

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

24 October 2024

Educational Outcomes in Dorset

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr. C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary: This paper provides detail on key educational outcomes for academic year 2023/24

Recommendation: That committee considers the details of key educational outcomes and the context of these in Dorset. That committee understands the strategies and plans in place to address some of the challenges of the national and local context.

Reason for Recommendation: Educational outcomes for children and young people in Dorset are crucial for their personal development and future opportunities. High-quality education equips them with essential skills and knowledge, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and resilience. It also plays a significant role in promoting social mobility, enabling young people from diverse backgrounds to achieve their full potential. Moreover, strong educational outcomes contribute to the overall well-being of the community, as educated individuals are more likely to engage in civic activities and contribute positively to society. In Dorset, where there is a mix of urban and rural areas, ensuring equitable access

to quality education is vital for addressing regional disparities and supporting sustainable economic growth.

1. Report

Please note the main report is provided with graphs and diagrams in Appendix 1

1.1 Summary and Analysis of Provisional Dorset Outcomes 2023/4

While performance outcomes for 2023/24 have been mixed, there are some notable positive improvements areas. Key Stage 4 outcomes improved, overall, we closed the disadvantage gap a little, and attendance has been good. Less positively Key Stage 2 outcomes have declined.

Key Stage 2 Outcomes:

- **Overall Performance:** Dorset is in the bottom 20% of local authorities for attainment in Writing, Maths, GPS, and the combined Reading, Writing, and Maths (RWM).
- **Maths:** Attainment for all pupils is in the bottom 20%. Boys' attainment dipped by 3%, now 5% below national average. Girls' attainment remained the same but is 6% below national.
- **Disadvantaged Pupils:** Attainment for disadvantaged pupils in RWM is 8% below national, with a slight reduction in the attainment gap.

Key Stage 4 Outcomes:

- **English and Maths:** Improvements noted in English (4% at grade 4+, 3% at grade 5+) and Maths (3% at grade 5+). Overall, the 4+ basics improved by 1%, and the 5+ basics improved by 3%.

Achievement Rankings:

- **Quintile Rankings:** Dorset ranks in the lower quintiles for most indicators, with significant areas of concern in Maths and Writing.

Locality Performance:

- **Variations by Locality:** Dorchester and the West show the largest concerns, despite some improvements. The East and North localities also show mixed results.

Disadvantaged Pupils:

- **Attainment Gap:** Disadvantaged pupils in Dorset improved at a better rate than their peers, but the attainment gap remains significant compared to national averages.

Attendance and Absence:

- **Attendance Rates:** Overall attendance is relatively high, with slight variations across days of the week and between primary and secondary schools.
- **Absence Reasons:** Illness and family holidays are the primary reasons for authorised and unauthorised absences.

Ofsted Ratings:

- **Quality of Education:** Dorset's schools generally perform below national averages in terms of quality of education, though leadership and personal development ratings are relatively higher.

Analysis:

The document highlights several critical areas for improvement in Dorset's educational outcomes, particularly in Maths and Writing at Key Stage 2. The performance of disadvantaged pupils, while improving, still lags behind national averages, indicating a need for targeted interventions. Locality-specific strategies may be required to address the disparities in performance across different areas. Attendance rates are generally good, but the reasons for absences suggest areas where additional support might be beneficial. Overall, the data underscores the importance of continued efforts to enhance educational quality and equity in Dorset.

2. The National Context for Education

- 2.1 Several significant changes are anticipated in UK education policy. The Children's Wellbeing Bill aims to place children's well-being at the heart of the education and social care systems, with measures such as free breakfast clubs in every primary school and limits on branded school uniform items to reduce costs for parents. Additionally, local authorities will be required to maintain registers for children not in school, and Ofsted will gain more powers to investigate unregistered schools.
- 2.2 The Skills England Bill focuses on addressing skills shortages and supporting economic growth by simplifying the skills system and transferring responsibilities to a new Skills England organisation.

- 2.3 These changes reflect a broader effort to improve educational outcomes, reduce inequalities, and ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to quality education and opportunities for personal and professional development.

3. The Educational Landscape in Dorset

- 3.1 Our education community is made up of around 350 early years settings, 158 schools and 2 Further Education Colleges (soon to merge to form one college.) A proportion of our children are educated out of county, at all stages of learning.
- 3.2 There is a small higher education facility at Kingston Maurward College but no university in Dorset.
- 3.3 67% of our schools are now academies.
- 3.4 There are 2 Free Schools in Dorset.
- 3.5 The Dorset Education Board (DEB) was established in 2022 to oversee and enhance educational outcomes for children and young people in Dorset. Led by independent Chair Stephen Twigg, the board includes representatives from the Department for Education, local school leaders, the Diocese, the Dorset Parent Carer Forum, the police, the NHS, and Dorset Council officers.
- 3.6 The DEB's core aims are to ensure every child receives education in an Ofsted-rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' setting, to close the attainment gap for disadvantaged and vulnerable children, and to prepare all young people with the skills needed for adulthood. The board actively engages with children and young people to ensure their views are considered in decision-making processes.:
- 3.7 Since the single word judgement for school inspections has now been removed, the DEB will review the statement for Ofsted ratings but will continue to seek high quality education for all our children and young people.
- 3.8 In 2023, the Dorset Education Board outlined several key priorities to enhance educational outcomes for children and young people in the region, through its education strategy. These priorities include:
1. Listening to Children and Young People: Ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

2. **Fostering a Sense of Belonging:** Making sure all children and young people feel included and valued within their educational settings.
3. **Achieving Potential:** Helping children and young people reach their full potential and succeed in preparing for post-16 education and adulthood.
4. **Strengthening the Workforce:** Continuously improving the skills and capabilities of educators and support staff.
5. **Financial Sustainability:** Ensuring that educational settings are financially strong and sustainable.

These priorities aim to create a supportive and inclusive educational environment that promotes the well-being and success of all students in Dorset.

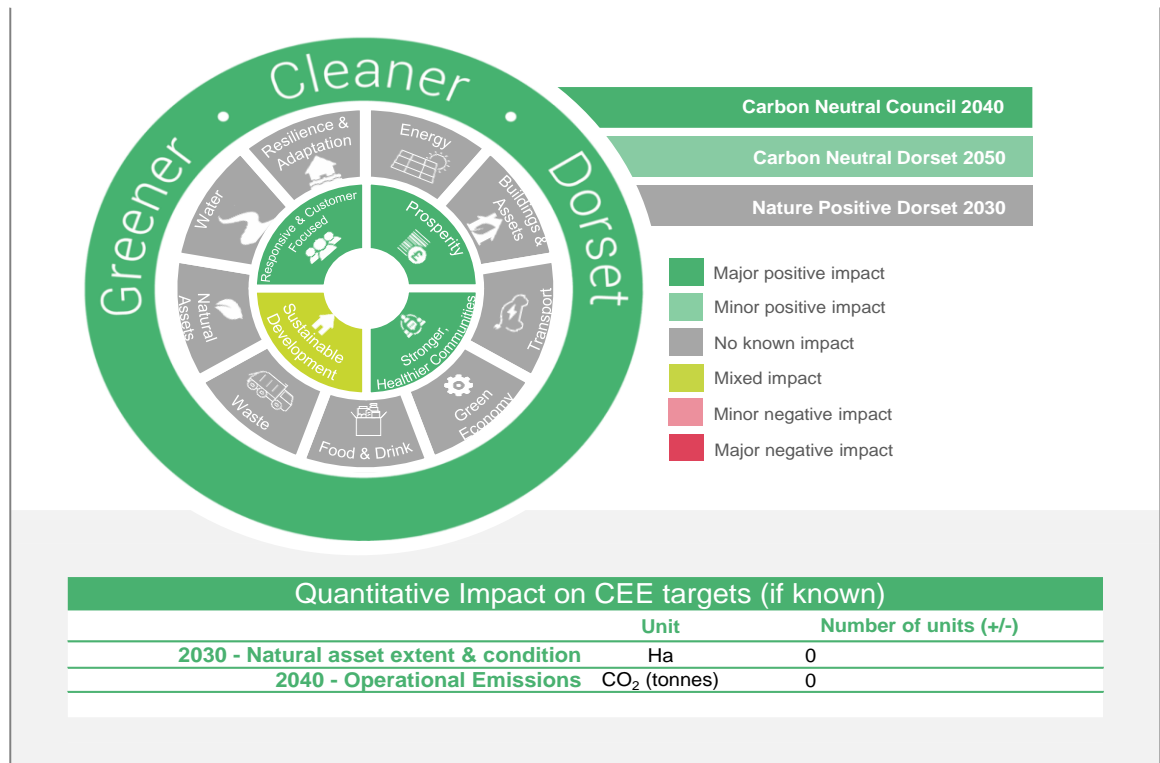
3.9 In early 2024 an additional element to improve outcomes was created. Facilitated by the Regional Department for Education, Chief Executives of all multi-academy trusts and of the Diocese were invited to join the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Corporate Director of Education and Learning to a round table discussion, with the aim of creating additional commitment and capacity to realising the aims of the Dorset Education Board.

3.10 This group is continuing to develop their work in this academic year.

4. **Financial Implications**

4.1 Investment in good educational outcomes is essential to economic growth and the prosperity of residents in Dorset. Funding for improving outcomes is partially funded by general funds in order to deliver our statutory duties on school improvements. A proportion is de-delegated from the Designated Schools Grant by Schools' Forum.

5. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**



5.1 There are no significant environmental factors to consider in relation to this work. However, if more children attended their local, mainstream school alongside their neighbours and friends, we would see less impact on home to school travel budgets and reduced carbon emissions.

6. Well-being and Health Implications

6.1 Our education strategy has the immediate and long-term health and wellbeing of children, young people and families at its heart. Evidence shows that children and young people experience social and wellbeing benefits from high quality education as well as academic achievement.

7. Other Implications

N/A

8. Risk Assessment

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

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

9. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

9.1 As described above, education can play a significant role in reducing inequalities.

10. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Educational Outcomes and Analysis.

11. **Background Papers**

None

12. **Report Sign Off**

12.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)