

Dorset Schools' Forum

Date of Meeting:	26 September 2026
Report Title:	Section 19 policy 2025/26
Executive Director:	Paul Dempsey, Executive Director for People - Children
Corporate Director:	Alice Deacon, Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships
Report Author: Title: Tel: Email:	Miriam Leigh (Head of Children Thriving in Education) miriam.leigh@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Ellen Eager (Sufficiency & Funding Manager)
Presenting Officer:	Miriam Leigh (Head of Children Thriving in Education)
Report Status:	Public
Reason for Submission to Schools' Forum:	For CONSULTATION Under Forum power/responsibility: 2D)III Such other matters concerning the funding of schools which the LA sees fit, including: 1. high needs block provision; 2. central licences negotiated by the Secretary of State; 3. funding of brought forward deficits.
Recommendation(s):	That, members take note of the following. A. The legal responsibilities of the LA and schools B. The funding arrangements for alternative provision

Reason for Recommendation(s):	To provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities for schools, families, and professionals. Ensure transparency and consistency in decision-making. Demonstrate compliance with statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). Provide a framework for managing referrals, funding, and reintegration.
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	Schools' Forum members are reminded of their responsibility to make a declaration of interest in any agenda item in which they have an interest, to the Chair or the Clerk, preferably in advance of the meeting.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction/Background

Dorset Council's Section 19 Policy outlines its statutory and strategic commitment to ensuring that children and young people who cannot attend school due to health needs, permanent exclusion, or other exceptional circumstances receive suitable education. This policy supports the Council's ambition for inclusive education as set out in the **Children, Young People and Families Plan 2023–33** and the **Education Strategy: Best Education For All 2024–2027**.

1.2 Why is it important?

There has been a growing number of children and young people where families are reporting emotionally based school avoidance or other family circumstances resulting in anxiety or school-based trauma.

Children unable to attend school face significant risks to their education, wellbeing, and social development. These include:

- Long-term or intermittent physical and mental health conditions.
- Exclusion from school.
- Situations where existing schooling is inaccessible.
- Children not currently on a school roll.

The policy identifies a need for **early intervention, multi-agency collaboration**, and **tailored educational support** to address these challenges.

1.3 Local Authority Responsibilities

Under **Section 19 of the Education Act 1996**, Dorset Council must:

- Arrange suitable full-time or part-time education for affected children.
- Act promptly when notified of absences exceeding 15 days.
- Provide education via Learning Centres or alternative provision.
- Safeguard children and promote reintegration.
- Coordinate with schools, health services, and families.
- Manage funding transfers and commissioning.
- Support children not on roll and those with EHCPs.

1.4 School Responsibilities

Schools are expected to:

- Support pupils with medical needs under statutory duties.
- Use a graduated approach to assess and meet needs.

- Develop and review **Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs)**.
- Refer cases to the Council with appropriate medical evidence.
- Host and lead review meetings with alternative providers.
- Maintain pupils on roll and ensure continuity of education.
- Collaborate with external agencies and contribute to reintegration plans.
- Notify the Council via the **ACE portal** when long-term absence is anticipated.

1.5 Funding Implications

Funding arrangements include:

- Budget reductions for excluding schools under Section 47 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
- Pro-rata funding transfers from home schools to alternative provision.
- Use of EHCP banding and other funding factors (e.g. FSM, EAL, IDACI) to calculate support costs.

Dorset Council **may** assume full financial responsibility if reintegration is not possible after a full academic year.

1.6 Conclusion

Dorset Council's Section 19 Policy provides a comprehensive framework to ensure that children unable to attend school receive high-quality, inclusive education. It emphasizes **shared accountability**, **timely intervention**, and **collaborative planning** to minimize disruption and support successful reintegration into education settings.

2. Financial Implications

The table below shows the mainstream school contribution for Dual Registered pupils wef September 2024 as communicated on 28 March 2024. The updated columns for 2025-26 include the comparable amounts for 2025-26 with NFF uplift and pay grants included. There is no proposal to increase school contribution for September 2025, but this will be reviewed for September 2026.

Mainstream school funding formula element per pupil	2025-26		2024-25		Notes
	Primary £	Secondary £	Primary £	Secondary £	
Basic Entitlement (Age Weighted Pupil Unit / AWPUP)	3,833	5,878	3,532	5,385	36% of pupils placed in learning centres across Dorset are KS3 and 64% are KS4 (average Jan & May 23 census), therefore secondary contribution is 36% of £4,980 KS3 Basic entitlement value plus 64% of £5,613 KS4 Basic entitlement value.
English as an additional language	-	-	-	-	Dorset secondary schools <1% EAL
Low prior attainment	1,175	1,785	1,170	1,775	100% of mainstream values
FSM	312	312	328	328	67% of pupils on average across Dorset learning centres per Jan & May 2023 census are entitled to a free school meal, therefore 67% of the FSM/FSM6 formula values are applied. 63% for May 2025 census.
FSM6	668	980	549	804	
IDACI Band E	285	450	285	450	100% IDACI E as previously applied
TOTAL	6,273	9,404	5,865	8,742	
TOTAL school contribution	-	-	5,800	8,700	
Per day	-	-	29.74	44.62	

3. Well-being and Health implications

N/A

4. Climate Implications

N/A

5. Other implications

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6. Risk Assessment

N/A

7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

N/A

8. Appendices

Appendix A: Approved section 19 policy 2025/2026

9. Background Papers

[Education Act 1996](#) section 19

[Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)

[Arranging Alternative Provision - guide for LAs and schools](#)

Footnote: [Please do not delete this footnote](#)

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Note: [it is the report author's responsibility to ensure the report satisfies the above conditions.](#)