

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Before completing this EqIA please ensure you have read the EqIA Guidance Notes

Title	School Admissions Policies and Co-ordinated Schemes		
Date assessment started:	1.9.19	Version No:	v.9
		Date of completion:	22.11.19
Revision	1.11.22	13.11.23	29.10.24
21.10.25			

Type of Strategy, Policy, Project or Service:

Is this Equality Impact Assessment (please put a cross in the relevant box)

Existing:	☒	Changing, update or revision:	☐
New or proposed:	☐	Other (please explain):	☐

Is this Equality Impact Assessment (please put a cross in the relevant box)

Internal:	☐	External:	☒	Both:	☐
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Step 1: Aims

What are the aims of your strategy, policy, project or service?
The suite of Admissions Policies for review are as follows: 1. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2027-2028. 2. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2027-2028 3. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-2028 4. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-2028 5. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-2028 6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2027-2028 7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2027-2028 8. Armed Forces Policy 2027-2028 Each Local Authority (LA) must have a suite of policies that deal with: a) The allocation of places to LA maintained schools for whom they are the Admissions Authority.

- b) The process of managing the statutory duty to co-ordinate allocation of places at the 5 different points of entry for all Dorset Schools, maintained, voluntary aided, academy and free schools.
- c) Ensuring that the Statutory Timelines laid out in the Admissions Code are met.
- d) The process of managing in year applications for LA maintained schools and ensuring co-ordination with other own admission authorities.
- e) Ensuring that there are clear processes for the allocation of places into the maintained nurseries as well as places at the maintained Sixth Forms.
- f) Ensuring that children of Service Personnel are treated fairly and equitably in the context of the dynamics of service life.
- g) Ensuring that there is suitable co-ordination with the Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND) Team to provide children with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP's) a smooth entry or transition to their new school in compliance with the School Admissions Code and the SEND Code of Practice.

The policies ensure that the allocation of places is fair, clear and objective and that parents can look at the admissions arrangements and understand easily how places for a school will be allocated.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

The School Admissions Code, issued by the Department for Education (DFE) in September 2021, pertains to the duties laid out under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (SSFA 1998).

Dorset Council (DC) is both an Admissions Authority and a Co-ordinating Authority and the SSFA 1998 details statutory duties for the LA with regards to both of these functions.

As an admissions authority, the LA is required to publish its Admissions Arrangements for all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools dealing with the Pupil Admissions Number and the criteria for the allocation of places when there are more applications than there are places.

As the co-ordinating authority, the LA is required to publish a timetable and the details of accompanying processes to ensure that all applications by Dorset residents for school places are processed appropriately. All Dorset residents also need to be informed on the relevant National Offer Day of their school place whether for a Dorset school or any other state-funded school in England and Wales.

Also as the co-ordinating authority, DC has the duty to ensure that there are systems in place for parents to submit in year applications into the Local Authority, even where the school is its own admission authority.

Step 2: Intelligence and Communication

What data, information, evidence and research was used in this EqIA and how has it been used to inform the decision-making process?

The Admissions Arrangements have been consulted on every year, as per the LA's statutory duty. These consultations have involved all schools in Dorset, through the schools - all parents of both preschool and statutory school age, all neighbouring local authorities, the Ministry of Defence and the Salisbury Diocese Board of Education.

Each year a review of appeal decisions is undertaken where a family has gained a place at a preference school to ensure that decisions are not based on a) deficiencies in the

admissions arrangements, b) deficiencies in the co-ordination processes managed by the LA or c) the occurrence of discriminatory practices by the Admissions Team

A key indicator in the robustness of the admissions arrangements and the co-ordinated scheme is evidenced by the fact that 93% of primary applications receive their first preference and 97% of secondary applications receive their first preference.

In the 2022-2023 academic year the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) reviewed Dorset Council Admissions Arrangements and identified various areas that needed to be revised – including information on Summer Born Pupils, clarity on admission of children with Education Health and Care Plans. The policies were subsequently reviewed and changed on the basis of these findings in order to ensure compliance with the latest 2021 DFE Admissions Code.

What data do you already have about your service users, or the people your proposal will have an impact on?

These policies will impact on all families in the Local Authority area several times as a child passes through the education system.

Each year the LA will manage approximately 5100 applications into the three points of entry across the primary age phase and approximately 4100 applications across the two points of entry in the secondary age phase.

The Local Authority has the following number of mainstream places to allocate:

4544 Reception places into First, Infant and Primary Schools;
186 Year 3 places into Infant Schools;
1361 into Middle Schools;
2516 into Year 7 Secondary Schools;
1125 into Year 9 Upper Schools.

In terms of applications, those aged four at the first of September the year prior to school entry may make an application for a reception place. Those aged six years at the September prior to transfer into a Junior School and are attending an Infant School are required to make an application.

Those aged eight in the September prior to transfer to Middle School and attending a First School in Year 4 will have to make a transfer application into Year 5. Those aged 10 years and attending a primary school in Year 6 will have to make an application for a Year 7 secondary place. Those aged 12 and attending a Middle School in Year 8 will have to make an application for a Year 9 Upper School for the following September.

Those attending Year 6 in Primary and Middle Schools could also apply to enter the Grammar School system in Year 7.

Any child may apply at any time to change school or to transfer to another school at a point of entry as long as they fulfil the age cohort criteria or are applying under the Chronological Age Range Guidance.

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this EqIA?

The policies are consulted on each year, regardless of whether there are minor or significant changes. The nature and process of the consultation is detailed in the statutory guidance within the Admissions Code. This includes a six week period of consultation between the 1 October and 31 January. The code then requires that a Local Authority 'determines' their arrangements. For Dorset Council this entails a paper to People Scrutiny Committee (PSC) and their decision is then ratified by Cabinet.

LA admissions team officers engage in a range of forums with other admissions officers in the South West working to interrogate admissions systems and ensure compliance with the Admissions Code.

In the last five years of the annual consultation, the admissions arrangements and the accompanying documentation around the Co-ordinated Scheme have only ever elicited one response. This concerns the prioritising of siblings who don't live in catchment, over children who do live in catchment. This was reviewed and it was deemed inappropriate to alter the prioritisation to place out of catchment siblings as a higher criteria in the oversubscription list.

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

Not at this time.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

All consultees will be informed that the arrangements have been determined (which must take place by the 28 February), and they are then published by the statutory deadline of the 15 March.

All consultees will be informed of their right to raise objections with the OSA by the deadline of the 15 May.

Step 3: Assessment

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

- If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:

- Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the 'Please provide details' box.

Positive Impact	• Positive impact on a large proportion of protected characteristic groups • Significant positive impact on a small proportion of protect characteristics group
Negative Impact	• Disproportionate impact on a large proportion of protected characteristic groups • Significant disproportionate impact on a small proportion of protected characteristic groups.
Neutral Impact	• No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Age:	<i>Neutral</i>
What age bracket does this affect?	The Admissions Arrangements for a statutory school place clearly define the relevant age groups who need to apply. Those who turn four years old in the September are required to make an application for entry into school the following September, if they wish to have a state maintained school place. All those in Year 2 of an Infant School (of which there are three in Dorset) are required to make an application into a Junior School. All those in Year 4 at a First school are required to make an application for a Year 5 place usually in a Middle School. All those in Year 6 in a Primary school are required to make an application for a place in Year 7 usually in a Secondary school. All those in Year 8 of a Middle school are required to make an application for a Year 9 place usually in an Upper School.
Please provide details:	Applications are restricted to these age ranges for point of entry. The policy around the admissions of a child outside of their chronological cohort provides families with information should they wish to vary these normal entry points for children born after 1 April. These families may delay entry into Reception until the child is five years old.

Disability:	<i>Positive</i>
Does this affect a specific disability group?	Any child with an Education, Health & Care Plan regardless of the condition the plan is designed to support, is afforded specific protections within the Admissions Code and the SEND Code of Practice.
Please provide details:	Any child with an Education, Health & Care Plan has to be admitted to their school of choice and is the highest criteria in the admissions arrangements. The LA Admission Team work with the SEND team to ensure that all children with EHCP's are identified in a timely manner and are allocated a place at their preferred school, and that schools are made aware of the allocation. In addition, the Dorset Admissions Arrangements also allows the identification of children with disabilities or medical conditions (but who do not have an EHCP) to be given a higher criterion and thus a greater priority to secure a place at their preferred school. The allocation of this criteria will take place when that school is the most appropriate setting for that child and where other schools may not have the physical infrastructure to be able to fully support a child's disabilities. Dorset Admissions Arrangements also look to give a high criteria to a child whose sibling, through an EHCP plan, is allocated a place at a resourced provision in a mainstream school and where the family

	would want the next child to attend the same school but they would not have a high enough criteria to secure a place through the normal processes.
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Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	The Admissions Arrangements and the accompanying co-ordinated scheme do require the applicant to declare their gender as is at birth. Dorset Admissions welcomes school applications from all Dorset children regardless of gender-identity. The request to submit gender details in an application is put in place as for points of transfer Dorset Admissions can receive an application for any school in England and Wales, some of which are single-sex establishments. Should an applicant wish to state a preference for one of these schools, the maintaining local authority requires this information. The admission arrangements for non-Dorset single-sex schools are available from that maintaining local authority or from the school itself. Dorset does not have single-sex schools and welcomes an application to any age appropriate school regardless of gender identity.

Pregnancy and maternity:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	(Does not apply to the directly affected group i.e. children, however contextual details are given for parents) Parental Support: - Dorset Council runs a catchment-based school allocation system that ensures that each address is identified within the catchment of a particular school, more often than not, the closest school. Advice to parents and the detail within the co-ordinated processes suggest to parents to always name the catchment school as one of their three preferences. This ensures that families have a high chance of accessing the local community school. Sibling criteria is also given prominence ensuring that families are able in the majority of cases get children into the same school. Special protection is afforded to twins, where the stipulation that only 30 children can be placed in a class for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, can be waived. Where a twin is the 30th allocated place, the Admissions Code allows the admission of the other twin as a 31st child with the school not needing to take qualifying measures (e.g. employing an additional teacher).

Race and Ethnicity:	<i>Neutral</i>
Please provide details:	The admissions process does not ask and indeed is not allowed to ask for race or ethnicity data and thus the allocation of places is undertaken without knowledge of a child's ethnicity or race. Applications are accepted from the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller Community as long as the home location at the time of the application is identifiable. The Admissions Team do not require documentation to verify the status of the accommodation.

Religion or belief:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	Schools are permitted to have a religious character and within their admissions arrangements can legally prioritise those who adhere to that faith for places in their school. Schools are required to have and publish a supplementary information form that families can submit if they wish to be considered under the religious admissions criteria of the school. The religious nature of the school does not prohibit applications from those who do not adhere to the relevant faith, and it is clearly articulated in the admissions arrangements the order of criteria for the allocation of places. Families who do not wish their children to attend a school with a religious character are at liberty to name other local schools that are identified as Community Schools. Should a place at a school with a religious character be the only reasonable option, families are permitted to withdraw their child from any activity that the family feels is of a religious character.

Sexual orientation:	<i>Neutral</i>
Please provide details:	The admissions process does not ask and indeed is not allowed to ask for information on sexual orientation and thus the allocation of places is undertaken without knowledge of this characteristic. All schools will support a child or young person regardless of their sexual orientation.

Sex:	<i>Neutral</i>
Please provide details:	Declaration of sex is required as applicants could be applying for any school in England and Wales, which includes many single-sex institutions. This information is disregarded when allocating places at co-educational institutions. Dorset only has co-educational institutions.

Marriage or civil partnership:	<i>Neutral</i>
Please provide details:	The only stipulation is that the applicant (applying on behalf of the child) has to be able to show that they have 'Parental Responsibility'

	(PR) for the child or young person regardless of any relationship status. Therefore marriage, civil partnership status or otherwise of the applicant is not used as part of the decision-making process.
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Carers:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	Dorset's catchment area structure looks to support families to access their local school, usually a significant factor for a Young Carer. Invariably applications to the catchment school will be successful at the point of entry. The Admissions Arrangements do support, where other professionals deem it appropriate, that Young Carers are given a Category Two criteria (Social or Medical Need) to ensure that the most appropriate school is allocated to a registered carer should a place not be allocated under the normal processes.

Rural isolation:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	The Dorset catchment area structure ensures that regardless of distance, all families have a higher criterion to their catchment school. This protects families in the rural areas of Dorset and ensures they can gain a place at their local school. This does not prevent a family from expressing a preference for other schools.

Single parent families:	<i>Neutral</i>
Please provide details:	The relationship status of any parent is not documented as part of the admissions process. The catchment area structure again favours local families gaining places at local schools, which would support single parent families. The sibling criteria also lends further support to families and single parents in accessing local school places.

Poverty (social & economic deprivation):	<i>Neutral</i>
Please provide details:	By law no requests for information on the social and economic background of an applicant is permitted with the exception of those who are in receipt of Pupil Premium. The Admissions Code does permit the use of pupil premium in limited circumstances to determine school place allocation. Dorset School Admissions Arrangements do not yet include this criterion.

	Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children are permitted to submit applications beyond the statutory national deadlines and they are deemed to have the highest criteria for a school place after children with EHCP's.
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Military families/veterans:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	The Armed Forces Policy ensures that where service families may have posting instructions that are to a military base but the family do not have a home address, the admissions team may use the posting order and base address to allocate a school place. The Armed Forces Policy also allows late applications into schools to be considered at the National Offer Day or a school is permitted to breach Infant Class Size (ICS) to accommodate a service child who could not submit an on-time application because of changes to a service parent's posting. The policy also allows service families (and those of crown servants) to apply in advance for an in-year place to ensure they have a clear pathway into education when moving into an area or returning from an overseas posting.

Step 4: Action Plan

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action	Person(s) responsible	Deadline	How will it be monitored?
Annual Review	A new review and consultation to take place in Autumn 2026 for September 2028 admission arrangements	Ed Denham or successor	January 31 2027	Any changes and consultation will be documented through submissions to PSC and Cabinet
Review of DFE Admissions Code	DC Admissions will review any new guidance or code when received.	Ed Denham or successor	Determined by DFE	Any changes and consultation will be documented through submissions to PSC and Cabinet

Step 5: EqlA Sign Off

Officer completing this EqlA:	Ed Denham	Date:	29.11.19 – Revised 29.10.2024
Equality Lead:		Date:	
Relevant Focus Groups*:		Date:	
Directorate Board Chair:		Date:	

* To include Diversity Action Groups