

APPLYING FOR A PLACE AT A HIGH SCHOOL IN HEREFORDSHIRE

1 *How do we apply for a High School place?*

You should begin by reading the information available from the Council and from individual schools, and, if you can, by visiting schools you are interested in by attending open evenings (details of the agreed Open Evenings will be sent with the individual letters addressed to Parents) or by making other arrangements with the headteacher. Having considered the possibilities, parents should indicate **three preferences in priority order** on the SA1 application form, and return it by 7 November 2003 (see paragraph 5 below), including any school you wish to apply for in other LEA areas. Please note that your 3 preferences will not be formally analysed until after the closing date of 7 November 2003.

When deciding your preferences you may need to consider carefully **how your child will travel to school**. You will not normally be eligible for transport assistance if your child is offered a place at a high school that is not the catchment school for your child's home address (See Chapter 7 of the Information for Parents Booklet for details of the Council's School Transport policy).

2 *Where can we find more detailed information?*

Chapters 3,6 &7 of the Information for Parents Booklet 2004/2005 contain more information about applying for a school place, and Appendix 3 gives details about the 14 Herefordshire High Schools. The information is also on the Council's Education Website (education@herefordshire.gov.uk). Please read all those sections **BEFORE** completing the SA1 form.

3 *Which is the High School for the address where we live?*

The school for your child's home address is named in the letter provided by the Education Office in September. If you apply for that school by **7 November 2003**, as one of your 3 preferences, you are most likely to be granted a place there irrespective of the priority order in which the school has been placed on your application form. The reasons for that are explained in section 10 of the Information for Parents Booklet. Please note that, in cases where the family is living apart or has more than one property, it is the child's principal home that decides which school is the one for his/her area. If you need further help, contact the information line.

4 *When do we apply for a place at High School?*

There is one date by which parents need to apply if they wish to be included in the initial consideration for places in the school year that starts in September 2004. That one date, which also applies to Church schools, is **7 November, 2003**. Late applications received between 8 November and the national offer date of 1st March 2004, may be included in the initial consideration but **only if** the reason for the delay was genuine and acceptable. Applications received after 1st March 2004 will be considered only after initial offers have been decided.

5 *Where do we send the completed SA1 form?*

The form should be returned to the Headteacher of your child's present primary school by 7 November 2003. **Remember**, if your form is late, or simply not returned, you could lose priority for a place at any of your 3 preferred schools, including the one for your home address and any in other LEAs.

6 *Are interviews or ability/aptitude selection part of the admissions process?*

No. Interviews by school must not be part of the admissions process. Similarly, no places are allocated in Herefordshire schools according to ability or aptitude including schools with specialist college status (the previous arrangement at Aylestone School has been discontinued).

7 *Can we apply for a place at a Church School?*

Yes. There are 2 Church Schools in Herefordshire: Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School, which is Anglican, and St. Mary's R.C. High School, Lugwardine, which is Roman Catholic. You can include one or both of these schools **within** the 3 preferences you are able to express on the SA1 form. You will be required to provide additional information if your request is based on denominational reasons. The school's own form requesting further information, is obtainable from the school or your local priest/vicar. It must be returned to the Council with the SA1 form by 7 November 2003 via your child's present school, as explained in 5 above.

8 Why am I allowed 3 preferences?

The Government has decided that all parents must be given the opportunity to express 3 preferences, shown in priority order, for any maintained school within the County of Herefordshire **or in an adjoining county**. Herefordshire welcomes the wider opportunity this gives parents.

9 What happens if too many parents apply for a school?

Places are allocated strictly according to the sequence set out in paragraph 6.1 of the Information for Parents Booklet. High priority is given first to pupils with SEN Statements then to children in public care and then for pupils living in the school catchment area. Children with brothers and sisters who would still be at the school in September 2004 come next, followed by pupils with validated medical, social or compassionate grounds, and finally according to distance from the school.

10 How will the decisions be made about parents' 3 preferences for high schools?

Everyone who has applied by 7 November will be told the decision on 1st March 2004, which is the national date for all such announcements. The decision will be reached via the following steps:-

STAGE 1 All applications received by the closing date of 7 November from parents will be analysed together, but only after that date, along with late applications for which there are good reasons. Applications for the 12 community high schools will be considered against the 6 priorities listed in paragraph 9 above. The Governors of the 2 voluntary aided schools will make decisions based on their criteria shown in Appendix 4 of the Information for Parents Booklet. At this stage, all 3 preferences are treated as a first preference (i.e. the priority order shown by parents will not count at this point).

STAGE 2 Following analysis, lists will be drawn up of all the parents who have applied (whether as 1st, 2nd or 3rd preference) for each school. At the top of each list will be the applicants whose children live in the catchment area, and living nearest to the school. At the bottom of the list will be the applicants whose children live outside the catchment area, and live furthest from the school.

STAGE 3 Each parent will then be offered a place at the highest of their 3 preferences (if any) that is available after all higher priority applicants have been allocated places. In the case of parents living in Herefordshire but applying for a school outside the county, the notifications in 2004 will still be given by the school's maintaining LEA. However, this position will not apply in the case of Shropshire where Herefordshire will offer the places. Parents living outside the County but applying for a Herefordshire school must send the details to their home LEA who will send the information direct to the Pupil Admissions Office based in Hereford.

STAGE 4 It is possible that some parents will not be offered a place at any of their 3 preferred schools. That could happen only in the case of parents who have applied for 3 oversubscribed schools and have not included their catchment area school as one of the 3 preferences or parents who have submitted a late application by the offer date without good reason. In such circumstances, the parents will be offered a place at the nearest or most accessible school that still has places available, taking account of any information the parents may already have provided.

11 What are the possible difficulties if your 3 preferences do not include the school provided for your child's home address?

Parents will be able to express 3 preferences for the September 2004 transfer. In practice, a parent applying for their catchment school by 7th November 2003 is most likely to be granted their local school, irrespective of the priority order in which the school has been placed on the application form. Most of the places in high schools are filled by local children. However, if parents do not include the catchment school in their 3 preferences, they will lose their priority for that school if all their chosen schools are oversubscribed. The child may then be required to attend another school altogether, which may involve the parents having to meet any additional transport costs. **For these reasons, it is advisable for parents to include the catchment area school as one of the 3 preferences.**

12 Can we make a case for personal or particular circumstances?

If you wish to apply for a school place for medical, social or compassionate reasons, you **must** send written evidence with your application. Such evidence may include supporting letters from a doctor, social worker, etc. Such reasons will be considered **only if** supporting information is included with your application **and** received by 7th November.

13 My child attends a primary school associated with my preferred High School - do I have any additional priority?

No – the designated High School is based on your child's home address. The fact that your child attends an associated primary school will not give your application any higher priority.