Merton Council is the admission authority, outcomes must also be provided within ten school days.

Where no preference school is able to offer a place for a Merton resident whose child is out of education, School Admissions will consider if appropriate alternatives exist. Should an appropriate alternative offer within reasonable travel distance be possible, an offer will be made and the parent/carer advised.

Where an applicant resident in Merton is out of school and no alternative appropriate vacancy exists, School Admissions may refer the case for consideration under Merton's Fair Access Protocol if it believes the relevant criteria are met.

Where the applicant is resident in another Local Authority, the child is out of education and no preference offer can be made, School Admissions will share the application and outcome with the Home Local Authority for Children Missing Education purposes.

Where an admission authority is unable to offer a place, it must notify the parent of this outcome in writing. The outcome should include the reason why a place cannot be offered and details of any waiting list arrangements. The outcome must include a right of appeal.

Where an application includes multiple preferences, any lower preferences will be withdrawn from the process where a higher preference can be offered.

If an admission authority rejects a resident applicant where vacancies are available, the case must be referred for consideration under the Fair Access Protocol. Admission authorities may only refuse to admit where vacancies exist in very limited circumstances.

Where a Merton applicant is out of education and their application is unsuccessful for preference schools, School Admissions will seek an alternative school or provision (including through its Fair Access Protocol where appropriate).

Where a school place is offered, parents will be given two weeks to accept or decline the offer of a place.

Where a parent does not respond within the two week timeframe, the admission authority will make every reasonable effort to contact the parent to find out whether or not they wish to accept the place. Only where it can be demonstrated that every reasonable effort has been made to contact the parent will the offer of a place be withdrawn. Such cases will be referred for Child Missing Education actions where the child is missing education.

Waiting lists will be maintained in accordance with each admission authority's policy and held by the admission authority.

Once an offer has been made, the allocated school is responsible for undertaking age and identity checks if not available from the application or a previous school. Schools should retain the UPN from the previous school.

Where a place is offered to a child out of education, arrangements should be made for the child to start as soon as possible. If the child is in another school within a reasonable travel distance/time of their home address, the school may agree a start date not beyond the start of the following full term.

Where an admission authority school makes an offer from their waiting list, they will inform School Admissions of the pupil to be offered a place and confirm that the parent has accepted.

Schools should update the School Admissions Module (SAM) with changes to their attendance count following joiners and leavers, as this generates the vacancy position of the school as required by the School Admissions Code 2021.

Merton Children Missing Education will be monitored through Merton Council systems and tracked until they are in education, using the Fair Access Protocol where appropriate.