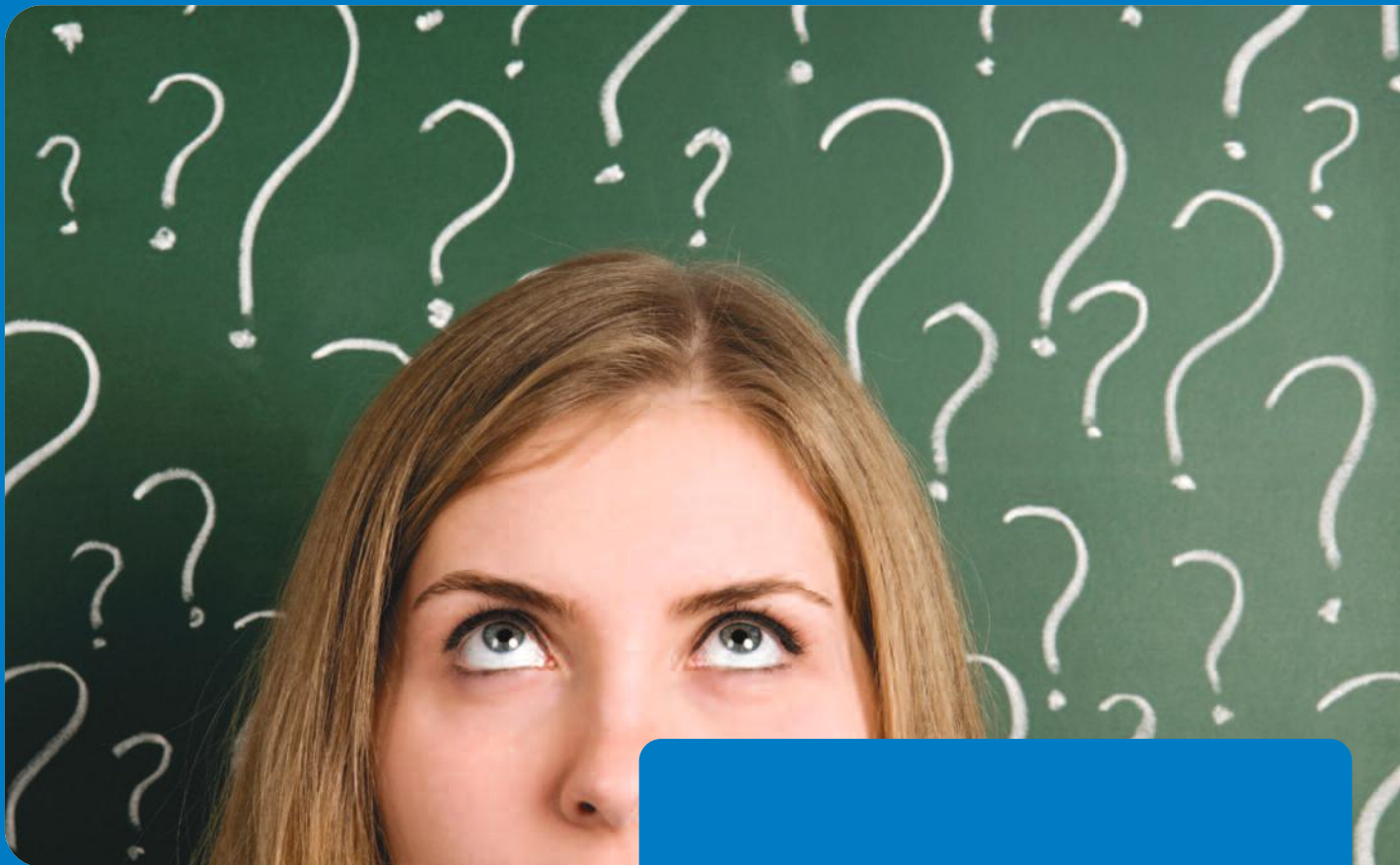




Choosing a school – Local Authority Maintained



The process of choosing a school for your child can seem daunting, but starting your preparation and planning early can help you to make a well informed choice.

All parents are required to make an application for a school place

Planning and preparing

Remember that all parents need to make an application – even if your child's current primary or nursery school is linked to the school you want them to go to next. You won't be considered for a place unless you apply. Making an early start will mean that you'll be less likely to miss key deadlines.



Search for schools near you

You can start by looking for schools near you online:

- Your Local Authority's website will be able to provide you with lists of local schools, provision offered, and their admissions information. (although this guidance refers to maintained schools, many local authority websites also have information and links to the independent schools in their area)
- You can find your Local Authority by visiting this website:
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/localgovernment/localauthorities
- Visit the ESTYN website
www.estyn.gov.uk to view inspection reports about local schools via their interactive map. Reading through the information will give you an idea of what the school is like and help you identify any areas you want to find out more about
- The National Grid for Learning Cymru (NGfL Cymru) website (www.ngfl-cymru.org.uk/6-0-0-0_schools_in_wales.htm) offers an excellent school search engine. Type in your postcode and it brings up a list of nearby schools with a key to services offered there

You can also contact your Local Authority by phone, letter or by visiting your local 'one stop shop'.

Find out more – arrange a visit to school

Once you know which schools are near you, get as much information as you can about them. This will give you a better idea of which schools might suit your child best. Once you have a list of possible schools, you should contact them to make an appointment to visit. All secondary schools hold open evenings for parents and carers in the autumn term. Schools are busy places, but always welcome prospective parents /carers. Ask who you will see from the school and how much time they will be able to spend with you.

Is there any information I can read before visiting a school?

All schools will be able to give you (upon request):

- A school prospectus or brochure
- The most recent Governors' Annual Report to Parents
- Their SEN policy
- Other policies, such as their behaviour or bullying policy
- Their Home-School Agreement
- The ESTYN Inspectors' report on the school

Before you visit:

- Think carefully about whether you want to take your child with you on the first visit (you could discuss this with the school)
- Decide if you want to take someone along with you such as a friend or relative. They can help in discussing your impressions afterwards
- Consider whether you would like to have a guided tour of the school. You will get a better feel for the school if you do this in school hours when the children are there
- Think about speaking to other parents about the school. However, it is important to keep an open mind. Schools change and information can be out of date. Also different things are important to different parents. You know your child best, and what is likely to suit him or her

What should I ask during the visit?

Here are some questions you might want to ask. You may think of other things that are important to you and your family. If you are going to visit more than one school you might want to jot down some notes to help you remember:

- How many pupils would be in my child's class?
- What will the school do to make sure that all the staff know about my child's individual needs?
- How does the school arrange extra support for children who need it?
- How will I be involved in planning for my child's needs and reviewing his or her progress?
- How will the other children be helped to understand my child's needs?
- How will my child be helped to settle in school and to make friends?
- How will I be kept up to date about what is happening in school?
- How does the school help children to learn how to behave?
- How does the school deal with bullying?
- How will the school make sure my child has the chance to take part in all areas of the curriculum and extracurricular activities such as lunchtime and after school clubs and outings?

Applying for a school place

Once you have narrowed down your list of preferred schools, it's time to apply for a place. If you do not have an application form, contact your local authority to request one. They will also be able to discuss local policies, guidance and offer information and support to those recently moved to the area.

Admissions criteria

Before submitting your application, it's very important to read the school's admission criteria; different schools have different criteria. If the school you're interested in is popular, the admissions criteria will give you a realistic idea of your child's chances of getting a place there. (These criteria should be found in the school's prospectus or by contacting the Local Authority)

Tip! Apply in the autumn term a year before your child is due to start.

Don't miss the deadline

There are important dates by which you need to submit your application.

The dates vary between local authorities so it's best to check with your own Local Authority and send off your form or apply online in plenty of time. It's important to remember that you may jeopardise your application if you miss the deadline.

When will you find out the result of your application?

For Secondary schools, admissions authorities send out offer letters on 1st March. Primary school offer dates vary, so it's best to check with your local authority.

Helpline: 0808 801 0608

Email: helpline@snapcymru.org

www.snapcymru.org