

Cabinet

30 January 2024

School Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordinated Scheme 2025-2026

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr B Quayle, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Ed Denham
Job Title: Manager
Tel: 01305221939
Email: ed.denham@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

As a result of successive Acts and associated Regulations, admission authorities are required to consult on proposed admissions arrangements prior to determination. A consultation has to be carried out by the 31st January 2024, with the outcomes to be determined by the 1 March 2024, published by the Local Authority by the 15 March 2024 for admissions into schools in September 2025.

The Department for Education September 2021 Admissions Code requires admission authorities to consult for a minimum period of 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January in any given year and to include relevant parents and other groups in that consultation.

The consultation on Dorset's Admissions Arrangements for September 2025 was completed on 9 January 2024 after a 6-week period. This report summarises the consultations that have taken place and invites Cabinet to adopt and determine the enclosed policies as a result of those consultations in order to meet the Local Authority's statutory duties.

All Admissions Authorities, of which Dorset Council is one, are required to 'determine' their admissions arrangements on an annual basis.

In addition to the policies, Parents and Carers are directed to the School Prospectus (Or Parents Guide) where the key elements of all the policies are detailed along with:

- Step by step instructions for parents and carers to follow for making an application
- Key dates for applications and receiving outcomes
- Details of what parents and carers need to think about when making an application
- How the Local Authority will allocate places, including how places will be allocated if there are too many applications for a school
- How Dorset Council deal with Forces Families and Summer Born children
- What parents and carers can do if they are unhappy with the outcome of their application for a school place
- How the Local Authority will deal with In-Year applications
- Details of all the schools in Dorset

Recommendation:

That Dorset Council Cabinet approve and adopt (determine) the following policies that make up Dorset Council's School Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme for school place allocations for September 2025:

1. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2025-2026
2. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2025-2026
3. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2025-2026
4. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2025-2026
5. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2025-2026.
6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2025-2026
7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2025-2026
9. Armed Forces Policy 2025-2026

In addition, Cabinet are asked to approve the following reductions in Pupil Admissions Number:

1. Cranborne Middle School reduction of their Pupil Admissions Number from 105 to 64 with effect from September 2025
2. Conifers Primary School reduction of their Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) from 60 to 30 with effect from September 2025

Reason for Recommendation:

To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the Schools Admissions Code September 2021.

To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and any subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.

Co-Ordinated Schemes – Primary, Secondary and In Year.

- 1.1 The new timetable for the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme meets with the requirements of the Schools Admissions Code of Practice and is attached in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The scheme co-ordinates with neighbouring local authorities and the national offer dates as set out in the Code of Practice. There have been no responses to this consultation.
- 1.3 There were no specific responses to the consultation

Cabinet are asked to adopt the co-ordinated scheme in order to meet statutory requirements.

2. Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2025-2026 including The Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2025-2026 and the Nursery Admissions Policy 2025-2026

- 2.1 Admissions arrangements for all maintained schools are bound by the DFE Schools Admissions Code, which was revised and updated in December 2021.
- 2.2 Dorset Council (DC) has made no changes to the oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.
- 2.3 DC has made no changes to the Sixth Form Admissions Policy nor The Nursery Admissions Policy.
- 2.5 There were no responses to the consultation.

Cabinet are asked to adopt the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2025-2026 and note that Local Authority Sixth Form Admissions Policy, Local Authority Nursery Admissions Policy are unchanged.

3. Dorset Admissions of Armed Forces Community Children Policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to all schools where DC is the admissions authority (community and voluntary controlled schools) – it is also promoted for adoption with Dorset Schools which are their own admissions authorities (academies, foundation, voluntary aided, studio and free schools). A copy of the policy is found in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 This policy recognises the Armed Forces Covenant and reflects the spirit of DFE Guidance issued in April 2013 that has been withdrawn but Dorset continues to maintain the principles.
- 3.3 The Guidance from the DFE and DC's policy is designed to ensure that admissions arrangements do not disadvantage service families, and the policy provides the admissions authority flexibility in how they may process applications from service families.
- 3.4 The policy ensures that an admission authority has flexibility in determining main residence when managing place allocations using base and future addresses where a family is subject to a new posting/rotation.
- 3.5 There is flexibility in the application of the Infant Class Size (ICS) legislation, which allows admissions authorities to place over number as an 'exception', though it is still incumbent on the admissions authority to respect the philosophy of ICS and not to necessarily make an 'exception' of every service family.
- 3.6 The policy also allows and requires an admission authority to act flexibly when an allocated school place through a future service or base address is then not appropriate to the residential address that the service family has, once they are finally settled.
- 3.7 There have been no responses to the consultation including the Ministry of Defence who were consulted.

Cabinet are asked to adopt the Dorset Admissions for Armed Forces Community Policy in order to support military families and to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant.

4. The reduction in Pupil Admissions Number for Cranborne Middle School

- 4.1 The reason for proposing lower PAN is to set a level which more accurately reflects the number of actual admissions and enables the governing body of the relevant schools to plan more effectively for

organisational and budgetary needs. Admissions to the schools will be in accordance with the admissions policy.

- 4.2 Currently the feeder schools for Cranborne Middle School will have less than 60 children graduating from their Year 4 going forward for the next 3-4 years. With Emmanuel Middle School retaining 124 places, the reduction at Cranborne Middle will allow the school to structure itself in an efficient way given these numbers. A total of 64 places will be allocated into Year 5 from September 2025 and for subsequent years going forward.
- 4.3 There were two responses to the consultation, one raised concerns as a family from out of catchment who may not get into Cranborne Middle School if the number were to reduce. The other response was from a family that live in catchment and were also concerned around their children being able to access a place at Cranborne Middle School.

DC Response: Current projection show that there are less than 60 children in the catchment feeder schools for Cranborne Middle School and though an LA can't guarantee a place, given the low numbers coming through, it is imperative that the size of the school and the resources deployed are inline with expected student numbers. This will ensure that the school budget is in line with the expected number of pupils so that the resources are deployed to support the number of children actually in the school as opposed to having to staff a school for a class structure that is unlikely to be realised.

Cabinet are asked to approve the reduction in PAN at Cranborne Middle School from 105 to 64 places for September 2025.

5. The reduction in Pupil Admissions Number for Conifers Primary School

- 5.1 The reason for proposing a lower AN is to set a level which more accurately reflects the number of actual admissions and enables the governing body of the relevant schools to plan more effectively for organisational and budgetary needs. Admissions to the schools will be in accordance with the admissions policy.
- 5.2 Currently the catchment area of Conifers Primary School has a projection of less than 35 children of reception age going forward for the next 3-4 years in the school catchment area with lower levels of demand in reception. In order to make sure that the school can structure itself in an efficient way given these numbers, it is proposed that the school will only allocate 30 places for the reception cohort in September 2025 and in subsequent years going forward.

- 5.3 There were no responses to the consultation on reducing the PAN at Conifers Primary School.

Cabinet are asked to approve the reduction in PAN at Conifers Primary School from 60 to 30 places for September 2025.

General Responses to the Consultation:

1. Member of the Public

Raised concerns around the continued reserved status of Church of England Schools and the fact that families in some areas of Dorset have no option than to attend a Church of England School

DC Response: The Reserved status of church schools and the denominational criteria is enshrined in primary legislation and is not within the gift of Dorset Council to make any changes.

2. Member of the Public

Raised concerns round a possible conflict in terminology for the deadlines for families to lodge an appeal. The DFE appeal code states that for late applications, appeals must be heard within 40 days of the deadline for submission of an appeal – these dates are published on any local authority website, or where the decision to refuse is received after the deadline, then the appeal must be heard within 30 days.

DC Response; The wording has been changed in section 8.3 of the Primary and Secondary Co-ordinated scheme to make it clear around deadlines for submission of appeals.

3. Member of the Public

A Respondent raised a concern in relation to a Dorset School that is its own Admissions Authority and does not come under the remit of these policies. The concerns focused on why schools do not have staff on hand during the summer holidays to process school applications and thus reducing the lost teaching time at the beginning of the September term.

DC Response: The concerns raised have been sent to the school in question. In terms of Dorset Council's own processes, and within the Admissions Code, we are obliged to respond to school applications within 10 school days. Thus, it is reasonable practice that schools are not expected to be able to respond to applications outside of term time.

4. Member of the Public

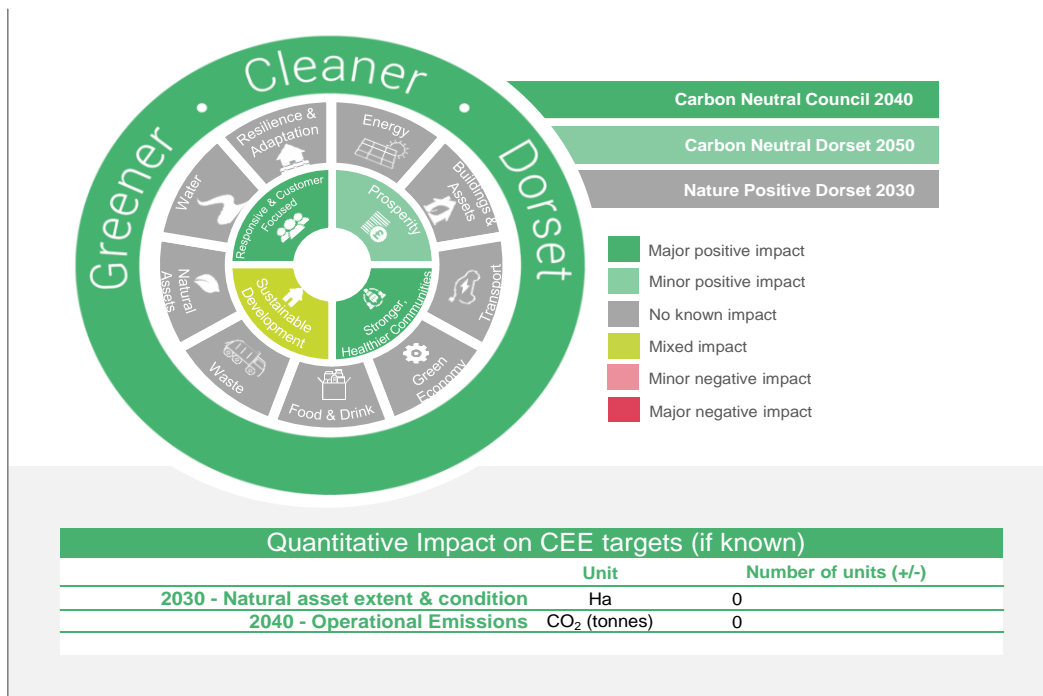
A respondent noted that it was a very positive move that Dorset schools on the borders are able to accept applications into their schools from non-Dorset residents. The respondent noted how both at primary and secondary level, their child's needs were very quickly identified once they had moved into a Dorset School, something the respondent felt would not have happened had they remained in their own home local authority school.

1. Financial Implications

None

2. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

The underlying premise of the School Admissions Arrangements and the criteria for the allocation of places focuses on local schools for local children, minimising where possible families having to undertake driven journeys to access a school place.



3. Well-being and Health Implications

The admissions arrangements and pupil place planning strategy for Dorset is focused on ensuring sufficiency and easy access to local school places,

generating close local attachments and promoting the walking to school agenda where applicable.

4. **Other Implications**

None

5. **Risk Assessment**

5.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

6. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

A full EQIA has been undertaken and is attached.

7. **Appendices**

1. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2025-2026.
2. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2025-2026
3. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2025-2026
4. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2025-2026
5. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2025-2026
6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2025-2026
7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2025-2026
8. Armed Forces Policy 2025-2026
9. Full EQIA for the Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme
10. Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations

8. **Background Papers**

Dorset Council Parents Guide (2024-2025 - Example). 2025-2026 Parents Guide is published on the 1st September 2024.

[Parents' guide - Dorset Council](#)

DFE Schools Admissions Code - *September 2021*

[School admissions code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

DFE Guidance on Summer Born Children - *September 2020*

[Summer-born children: school admission - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

DFE Guidance on Admissions and The Armed Forces Covenant – *April 2013*

[Armed Forces Covenant: guidance and support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[\[Withdrawn\] Armed forces covenant: admissions to schools in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)