

School Improvement Impact Report 2024 - 2025



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Executive Summary

Purpose

This report is written to present to Schools' Forum members to evidence and evaluate the impact of the School Improvement service in raising educational standards and providing a range of support.

The report will provide detail and evidence of impact pertaining to the key areas of leadership, governance, belonging and inclusion, curriculum and finance as set out in the Best Education for All plan. In addition, it will outline specialist projects and other work led by the School Improvement team. The offer has been delivered by the Education Challenge Leads (ECLs) and Schools Finance team with additional support to include Governor Services.

Key Findings

There is evidence of impact linked to the following areas:

- Bespoke Professional Development – training for Schools and Governors
- Coaching and mentoring for subject and school leaders
- Headteacher and Senior Leader recruitment and development
- Development and implementation of specialist projects and utilisation of LAG funding
- A range of meetings and events
- Continuous professional development
- Curriculum specific reviews and development work with schools, alongside a Maths and English offer working in partnership with external providers
- Ofsted support for schools
- Finance support for schools
- Governor services support for governing bodies and schools
- Headteacher appraisal service
- Specialist projects

Recommendations

- Continue to review and improve our Dorset Council School Improvement offer and functions from September 2026.
- Ensure that staff working within the School Improvement sector have the relevant expertise and up-to-date training to successfully implement all elements of the school improvement offer.
- Explore the possibility of delivering a Dorset led headteacher mentorship programme.
- Create a mechanism for collecting annual feedback from our maintained schools so that this can inform our planning moving forward.



Headteacher and SLT Recruitment

ECLs work with school leadership teams and governing bodies to provide support during recruitment windows.

Context

ECLs have participated in and supported schools in the recruitment of new Headteachers, providing examples of activities, support with interview questions and the full process of recruitment. ECLs have offered continual support to the Chair of Governors and governing body throughout this process (to include closely liaising with the Diocese). This ensured that governors were well-informed and prepared, and that relevant guidelines and legal recruitment processes were followed.

Examples of work

- **West:** Successful recruitment of a new primary school Headteacher which will bring stability to a school experiencing significant challenges. The headteacher was recruited with the support of the ECL and they will work closely together to continue to drive the school out of RI to good and beyond.
- **Dorchester:** Successful recruitment of a new first school Headteacher. The headteacher was recruited with the support of the ECL and they will work closely together to continue to drive the school out of RI into good and beyond.
- **North:** Successful recruitment of a new Secondary Headteacher.
- **Chesil:** Successful recruitment of two new primary Headteachers. Support for two primary schools with the appointment of new Deputy Headteachers.
- An ECL presented to governors regarding Headteacher recruitment within the maintained sector during the Chairs Briefing at Kingston Maurward (Autumn Term).

Impact

- “Thank you so much, both of you, for your support and wise advice today and all through this process - not least for all producing the paperwork we needed. I have especially valued having you at the 'end' of an email.”
- “From the early days of letting us know what we needed to do, from candidate walk arounds through to the interview process, you all have been so supportive. The governing board have enjoyed your time, humour, and professional support over this period to enable us to recruit a fantastic headteacher. We are very grateful.”

Team Around the School meetings

ECLs continue to implement and lead Team Around the School (TAS) meetings, necessary to support schools in several different contexts.

Context

ECLs take responsibility for setting up and leading TAS meetings. A TAS is put in place to provide high support and high challenge where needed.

The purpose of the TAS meeting is to regularly bring together all the professionals supporting a school's improvement journey, to ensure that actions are rapid and there is a clear line of sight on the impact of improvements. The governing body and members of the Diocese (where appropriate) are an essential part of the TAS alongside other key stakeholders.

Examples of work



East: TAS meeting in place to support a school based around their decline in performance noted during their 2025 Section 8 inspection. This TAS is to support identified key areas and to ensure effective partnership with the school, leaders, governors and the ECL. This support has been valued and appreciated by the Headteacher. TAS meeting in place to support a school where there have been ongoing challenges. Extensive support was provided to the Chair of Governors, and additional school support provided from a visiting head.

West: TAS meetings for three schools. Two of the schools have a TAS in place because of an RI rating at Ofsted, the remaining school has one in place linked to finance.

Dorchester: TAS meetings have been in place for two schools. One due to a building project (now finished due to completion of the work) and one due to an Ofsted RI judgement and financial deficit.

North: Regular TAS meeting to support a school with ongoing challenges (Ofsted RI judgement and financial deficit) at one primary school.

Case Study

Context: A primary school was graded RI in November 2024. In January 2025 the HT was off sick until Easter. An Interim HT was appointed in the short term.

Support Provided: TAS meetings were re-established. Additional support and time were given to the school to plan the priorities for the Spring Term. The school's development plan was re-written alongside the interim HT to gain focus and momentum for the remainder of the year. English support was given to the English Lead to unpick the progress made since the Ofsted inspection (English was a key focus). This involved a subject discussion with Governor support and Learning walks/book monitoring/pupil voice. Support was provided to appoint a new Headteacher for the school. Collaboration with the SEND team to support the school with funding for pupils with high levels of need.

Impact: The school received support and advice regarding funding for SEND pupils to ensure identified pupils had sufficient funding. A new headteacher was interviewed and appointed and work has taken place to induct and support them.

Impact

- "Thank you for the minutes - they have captured the conversations well and I appreciate the thought that has gone into this. It was great to see you and chat through different ideas. The new HT feels really reassured having met you and is looking forward to working with you over the coming months."
- "Thank you for the report and the meeting. It felt really productive and I'm looking forward to getting out of the office more on your next visit to talk to pupils."

Ofsted support

ECLs provide support to Headteachers and wider school leadership teams in the lead up to, and during, Ofsted inspections.

Context

ECLs work with school leaders to ensure that they are well supported during the lead up to Ofsted, during the inspection itself and then following, including supporting with the creation of post-Ofsted Action Plans (where deemed necessary).

ECLs ensure that school leaders are kept abreast of updates and developments, using the Education Bulletin, LEADS touchdowns and LEADS in-person meetings to disseminate key messaging and information.

Examples of work

West: One maintained school supported through Ofsted. A SEND and Maths review was conducted through ECL visits. Both leaders in these areas were involved in deep dives throughout the inspection. They said that they felt prepared due to the prior reviews and were able to draw on this to facilitate their conversations. The school achieved Outstanding in 2 areas and good in the remaining.

Dorchester: One maintained school supported through Ofsted. Work conducted in the lead up to the Ofsted inspection included History and Geography curriculum reviews, a Behaviour Policy review (after a new policy



was implemented) and collation of staff and pupil voice. The school achieved Outstanding in three areas (Behaviour and attitudes, Personal Development and Early years provision).

Chesil: There has been a successful Ofsted inspection at an infant school. The school's curriculum was praised, the SEND provision and their personal development. In the feedback Ofsted also mentioned the school's successful approach to writing (and the school has been accessing the LA English training to support this).

North: Ofsted support provided to a school who moved from RI to Good.

East: Ofsted support provided to a school going through significant change.

Impact

ECLs provide additional capacity to leadership teams and governors, and they are interviewed as part of the Ofsted inspection, enabling them to provide additional evidence and perspective.

ECLs digest and analyse policy change and information and share with our schools in a timely fashion.

School leaders feel supported through the inspection process.

Headteacher Appraisal

This was a new offer introduced in September 2024 in response to the need to further improve our services and to meet demand.

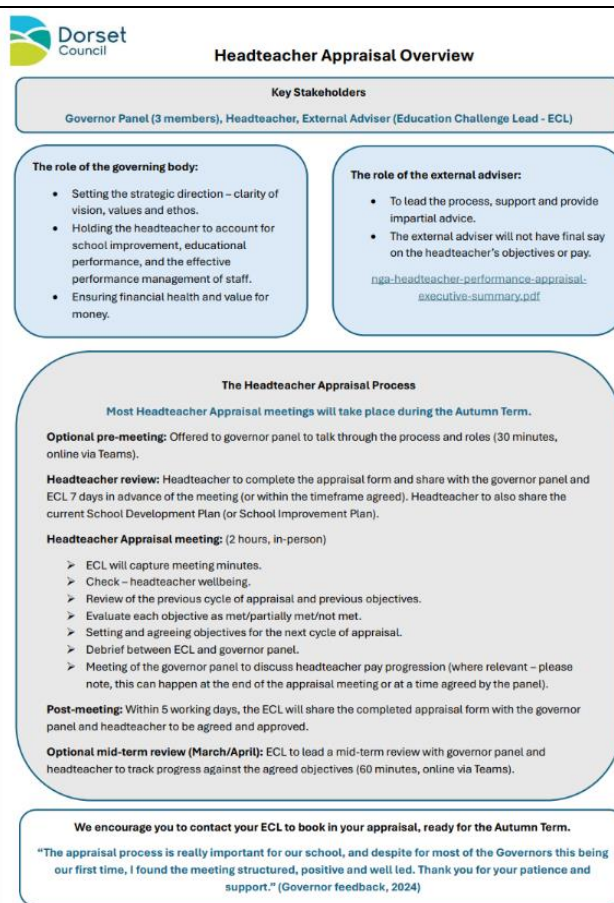
Context

Officers recognised that some schools were paying for external support to lead Headteacher Appraisals, and we wanted to be able to provide this as part of our School Improvement Offer. External training was arranged by Richard Howes (ECL) from a Local Authority who were well established in providing this service.

This is a growth area for the school improvement team moving forward aligned with additional updates.

Appraisals remain a key measure in driving forward school improvement in our settings.

Examples of work



- ECLs act as the meeting lead and record keepers for the appraisal process and work with the governing body to ensure the appraisal follows due procedure. The process is rigorous and thorough.
- Headteacher appraisals have been conducted across all locality areas, mid-term reviews were also offered and carried out during the Spring term for those who requested them.

Impact

- ECLs conducted 15 Headteacher Appraisals during the Autumn Term 2024. This offer is now being taken up more widely and we already have 26 Headteacher Appraisals booked in for Autumn 2025.
- “Many thanks for today and all your input, it was much appreciated.”
- “The appraisal process is really important for our school, and despite for most of the Governors this being our first time, I found the meeting structured, positive and well led. Thank you for your patience and support.”
- “Thank you for your time last week. I found the meeting really insightful, and it was really nice to take the time to reflect on all of the great work that ---- is doing.”
- “I would like to thank you for your time yesterday and in our initial meeting. I have found our discussions really informative and supportive. Having this type of appraisal meeting for the first time, I appreciated the structure, experience and personal touch you brought.”

Leadership

ECLs work closely with our maintained headteachers and wider school leadership teams.

Context

In supporting school leaders, the Education Challenge Leads have provided Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Development Plan (SDP) reviews, informal coaching for headteachers, visits to other schools, website compliance checks and strategies for improving outcomes for specific pupils groups such as FSM, SEN support and SEND, based on national and local research, along with organising and delivering bespoke training.

• Examples of work

- LEADS touchdowns and termly LEADS in-person meetings provide a forum for information sharing and discussion. We have worked to refine our LEADS in-person meetings to ensure they are purposeful and strategic, and we hope to improve attendance at these during the next academic year.
- The weekly digital education bulletin provides up-to-date information for our schools.
- An ECL was invited to speak to members of Dorset Association of Secondary Heads in the Spring term to provide a comprehensive update on changes to the national landscape.
- One ECL continues to attend all ASCL National and Regional conferences which allows for significant learning and networking opportunities.
- ECLs have been the key driver in the establishment/growth of several collaborations. The evolving LA Secondary Collaboration remains a work in progress, but we have seen encouraging impact from our work to date, particularly through the Peer Review Model. This model not only supports settings with quality assurance but allows for the sharing of best practice. The lead ECL continues to have a vision for how this work will grow organically over time and the potential this has moving forward. Other successful collaborations who work closely with ECLs are the West Dorset Schools Collaboration (WDSC), Chesil Collaboration, Learning First Alliance (Dorchester First maintained schools), Purbeck Collaboration and North collaboration.
- New headteachers (first headships or new to Dorset maintained sector) have received additional support to form part of an early induction. Support is provided to ensure that SDPs are concise and focused on specific areas of school improvement to help drive forward change, without taking on too much at once.

Impact



- “While measurable impact will emerge over time, schools have already developed stronger leadership, deeper trust, and clearer systems for collaboration...the partnership is well-placed to embed long-term inclusive change.”
EDT, Progress Report.

Curriculum

ECLs provide curriculum subject support, utilising national best practice and research, auditing tools and stringent review processes to drive this work.

Context

Curriculum reviews are carried out with schools based on the SDP priorities. Many of which involve ECLs working directly with subject leaders and link governors to ensure that they have a good understanding of what is happening in school and prioritising next steps.

Examples of work

- The pre-teaching and assigning competence in Maths course has been offered. This took place for the second time throughout the summer term. 13 participants took up the opportunity.
- Strong Foundations audit and follow up support for EYFS/KS1.
- Curriculum intent and implementation focused sessions with curriculum leaders.
- Pupil Voice for evidence of personal development.
- CPD planning with schools – ensuring that they are aware of the LA offer and if any gaps in training needs how ECLs can help them to source this.
- One ECL facilitated Oracy CPD – delivered to Chesil Challenge schools by Devon Research School.
- Bespoke Teaching and Learning training delivered in schools, all linked to evidence-based practice.
- The lead ECL for English facilitated English Training for all Dorset Schools delivered by Hampshire and funded by LA.
- One ECL is the STA linked Assessment Lead for Dorset, and they coordinated the statutory assessment moderation of KS2 writing, Phonics Screening and KS2 SATs administration checks. This ensured that we met our statutory duty of moderating 25% of all Dorset schools with KS2 for teacher assessed writing and 10% of all schools received checks for Phonics Screening and implementation of KS2 SATs.
- Curriculum reviews offered and conducted at a Secondary School in the West – PE, MFL and Art & Design.
- Ongoing support provided to some headteachers regarding alternative placements for students at risk of permanent exclusion or in need of specialist support.
- As part of our commitment to ensuring schools fully understand the statutory assessments in Primary schools, the ECL ensured that they delivered a programme of CPD linked to assessment and improving outcomes (EYFS, LKS2, KS2 and New to KS2). Whilst this was not free of charge (2024-2025) to access, the LA subsidises this training to make it as accessible as possible for all maintained schools to attend.
- The lead ECL for English developed an English offer and facilitated this across the year supporting KS2 writing. This workstream will look at verified KS2 English data this year to look for evidence of impact in those that attended.

Case Study

Context: A large primary school in Chesil wanted to drive excellence in its Early Years (EYFS) provision (nursery and reception) believing that improvements there would have a lasting impact on children as they progress through the school.

Support Provided: The school ECL led a Strong Foundations briefing for all staff and subsequently, a Strong Foundations audit was completed by reception teachers. The ECL also supported a new EYFS Lead appointment. A professional conversation focused on use of ‘continuous provision’, the ECL conducted a



shared learning walk and then provided feedback to all staff. This resulted in the EYFS Lead having a clear understanding of priorities, agreed with staff, to move forwards with.

Impact: This project is now being driven by the EYFS Lead who is feeling clear in vision and aims for the provision. Support for monitoring impact will be provided next term when there has been a chance to implement actions.

Impact

➤ “Thank you very much for the lovely ECL visit report. Your suggestions about how we can further enhance this aspect of Maths were particularly helpful.”

- Improvements in KS2 pupil outcomes for a school supported with English and Maths curriculum development and delivery (last years data shown in red for comparison):
- Reading – 83% 75%
- Writing – 83% 50%
- GPS - 67% 50%
- Maths - 75% 56%
- RWM - 67% 38%

Schools who have attended training tell us that it makes moderation easier for them and helps drive their subject knowledge to support better outcomes.

Inclusion & Belonging

The key areas of focus have been attendance, persistent absence, behaviour, SEND and personal development.

Context

ECLs work with schools, locality colleagues, Education Psychologists (EPs), Specialist Teachers, Inclusion Leads and the Virtual school to support strategic priorities in line with the SEND, Belonging and Attendance strategy. The embedding of inclusive practices ensures that all children and young people feel a sense of belonging.

Examples of work

- Successful LAG funding bids have secured 5 additional Dr Lucy Willets EBSA training days building on the work of EPs, for East, North and Dorchester as well as representatives from all other localities. This meant we were able to scale up the reach quicker.
- LAG funding has been used to implement the School’s Partnership Programme focusing on Inclusion for the Maintained Schools in the North.
- Therapeutic Thinking Training has continued to be embedded across Dorset. Over 100 Dorset educationalists have been trained to deliver training over the last 3 years. The ECL lead works in collaboration with the lead specialist teacher and Senior EP.
- We have been working closely with IMPOWER to support the introduction and development of the use of VSEND in our Early Years and Primary settings. Members of the ECL team are now VSEND champions and one ECL is the Operational Lead alongside a Specialist teacher, Senior EP and Best Start in Life advisor for this work. They work with the champions in their role to deliver training and support settings to implement the VSEND tool. This tool supports settings to evaluate their provision (setting readiness) and to see how it aligns with child need (including child and parent voice).

Case Study

SEND INSET Day (January 2025)

Context:

The West Dorset Schools’ Collaboration (WDSC — a collective of maintained primary schools in the West, supported by a maintained secondary school) requested support in organising a combined INSET day for a group of seven schools, bringing together approximately one hundred members of teaching and support staff.



The INSET day was organised by the ECL, working closely with WDSC Headteachers to ensure it aligned with the strategic aims of the collaboration and addressed the identified needs of SENDCOs and school staff.

Strategic aims of the WDSC:

1. To promote and support wellbeing and positive mental health for pupils and staff
2. To improve outcomes for pupils with SEND
3. To improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Sessions were carefully selected based on feedback gathered by Headteachers regarding what staff would find most useful. The day comprised nine workshops, all chosen to meet the needs of the schools (as identified by Headteachers and through the SENCO networking group).

Workshops included sessions on Neurodiversity, Family Systems, Supporting Children with Spelling, and Therapy through Nature, among others. This was the second INSET of its kind and was planned in collaboration with Specialist Teachers, TADSS, staff from Dorset's Mental Health Services, Educational Psychologists, and other external experts.

The INSET day aimed to strengthen and extend understanding of teaching children with SEND and to provide practical strategies and takeaways that could be implemented in the classroom immediately.

Impact:

The INSET training received an average rating of 4.46 out of 5, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from delegates:

- "Brilliant workshops – lovely to have the opportunity to meet up with other local schools."
- "I really enjoyed all the workshops I attended and got something from each one."
- "I enjoyed the practical tips and adaptations that could be made for all learners."

Case Study

Locality SEND Reception Staff Training (Autumn Term 2024)

Context:

Feedback from Dorset schools highlighted that teachers and support staff working in Reception were finding it increasingly challenging to meet the complex needs of children joining their classes. To address this, the ECL, Specialist Teachers, and Educational Psychologists from each locality offered a free training opportunity to all Dorset schools. The training was designed based on feedback from SENCOs and Reception staff, who reported difficulties in supporting some of the more complex needs in their classrooms.

Training was delivered in each locality, with the agenda adapted to suit individual contextual needs. For example, the training in West and Dorchester focused on Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), sensory needs, ILP writing with purposeful small steps, and self-regulation.

Impact:

Individual feedback from Dorchester and West schools rated the training 4.78 out of 5:

- "Better understanding of supporting children with sensory differences and how to provide a sensory-friendly environment. Access to audit toolkits to help implement effective targeted support. Support with how to ensure ILP targets are outlining steps for success to evidence progress more successfully."

Case Study

Ofsted Feedback (Spring and Summer Term 2025)

Context:

Schools in Dorset have been working extremely hard to meet the varied and often complex needs of pupils in their classrooms. Recent Ofsted reports demonstrate the positive impact of this work, highlighting that our schools are progressing towards delivering an inclusive and adapted curriculum.

Impact:

Examples of recent Ofsted feedback in Dorset:

- **Secondary school:**
"The school is precise and diagnostic in identifying the needs of pupils. It tailors the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that teachers provide pupils with SEND with the adaptations they need to learn the curriculum."



- Primary school:
“The school is ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It works closely with outside agencies to identify and provide pupils with SEND the help they need.”
- Special school:
“The school has high expectations of pupils. It places high importance on a bespoke curriculum, including individualised therapeutic approaches to meet pupils’ needs. Pupils benefit from a strong focus on communication, early reading, writing and mathematics. They experience success because staff understand their individual needs extremely well.”
- First School:
“Kindness ripples through this happy school. Nurturing relationships lie at the centre of this. Pupils appreciate the adults who care for them. They know who they can talk to if they have any worries. An inclusive culture ensures that everyone is welcome. Difference is valued and celebrated. As a result, pupils feel safe, supported and attend well.”

Impact

We recognise the challenges our schools are facing and try and support this by providing training, utilising partnership working and directing schools to relevant research, case studies and strategies that might support and improve the work they are doing in this area.

Finance

The finance team provide support to schools and governors covering a range of services. Involvement of Dorset Council’s School’s finance team has been essential in bringing people together to source support for schools.

Context

Officers from the team work closely with school business managers and office support staff, alongside headteachers, to ensure that our schools are in the best possible financial position.

This year the Finance team have worked more closely with the ECL team to ensure that our work is aligned and to provide a streamlined approach for our maintained schools.

Examples of work

- Dorset Council has successfully secured School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) reviews for six schools during 2024-25 and there are four booked so far for 2025-26. These in-depth specialist reviews provide schools with clear action plans and efficiencies for improving the use of resources at no cost to the school or LA.
- The School Finance & Support team continues to hold schools to account for their spending, which has contributed to a fall in schools' total deficit balances by approximately 8% over 2024-25. (*Excluding an accounting issue in one school*)
- The Schools’ Finance team have issued three Notices of Finance Concern during the year and continue to work closely challenging and supporting schools to reach a financially sustainable position.
- Members of the school finance team attend Team Around the School (TAS) meetings for five schools currently to ensure financial objectives are balanced with maintaining quality of education. They work in partnership with ECLs to provide support and challenge to schools.
- The Finance team provide detailed guidance at budgeting and forecasting time to support schools in effective planning.
- The finance team have provided training for schools and created bespoke training to deliver an induction for three new Dorset maintained headteachers.

Case Study

Context: Dorset School ended 2023-24 with a deficit of £600,000.



Support Provided:

- Investigation into accounts and variances
- Technical accounting guidance on how to account for different income streams. Requiring them to remove their outreach costs and income from the school accounts reported as the income was providing false comfort and a lack of transparency in review of their financials.
- Collaborating with internal colleagues from accountancy and SAFSOs – setting up a regular monthly internal meeting to aid information sharing and ensure consistent messaging.
- Additional and enhanced monitoring
- Creating a bespoke cash forecasting tool to monitor and forecast cash effectively (the school had experienced third party payroll direct debits bounce).
- Escalating the need for a third-party review which took place in the summer term last year.
- Providing support but also holding the school to account and clearly setting expectations by sending a notice of financial concern signed by Executive directors.
- Attending governors' meetings.

Impact: This has led to the school reducing their deficit by over £140k during 2024-25. This positive outcome has been achieved while maintaining an excellent working relationship with the Head and school Business Manager, who are appreciative of our support and challenge.

Impact

- 29 school finance courses were run by the School Finance & Support team during 2024-25 with a total of 234 delegates attending. Ensuring schools are equipped to manage their school budgets effectively.
- “I wanted to say separately a thank you to your team who have put in the work around this. I know it was a significant piece of work and appreciate it.”
- ” Thank you for your ongoing support and advice through attending Governing Body meetings.”



Governance

In collaboration with Dorset Governor Services, the Education Challenge Leads work with governing bodies to support them in meeting their statutory duties.

Context

The Governor Services team have provided advice and support to the clerks and chairs. Advice has been about legal procedures and actions and advising on managing the relations and roles within governing bodies. Governor training has been delivered by ECLs including 'New to Governance and Understanding SEND as well as understanding Strategic vs Operational Leadership in the role of a governor.

Training events and face-to-face clerk and chairs meets are held covering a range of relevant and requested topics.

Based on feedback from this year, we are expanding our suite of governor training for 2025 – 2026.

Examples of work

- Working with the Chesil Collaboration: governor services officer/(s) have attended collaboration meetings each term to meet with Chairs and Heads to enable them to understand the challenges facing governors. Out of this came an invitation to attend a governing body meeting at each school. This has enabled officers to understand issues around recruitment of governors and build relationships with each board. Clerks have now asked officers to be involved in something similar for them.
- A Governor services officer has attended TAS meetings for a school in the West, which has led to supporting the chair with some procedural matters around appointing governors; attended FGB meeting to support with minute taking in the absence of the clerk; provided support with new governor induction and governor training; and most recently supporting with the recruitment of a new clerk.
- A secondary setting within the West received a full governor review in line with The School Governance Regulations 2013 document. This review involved interviewing all governors and key senior staff to assess the positive impact to date as well as to identify areas of development for the academic year ahead.
- ECLs have worked closely with governors to provide support for Governor Monitoring - specifically linked to Review, Progress and Monitor (RPM) cycles.
- An ECL has provided specific support for SEND support offering online training.
- One ECL has conducted safeguarding conversations alongside the headteacher and extended leadership team.
- Several schools have commissioned their ECL to work with governors as part of enhancement to their roles. This includes providing guidance and support linked to numerous areas dependent on school need and School Development Plan (SDP) priorities.
- ECLs have attended full governing body meetings by invite of SLT to better understand the context of the setting and to develop relationships with the wider school community.
- An overview of the Ofsted inspection process for management committees and governing bodies and how they can prepare and be ready at the point of inspection has been delivered in several schools. This has meant governors feel more secure in their understanding of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and how they can articulate the impact of their work with the lead HMI.
- Bespoke support provided to a school within Chesil where a variety of issues were being dealt with. Officer from governor services has attended all FGB meetings this year; liaised with the chair, both previous and new, and helped to build relationships with other governors and Headteacher; advised on procedural matters; been a supportive ear to the clerk; appointed 'additional governors' under the power detailed in the school causing concerns guidance.



- Improved communication with clerks and chairs due to the creation of a weekly newsletter. This notifies them of training, key updates and other pertinent information.
- Training and meetings provided:
 - New governor induction training termly
 - Chairs' Briefings
 - Clerks' Briefings
 - Training for new clerks
 - Suite of five finance courses termly
 - Bespoke ECL training for governors
 - Short course on the Nolan Principles and Good Governance

Impact

- Bespoke training has been offered to all locality areas and has given governors the opportunity to work together and access additional training beyond the National Governance Association (NGA) resources (this is necessary because not all schools choose to sign up to the NGA). This work is being built on for 2025 – 2026 with a brand-new suite of training being written and delivered by ECLs.

Local Alliance Group (LAG) funding

Local Alliance Groups include members who have a vested interest in making a difference in the lives of children and families. There are six local alliance groups in Dorset, each representing a different geographical area. The groups agree on priorities and create plans to improve things for children and young people in their local area.

Context

ECLs support schools to write and submit LAG funding bids to support maintained schools with different priority areas. In addition, ECLs also facilitate consortium bids in conjunction with external organisations, including charitable foundations.

Examples of work

- ECL helped complete a successful bid for a first school 'Outdoor Sensory Circuits for KS2' with outcomes expected following installation in 2025-26.
- ECLs supported The Colyton Foundation to successfully bid for funding to run the 'Your Future Story' programme across a number of Secondary schools in Chesil and the West. This is led by a coalition of leading universities, schools, and charities today and is a pioneering initiative designed to support high-attaining young people from under-resourced backgrounds across the South West to access top universities.
- LAG funding was used to fund a Peer Review project in the North.
- LAG funding was used to provide EBSA training across locality areas.

Case Study

Chickerell Camp

LAG funding was utilised to purchase resources to support schools hosting children from the Chickerell Camp. Items purchased and given to schools included:

- 7 EAL Toolkits from Mantra Lingua, including Talking Pens and bilingual books
- Beginner's schemes of work
- EAL Beginners Activity Packs
- Picture Dictionaries (KS1 and KS 2 and KS 3)
- Picture Dictionary activity Packs



- Communication games

In addition, training was signposted, and schools were sent information about webinars and resources from the Bell Foundation, including the EAL Assessment Framework. Schools with Chickerell camp pupils also accessed Specialist Teacher EAL training.



Impact

- Whilst this funding specifically supported schools to work with children speaking Dari and Pashto (Afghan children) the resources can be added to ensure other languages are also supported.
- “Just to say that the resources are working so well with the boys.”
- “They are exactly what we were looking for in terms of offering a structured scheme of learning.”
- “It is so useful having these resources and knowing about the EAL Assessment Framework. It has helped us to work with other EAL children also.”
- “Thank you so much for the amazing pack you have left for me in reception. It is going to have a big impact on the children's progress during their time with us.”
- “We are really enjoying using the resources – they are just what we need to work with the children while they are with us.”

Specialist Projects and Events

The ECLs are involved in the leadership and implementation of a large number of different projects.

Context

ECLs work in partnership with Dorset locality colleagues, external stakeholders and national organisations to develop and deliver a range of specialist projects and opportunities.

Examples of work

- Chesil Challenge activities – addressing educational disadvantage. Learning walks, support with action planning, pupil voice, oracy, staff questionnaire and strategies. The Chesil Challenge continues to provide support and challenge to all school involved, focusing on their disadvantaged strategy. After 5 successful in-person workshops, the work is now focused on a school level, with ECLs following up on action points.
- ECLs facilitated the Chesil Challenge - Addressing Educational Disadvantage CPD, this was delivered by Marc Rowland and Roy Blatchford.
- Working with St Osmund's Middle School (Wessex MAT) to offer relational learning walks has resulted in 27 teachers visiting St Osmund's this academic year, this work is based on the research of Paul Dix and closely aligns with Dorset priorities.
- Our Leaders Learning Day at Trinity Academy in Bristol saw eleven delegates from across maintained schools visit Trinity Academy to focus on how the school works with, and prioritises, disadvantaged learners. Councillors with the portfolio for education were also invited to attend this event.
- We are in the process of commencing work with ALPS and Post 16 collaborative learning and this will come into fruition in the next academic year.



- The PESSPA network event in July 2025 saw one hundred primary teachers from across Dorset and BCP come together to focus on boosting student engagement. PESSPA education and play provides innovative sports and learning programs that extend beyond the classroom, promoting well-being and academic achievement.
- One ECL presented our Dorset Disadvantage Strategy at our Dorset LEADs meeting and as part of the Careers Hub Conference.
- An ECL lead attended the DfE Attendance Conference and presented feedback during our in-person LEADs meeting.

Action Tutoring

Dorset Council has piloted the use of Action Tutoring for KS2 and KS4 and following on from this work, has secured funding to provide eligible LA maintained schools with a subsidy to take up Action Tutoring for KS2 (2025-2026). We are pleased to be able to offer eligible schools £3000 towards the total cost of the tutoring programme. There are seven eligible schools (six primary and one middle school in Dorset). The selection of schools was a decision based on Action Tutoring's criteria and programme offer. Each school will be offered the following programme:

- An online programme in maths, reading or both subjects with Year 6.
- For a Year 6 programme, the pupils will receive tutoring sessions in the autumn (the first session will take place over the first two weeks of October) and spring term. In the summer term we would run a Year 5 programme.
- The programme is for an hour a week, at the same time and day each week. This can be before, during or after the school day.
- Action Tutoring will provide a dedicated member of Action Tutoring staff to support the delivery of the programme virtually, supporting with technology and as an observer in each virtual classroom, to manage the group of volunteers, and to provide the school with feedback.
- Action Tutoring will run a baseline assessment in September, and a progress check around the February half term, so that support can be tailored to the pupils needs, and so that they can also provide each school with an impact report.
- Each high-quality, trained volunteer tutor works with three pupils on average.

Case Study

Beach Clean: The Climate Ambassadors programme, of which all ECLs are involved, is dedicated to fostering awareness and action on climate issues. As a climate ambassador the goal was to educate and empower the next generation to take active roles in environmental conservation. By involving students in this hands-on activity, we aimed to instil a sense of responsibility and urgency about protecting our natural environment, while also highlighting the tangible impact of waste on our local ecosystems. Together, we can make a significant difference and inspire lasting change.

Impact: ECLs are all trained as Climate Ambassadors. They can provide bespoke support to schools, alongside our South West Climate Ambassador team, to achieve the Department for Education's Climate Action Plan initiative.





Case Study

Chickerell Camp

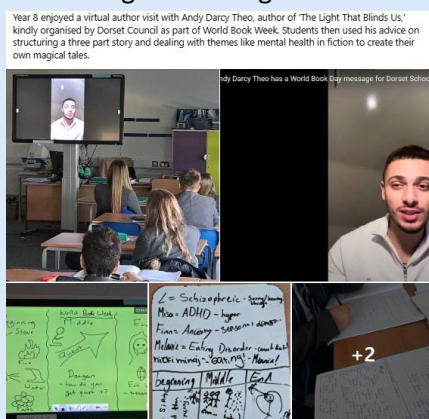
Afghan Nationals were moved to Chickerell Camp as part of a temporary housing scheme. The camp has accommodated families who were eligible to settle in the UK due to their contribution to UK objectives in Afghanistan. ECLs provided early support and education sessions for children, and they also provided education overview sessions for adults at the Chickerell Camp so that they could better understand the British Education system. When it became clear some families would be staying for longer than initially anticipated, ECLs worked with other Dorset Council (internal and external) stakeholders to place 170 children in local schools. The camp will be closing at the end of September and schools who have taken Afghan children from the camp have all expressed how much they've enjoyed having the children.

- "We've so enjoyed being a part of this scheme, I'm quite sad to hear that it's finishing."
- "Thank you for sharing this, I am sad to read this news, they are a key part of our family and we will miss them."
- "It has been a pleasure to support the children and families, and we would do so again - without hesitation."

Case Study

World Book Day

One ECL worked with Dorset Library Services to develop and facilitate an author event, this was hosted by Dorset Library Services. Over 6000 pupils signed in to join online for the primary session and the secondary session was pre-recorded with schools accessing this throughout the week.



Case Study

The Chesil Literacy Project



The Chesil Literacy Project is run by ECLs in collaboration with colleagues from Dorset Music Service. The group organised the Chesil Poetry and Music festival giving Year 5 children the opportunity to perform on the professional stage at Weymouth Pavilion. Classes had support from the Dorset Music Hub to bring a musical element into the performance. Children (with disadvantage) were selected to introduce their performance (giving them increased opportunity to develop their oracy skills). Twenty-one classes across Chesil took part and parents and carers were invited into the audience.



Feedback:

- “Just a quick note to say how impressed I was with how well the children performed at today’s performance at the Pavillion, and a big thank you to the teachers and Chesil literacy team for all the hard work and preparation that must have gone into it. And what a wonderful experience for the children to perform in a theatre.” – A parent.
- “From an Oracy and personal development perspective, this event had a significant impact on some of our children. From a child who has significant S&L needs but could stand and clearly deliver part of their poem alone; a selective mute who played a key role and participated throughout, and an autistic child who didn't want to participate at the beginning but then wanted to play an instrument, perform and even have a solo part! This shows why we do it and we were proud of the children and to be part of this fantastic event so thank you once again!” – A school teacher.

Case Study

Dorset Education Conference: 26th June 2025

The conference was opened with a wonderful performance of spoken words from children of a Weymouth primary school.

Conference objectives:

- *To be able to identify and analyse the systemic and socio-economic barriers that impact educational access and achievement for disadvantaged children*
- *To learn about evidence-based teaching and intervention strategies that have been shown to improve engagement and attainment among disadvantaged learners*

Keynote speaker: Marc Rowland

The keynote address focused on disadvantage through the lens of education. Marc referenced both national and Dorset specific context and talked about barriers and what works to overcome them (with reference to the Chesil Challenge work). To conclude, he spoke about potential next steps and what proactive things schools can do to meaningfully address the educational gap.

During the conference we also heard from Action Tutoring and two schools who worked with them this year (as part of a pilot scheme) and from The Engagement Platform (TEP) about the research and findings from their most recent published paper.

Impact:

- The event was widely praised for its positive atmosphere, smooth delivery, and impactful networking.



- Attendees appreciated the inclusion of young people, the quality of presentations, and the collaborative spirit.

Improvements:

- Raise the profile of this event and give school leaders more lead in time so that they can prioritise their attendance.

Case Study

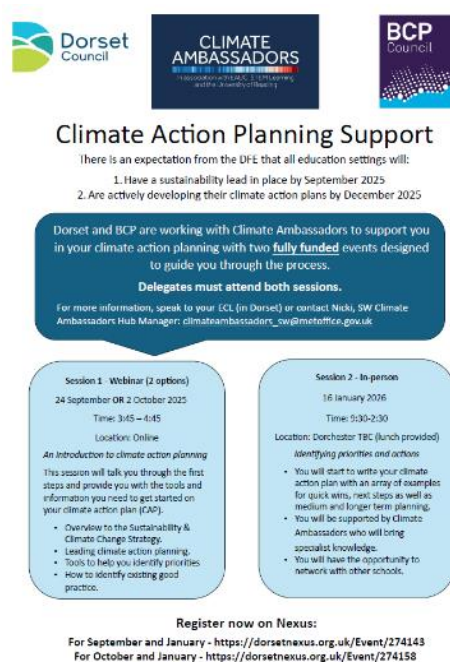
Dorset SACRE:

SACRE Locally Agreed Syllabus Launch and SACRE work have been a priority this year for the ECL Lead. The Locally Agreed syllabus for 2025-2030 was launched in the Spring Term (which was the culmination of 12 months of planning), with over 80 delegates in attendance. A restructured role for the RE Adviser for SACRE and significant work on developing a SACRE website has taken place, providing a platform for all of Dorset SACRE's work.

The launch of the new Common Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2025-2030 has been a success. All schools and academies across Dorset have received a hardbound copy of the new syllabus and were invited to a full day's training to support the implementation of the new curriculum. 82 schools attended this training. A new SACRE website is now in operation along with further annual training for leaders of RE, in addition to more structured guidance in operation around the role and functions of Dorset SACRE.

Impact

- All schools have been invited to attend Climate Action planning training taking place in Autumn (2025) and Spring (2026).



Dorset Council **CLIMATE AMBASSADORS** **BCP Council**

Climate Action Planning Support

There is an expectation from the DfE that all education settings will:

1. Have a sustainability lead in place by September 2025
2. Be actively developing their climate action plans by December 2025

Dorset and BCP are working with Climate Ambassadors to support you in your climate action planning with two **fully funded** events designed to guide you through the process.

Delegates must attend both sessions.

For more information, speak to your ECL (in Dorset) or contact Nicki, SW Climate Ambassadors Hub Manager: climateambassadors_sw@metoffice.gov.uk

Session 1 - Webinar (2 options)	Session 2 - In-person
24 September OR 2 October 2025	16 January 2026
Time: 3:45 – 6:45	Time: 9:30-2:30
Location: Online	Location: Dorchester TBC (lunch provided)
An introduction to climate action planning This session will take you through the first steps and provide you with the tools and information you need to get started on your climate action plan (CAP). • Overview to the Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy. • Leading climate action planning. • Tools to help you identify priorities. • How to identify existing good practice.	Identifying priorities and actions • You will start to write your climate action plan with an array of examples for quick wins, next steps as well as medium and longer term planning. • You will be supported by Climate Ambassadors who will bring specialist knowledge. • You will have the opportunity to network with other schools.

Register now on Nexus:
 For September and January - <https://dorsetnexus.org.uk/Event/274143>
 For October and January - <https://dorsetnexus.org.uk/Event/274158>

ECL involvement in specialist projects will continue and this will provide additional opportunities for our maintained schools.

Next Steps 2025 – 2026

- Adoption and implementation of policy changes: New Ofsted Framework, Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, Curriculum and Assessment review, expected SEND white paper.
- Commencing our project work with ALPS and Post 16 collaborative learning.
- Commence plans to work towards a Dorset Smart Phone strategy – a task and finish group has been set up and the key priority areas of work decided.



- Development work with the governor services team to strengthen our training offer including the delivery of a new training suite.
- Launch of a new programme focused on Rights and Responsibilities.
- Climate Ambassador programme (in line with the Department for Education's initiative).
- Specialist Projects: monitor and develop our partnership work with Action Tutoring, The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Impact Ed (The Engagement Platform – TEP) and the PSHE Association. We have offered paid membership of the PSHE Association to all maintained schools, along with a significant contribution for TEP sign up. Along with this, we are also offering funded annual membership to OnlineSCR – a fully digital Single Central Record platform, which streamlines this crucial process. As ever, we will collect and analyse feedback from our maintained schools to determine the impact and value of these.
- Preparations for the 2026 Education Conference.
- Key Stage 2 Steering Group with Trust leaders.
- Detailed granular analysis of Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 outcomes for Dorset (identifying patterns/trends and considering how we can link schools to share best practice and further improve outcomes).
- We will focus on suspension and exclusion data. ECL will conduct a detailed analysis to identify key insights and opportunities to improve systems and processes. We will utilise data from the Virtual School, which will inform our practice and support efforts to reduce suspensions.
- Expansion of the Headteacher Appraisal service
- Development of the Chesil Regeneration project in partnership with the Economic Growth and Infrastructure Team (Weymouth 2040).

