

The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence

15 September 2025

Dorset Council Commissioner's Report

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

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

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

Report author and job title: Ross Bowell, Head of Service – Health, Education and SEND Commissioning

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Statutory Authority: N/A

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

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1. This report provides an overview of the current position in relation delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) against the commissioning agreement.
2. **Recommendation(s)**
 - 2.1 Shareholders are asked to note the progress made and support the continued cooperation between the Council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence.
3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**
 - 3.1 Progress continues to be sustained enabling the company to focus on delivering high quality education and preparing for further growth.
4. **The report**
 - 4.1 This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) against the commissioning agreement and an update on Dorset Council activity required to realise the delivery of the Dorset Centre of Excellence Business Plan.

- 4.2 Coombe House School had an OFSTED inspection at the end of June/start of July. The final report is due for publication in early September and the outcome is confidential until publication. We expect that publication will be before the Shareholder Committee which will allow a discussion of performance in the meeting which is informed by the OFSTED outcome.
- 4.3 The commissioning relationship continues to develop and strengthen. At the invitation of the DCOE Board, the Head of Service – Health, Education & SEND Commissioning attends the DCOE Board meetings. Regular contract review meetings continue between the Managing Director of DCOE and the Strategic Commissioner for Education, focused on the performance of the school. The meetings are informed by a range of performance indicators and reporting by exception we do not have any operational concerns to report. Working with the DCOE leadership in this academic year we will review performance reporting arrangements for the Shareholder Committee.
- 4.4 Notable areas of performance in recent contract reviews include strong development of reading and phonics delivery underpinned by teacher CPD, the multi-term improving trend in attendance and reduction in unauthorised absence, and consistently compliant engagement with local authority SEND practitioners including the completion of timely, high-quality annual reviews, individual education plans and preparation for adulthood plans for children in year 9 and above.
- 4.5 Regular operational meetings also take place to support conversations about individual children and to plan admissions. There were 131 pupils on roll in the summer term with a commissioned capacity of 152.
- 4.6 The Dorset Centre of Excellence Commissioning Group, which includes senior officers from Corporate Development, Place as well as Children's Services, continues to oversee Council activity in relation to DCOE including taking forward the action from the June Shareholder Committee for a report on the longer-term intentions for the site. This work is underway and a report will come to a future Shareholder Committee meeting.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 No decisions are requested from this report. As such, there are no specific legal considerations arising from this report.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 There are no specific wellbeing and health implications arising from this report.

10. Other implications

10.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

11. Risk implications

11.1 There are no specific risk implications arising from this report.

12. Equalities

12.1 No decisions are requested from this report. As such, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

13. Appendices

13.1 N/A

14. Background papers

14.1 N/A

15. Report sign-off

15.1 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)