

# Cabinet Report

25 February 2025

## School Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordinated Scheme 2026-2027

### For Decision

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio:**

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

**Local Councillor(s):**

All Councillors

**Executive Director:**

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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**Report Status:** Public [Choose an item.](#)

### 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 2025, with the outcomes to be determined by the 1 March 2025, published by the Local Authority by the 15 March 2025 for admissions into schools in September 2026.

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 2026 was completed on 31 January 2025 after a 8-week period. This report summarises the consultations that have taken place and invites Cabinet to adopt and

determined 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 2026:

1. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2026-2027
2. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2026-2027
3. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2026-2027
4. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2026-2027
5. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2026-2027.
6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2026-2027
7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2026-2027
9. Armed Forces Policy 2026-2027

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

1. Gillingham School reduction of their Pupil Admissions Number from 280 to 270 with effect from September 2026.

2. Sturminster Marshall First School reduction of their Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) from 30 to 15 with effect from September 2026.
3. Hazelbury Bryan Primary School reduction of their Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) from 17 to 15 with effect from September 2026.
4. Greenford Primary School reduction of their Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) from 25 to 20 with effect from September 2026.

**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.

**1. Report**

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

- 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.
- 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.
- There were no specific responses to the consultation

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

1.2 Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2026-2027 including The Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2026-2027 and the Nursery Admissions Policy 2026-2027

- Admissions arrangements for all maintained schools are bound by the DFE Schools Admissions Code, which was revised and updated in December 2021.

- Dorset Council (DC) has made no changes to the oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.
- DC has made no changes to the Sixth Form Admissions Policy nor The Nursery Admissions Policy.
- There were no responses to the consultation.

**Cabinet are asked to adopt the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2026-2027 and note that Local Authority Sixth Form Admissions Policy, Local Authority Nursery Admissions Policy are unchanged.**

### 1.3 Dorset Admissions of Armed Forces Community Children Policy

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.**

1.4 The reduction in Pupil Admissions Number for The Gillingham School from 280 to 270

- The reason for proposing lower AN is to set a level which more accurately reflects the number of local catchment demand and enables the governing body to plan more effectively for organisational and budgetary needs. Admissions to the schools will be in accordance with the admissions policy.
- The school will also move from a 10 class structure to a more financially sustainable 9 class structure with each class containing 30 students.

**Cabinet are asked to approve the reduction in PAN at The Gillingham School from 280 to 270 places for September 2026.**

1.5 The reduction in Pupil Admissions Number for Sturminster Marshall First School

- The reason for proposing 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.
- Currently the catchment area of Sturminster Marshall First School has a projection of less than 20 children and parent demand is only a small proportion of the catchment children.
- There were no responses to the consultation on reducing the PAN at Sturminster Marshall First School.

**Cabinet are asked to approve the reduction in PAN at Sturminster Marshall First School from 30 to 15 places for September 2026.**

1.6 The reduction in Pupil Admissions Number for Hazelbury Bryan Primary School from 17 to 15 for September 2026.

- The reason for proposing 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.
- Currently the catchment area of Hazelbury Bryan has a projection of less than 15 children and given Infant Class Size legislation to remain at 17 presents significant risk in being able to organise classes with a maximum of 30 children in Early Years and Key Stage 1.
- There were no responses to the consultation on reducing the PAN at Hazelbury Bryan Primary School.

**Cabinet are asked to approve the reduction in PAN at Hazelbury Bryan Primary School from 17 to 15 from September 2026.**

1.7 The reduction in Pupil Admissions Number for Greenford Primary School from 25 to 20 for September 2026.

- The reason for proposing 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.
- Currently the catchment area of Greenford Primary has a projection of less than 20 children. The school buildings can only ideally support 5 classes, and a PAN 20 will better serve a PAN 20 setup.
- There were no responses to the consultation on reducing the PAN at Greenford Primary School.

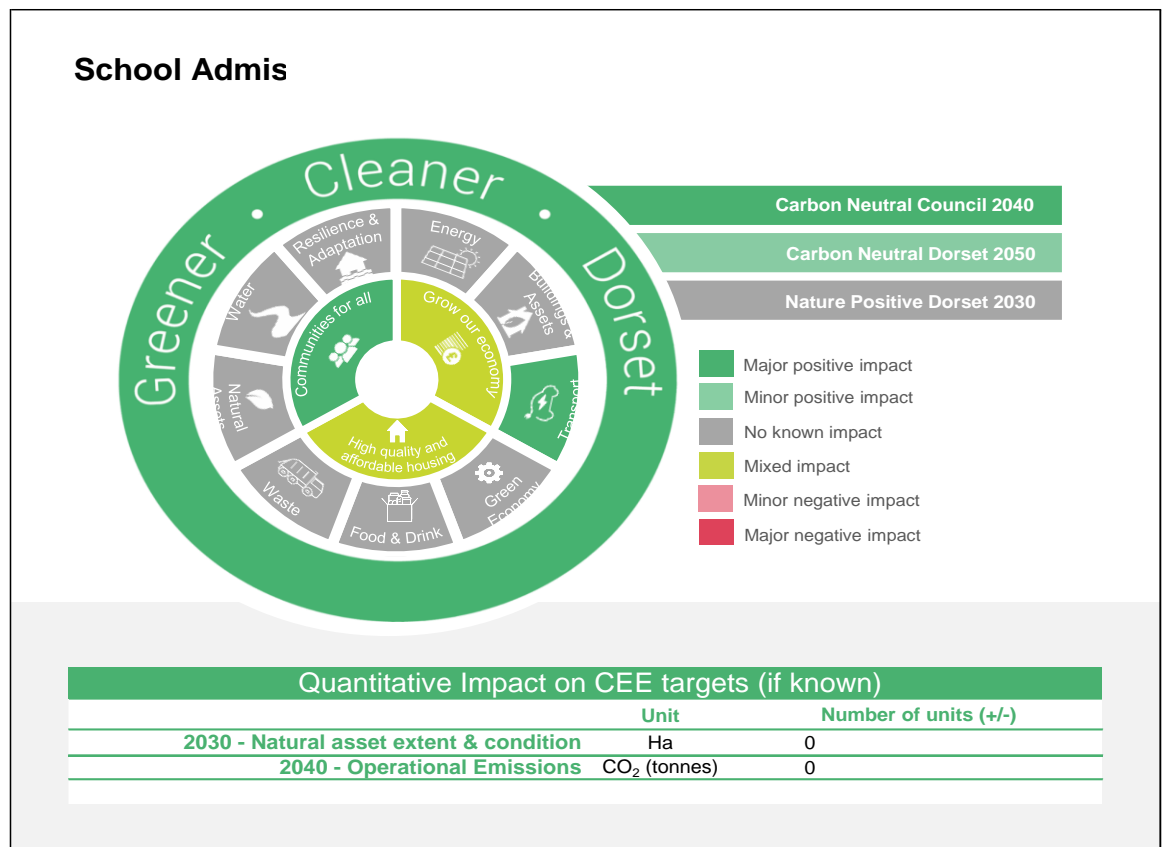
**Cabinet are asked to approve the reduction in PAN at Greenford Primary School from 25 to 20 from September 2026.**

**3. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications for the Admissions Policies. The changes in Pupil Admissions Numbers are all designed to ensure viable and sustainable schools providing them with the flexibility to deliver quality education in the most financially efficient way.

#### 4. 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.



#### 5. 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.

**6. Other Implications**

None

**7. Risk Assessment**

- a. HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk:LOW

**8. Equalities Impact Assessment**

A full EQIA has been undertaken and is attached.

**9. Appendices**

1.Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2026-2027.

2.Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2026-2027

3.Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2026-2027

4.Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2026-2027

5.In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2026-2027

6.Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2026-2027

7.Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2026-2027

8.Armed Forces Policy 2026-2027

9.Full EQIA for the Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme

10. Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recomendations



## 10. Background Papers

Dorset Council Parents Guide (2025-2026 - Example). 2026-2027 Parents Guide is published on the 1st September 2025.

[Admissions Guide 2025-2026](#)

DFE Schools Admissions Code - September 2021

[School admissions code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

DFE Guidance on Summer Born Children – November 2024

[Guidance on handling admission requests for summer born children - GOV.UK](#)

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

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

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

## 11. Report Sign Off

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)