

# Dorset LEADS

Leaders in Education Across Dorset - Working in partnership



# School Improvement – Impact Report 2025-2026

## Lead Officer

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| Lisa Gray – Head of Service, Best Education for All<br>Submitted 11 <sup>th</sup> September 2026 |
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## Purpose

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| <p>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 to maintained schools.</p> |
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| <p>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.</p> |
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## Ofsted preparation and Inspection support

Education Challenge Leads (ECLs) provide support to Headteachers and wider school leadership teams in the lead up to, and during, Ofsted inspections.

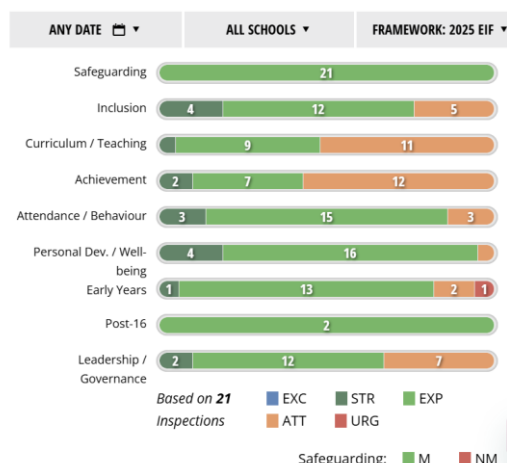
### Context

- Supporting school leaders to develop a clear understanding of the revised 2025 Ofsted framework and subsequent updates, enabling them to effectively prepare for and respond to inspection requirements.
- Providing ongoing training and development for governing bodies to strengthen their understanding of the revised framework, inspection expectations and their role in demonstrating effective governance during inspection.
- Working closely with school leaders before, during and after inspection to provide appropriate support and challenge, including facilitating reflection on outcomes and supporting the development of post-Ofsted action plans where required.
- Collaborating with Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) colleagues to coordinate support for schools identified as 'Needs Attention' or below, ensuring that improvement activity is aligned, timely and responsive to individual school contexts.
- Ensuring school leaders remain informed of key national and local developments through a range of communication and engagement channels, including the Education Bulletin, LEADS Touchdown meetings and LEADS in-person events.

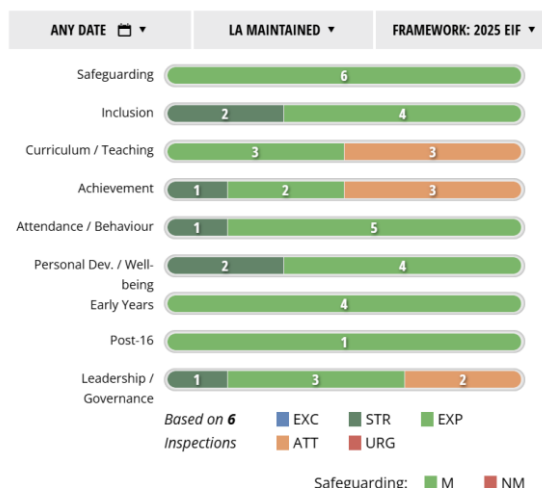
### Supporting Information

#### All Dorset Schools – 21 Inspections

OFSTED



#### LA Maintained Schools



### Impact

- Education Challenge Leads (ECL's) provide additional capacity to school leadership teams and governing boards, offering strategic support and challenge. They also contribute to the inspection process through discussions with Ofsted inspectors, providing valuable evidence and an informed external perspective on a school's improvement journey.
- Through the targeted support and challenge provided by the ECL, one maintained secondary school and one middle school have, to date, achieved a strong standard judgement. This represents one of the highest outcomes currently awarded through the inspection framework and reflects the significant progress made by these schools.
- Governors report increased confidence in undertaking their roles during inspection, citing the high-quality training and support provided by ECLs as instrumental in strengthening their understanding of accountability, school improvement and inspection expectations.
- Partnership working between ECLs, schools and RISE advisers (where involved) has been positive and constructive. Schools have benefited from a collaborative approach which combines local



knowledge with external expertise, while ensuring appropriate consideration is given to the Dorset context.

## Curriculum - Maths and English

ECLs provide specialist curriculum support across a range of subject areas, drawing on national research, evidence-informed practice, curriculum auditing tools and robust review processes to support schools in evaluating provision, identifying priorities for development and securing sustained improvement.

### Context

Curriculum reviews are undertaken with schools in line with identified School Development Plan (SDP) priorities. These reviews often involve ECLs working directly with subject leaders and link governors to strengthen their understanding of curriculum implementation, evaluate impact, identify areas for development, and agree clear next steps to support ongoing school improvement.

### Examples of work

- The lead ECL facilitated a programme of English professional development for Dorset schools, delivered by Hampshire colleagues and funded by the Local Authority, supporting schools to strengthen curriculum leadership and improve outcomes in English.
- The Dorset STA Assessment Lead coordinated the statutory moderation of Key Stage 2 writing, the Phonics Screening Check and Key Stage 2 SATs administration visits, ensuring that the Local Authority met its statutory assessment and moderation responsibilities.
- Subject networks for both English and mathematics have been established, providing opportunities for school leaders to collaborate, share effective practice and engage with national and local developments.
- ECL representation on the Ramsbury English Hub Strategic Board provides governance, strategic challenge and oversight of the Hub's work. In addition, engagement with the Cornerstones English Hub has secured bespoke support for Dorset schools and helped maximise uptake of the full programme of support available.
- A strong relationship has been established with the Jurassic Maths Hub Strategic Board, enabling Dorset schools to benefit from additional challenge, support and opportunities for professional development, whilst ensuring that local priorities are reflected within wider strategic discussions.

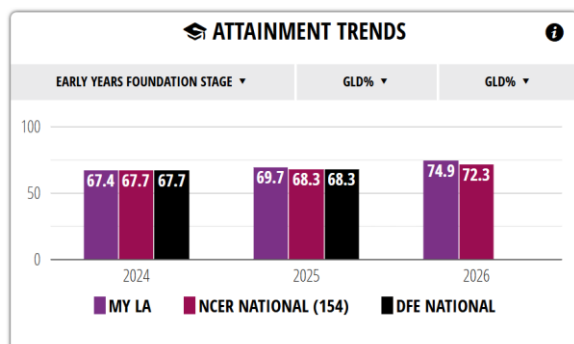
### Impact

- A comprehensive programme of English professional development was delivered to 20 Dorset schools, with Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers participating in a series of focused training sessions to strengthen classroom practice and improve pupil outcomes.
- Phonics outcomes have increased from 79.4% in the previous year to 84.2% in 2026, representing an improvement of more than five percentage points and placing Dorset above national averages.
- English Subject Leader network meetings engaged 30 leaders, providing opportunities to share effective practice, strengthen subject leadership and respond to local and national priorities.
- Dorset has seen a sustained improvement in Key Stage 2 English outcomes over the past three years. Reading outcomes have increased from 73.2% to 75.0%, writing from 68% to 72%, and grammar, punctuation and spelling from 68.1% to 72.0% (these results are provisional), reflecting the impact of continued investment in curriculum development and professional learning.
- Mathematics Subject Leader network meetings were attended by 14 leaders, strengthening collaboration and supporting the sharing of effective practice across schools. This work has coincided with an upward trend in Key Stage 2 mathematics outcomes, rising from 67.5% in 2024 to 73% in 2026.

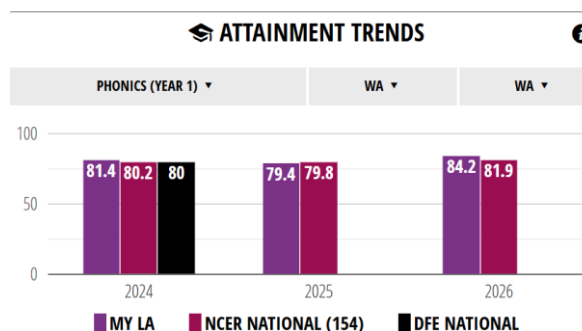


- Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) outcomes improved this year by 3 percentage points to 60%. We are still 3% below national, but closing the gap.
- Targeted professional development programmes, including Strong Foundations in Key Stage 1 (20 participants), On Track for Year 6 (12 participants) and Writing Standardisation training (14 participants), have supported teachers to improve classroom practice and assessment accuracy.
- EYFS Profile training attracted 29 practitioners and has supported continued improvements in outcomes. Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes have increased from 67.4% to 74.9% over the last three years.
- All Dorset secondary schools now have access to the enhanced support available through the English Hub programme. This provides additional opportunities to strengthen literacy provision and aligns with preparation for forthcoming national developments, including the introduction of the Year 8 reading assessment.
- Within the secondary phase, English and mathematics middle leaders have continued to collaborate through network opportunities to share best practice, discuss strategies for supporting all learners and prepare for anticipated curriculum and assessment reforms.
- Provisional GCSE outcomes indicate further improvements in attainment, with English Grade 4+ increasing by two percentage points to 73% and mathematics Grade 4+ increasing by two percentage points to 70%. National comparison data is not yet available at the time of writing, but we expect to remain just below National.
- Partnership working with the Jurassic Maths Hub has strengthened the identification of schools requiring support, ensuring that available resources and programmes are targeted effectively and informed by local intelligence and need.

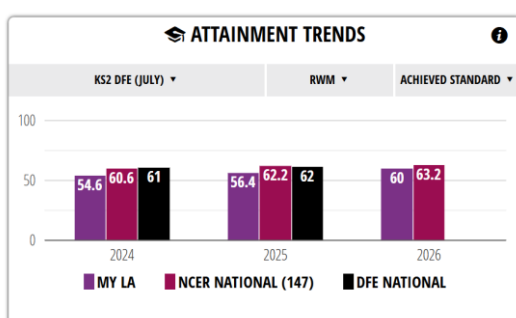
### GLD – 3 year upward trend



### Phonics – upward trend



### KS2 Combined – upward trend



## Inclusion & Belonging

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

### Context



ECLs work collaboratively with schools, locality teams, Educational Psychologists (EPs), Specialist Teachers, Inclusion Leads and the Virtual School to support the delivery of Dorset's SEND, Belonging and Attendance Strategy. Through this partnership approach, schools are supported to strengthen inclusive practice, remove barriers to learning and participation, and ensure that all children and young people feel valued, included and able to thrive within their school community.

#### Examples of work

- Embedding of VSEND including development of the reporting tool
- Development of Attendance Strategy with the Virtual School
- Signposting to the Attendance and Behaviour Hubs for secondaries.
- Attendance and Behaviour subject network meetings have been established across the secondary maintained collaboration.
- Peer Mentor training to several secondary schools as part of supporting transition from Year 6 into Year 7.
- Providing curriculum support for inclusion hubs (specialist resource provisions) in schools. Some of these are informal, as well as our formal LA funded hubs.

#### Impact

- Valuing SEND (VSEND) will be a key enabler for Dorset's SEND Reform implementation, providing a consistent picture of children and young people's needs alongside the readiness of settings to meet them. Building on strong engagement in 2025/26, with 282 users across 230 schools and settings and 580 CYP profiles created, VSEND will support earlier identification, targeted deployment of the Universal and Expertise Offers, stronger school moves and more evidence-informed commissioning. Its data will also contribute to the Integrated SEND Dashboard, helping the Local Authority identify variation, target resources and demonstrate the impact of reform on inclusion, early intervention and reduced escalation to statutory provision.
- At a secondary level Attendance and Behaviour Leads have the opportunity to share best practice and discuss how they support all students within their settings, as well as working together to address ongoing concerns and priorities.
- Peer mentoring in schools has supported identified students in Year 7 throughout the academic year. Specific work has focussed around securing and improving attendance and adapting to the demands of secondary school life.
- Ofsted have reported positively on all the inclusion hubs that we have supported, so far: e.g 'The specialist resource hub is a particular strength. It provides an individualised and nurturing curriculum for pupils with complex needs. Staff use detailed knowledge of pupils' sensory needs to shape routines and learning activities, helping them feel secure and re-engage positively with learning. Pupils thrive in this provision, developing their communication, confidence and independence.' Maintained Primary School.

### Headteacher and Senior Leadership Recruitment

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

#### Context

ECLs have played a key role in supporting the recruitment of new Headteachers, working alongside governing bodies and Diocesan representatives where appropriate. This has included providing guidance on recruitment processes, advising on selection activities and interview questions, and supporting governors throughout the appointment process.

Ongoing support to Chairs of Governors and governing boards has helped ensure that recruitment processes are robust, compliant with statutory requirements and informed by best practice, enabling governors to make well-evidenced leadership appointments with confidence.



### Examples of work

- 7 Primary schools had recruitment supported by ECLs
- 2 Special Schools had Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher support provided by an ECL

### Impact

- The majority of schools have substantive headteachers in place for September. Where substantive appointments have not been possible, appropriate interim leadership arrangements have been secured to ensure continuity, stability and effective leadership aligned to the needs of the school.
- Succession planning and leadership development have enabled several strong middle leaders to progress into senior leadership positions within their current schools, strengthening leadership capacity and supporting workforce sustainability.
- Governors have been equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources required to undertake headteacher recruitment processes effectively, enabling them to make informed decisions and fulfil their statutory responsibilities with confidence.

## Leadership

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

### Context

ECLs have provided tailored support to school leaders through informal coaching, peer-to-peer networking opportunities and facilitated visits to other schools. Drawing on national research, local intelligence and evidence-informed practice, ECLs have supported leaders to develop and implement effective strategies to improve outcomes for specific groups of pupils, including those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), pupils receiving SEN Support and those with SEND.

This has been complemented by the design and delivery of bespoke professional development and the sharing of best practice across the Dorset school system.

### Examples of work

- LEADS Touchdown meetings and termly in-person LEADS events provide a well-established forum for communication, collaboration and professional dialogue, enabling school leaders to engage with key local and national developments and contribute to strategic discussions.
- The LEADS in-person programme has continued to evolve, ensuring meetings are purposeful, strategically focused and aligned to the priorities of Dorset schools and the wider education system.
- The weekly Digital Education Bulletin provides school leaders with timely updates, key information and guidance, supporting effective communication across the maintained sector.
- Additional induction and mentoring support has been provided to headteachers undertaking their first headship or joining the Dorset maintained sector, helping to strengthen leadership confidence, accelerate local knowledge and support successful transition into role.
- The Dorset Secondary LA Collaboration has continued to strengthen and mature throughout 2025/26. A significant development has been the enhancement of the peer review model across the secondary phase, providing robust professional challenge, high-quality collaborative dialogue and strengthened quality assurance processes.
- A peer review model has now been agreed across all four maintained special schools for implementation in 2026/27, creating additional opportunities for sector-led improvement, specialist collaboration and bespoke quality assurance.



- Secondary leaders have engaged in external best practice opportunities, including visits to schools demonstrating exemplary practice under the revised Ofsted framework, enabling leaders to reflect on and strengthen provision within their own settings.
- The Dorset Post-16 Collaboration work continues, bringing together the majority of post-16 leaders across the county. This work, undertaken in partnership with a Multi-Academy Trust CEO and colleagues from ALPS, is supporting greater collaboration, shared learning and strategic development across the Post-16 sector.
- One ECL acts as the Local Authority link officer to Dorset SACRE, providing support and professional input to ensure the effective delivery of the group's responsibilities and priorities throughout the academic year.
- Locality-based school partnerships and collaborations have been actively supported, enabling schools to work collectively to address shared priorities, improve practice and drive better outcomes for children and young people.
- English and mathematics subject leaders have accessed bespoke professional development opportunities designed to strengthen subject leadership, build capacity and support improvements in teaching, learning and pupil outcomes.

### Impact

- Peer reviews have been completed in four secondary schools during 2025/26. Feedback from both host schools and peer reviewers has consistently highlighted the value of this collaborative approach to school improvement. Schools receive detailed, evidence-informed feedback against an agreed area of focus, recognising strengths whilst identifying clear priorities for further development. Beyond supporting improvement within individual schools, the process facilitates the sharing of effective practice, strengthens professional networks and promotes collective responsibility for school improvement across the Dorset secondary maintained sector.
- Leaders have developed a stronger understanding of the characteristics and expectations associated with an Exemplary judgement under the revised Ofsted framework. This has increased both capacity and ambition across the Dorset system, supporting schools to aspire to the highest standards of educational quality and effectiveness.
- Post-16 leaders benefit from regular opportunities to collaborate, engage in high-quality professional development and deepen their understanding of how ALPS data can be used strategically to inform leadership decisions, curriculum planning and improvement priorities. This contributes to more informed decision-making and improved outcomes for students.
- The SACRE RE Conference for school leaders is now an established annual event within the Spring Term. In February 2026, 56 RE leaders from first, primary, middle and secondary schools participated, providing a significant opportunity for professional development, networking and the sharing of effective practice.

### 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. The demand for this service has grown in our second year offering it.

#### Context

ECLs now provide Headteacher Appraisal services for Local Authority maintained schools. This service was previously commissioned externally and incurred additional costs for schools. By delivering appraisals in-house, Dorset Council is able to provide high-quality, locally informed appraisal support that strengthens governance, ensures consistency in the appraisal process and offers a cost-effective solution for maintained schools.



### Supporting Information

- Headteacher appraisals have been conducted across all locality areas, ensuring maintained schools have access to high-quality, appraisal support. Mid-year reviews were also offered and completed during the Spring Term where requested, providing an additional opportunity to review progress, support professional development and consider emerging priorities.
- Training has been delivered to governors involved in Headteacher Appraisal Panels, strengthening their understanding of the appraisal process and equipping them with the skills and confidence required to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

### Impact

- ECLs conducted 26 Headteacher Appraisals during Autumn 2025, representing an increase of 11 appraisals compared with the previous year and demonstrating growing demand for the Local Authority's in-house appraisal service.
- In response to increasing demand, a centrally coordinated appraisal programme has been established at County Hall over a two-week period in October 2026. At the time of writing, more than 33 appraisals have already been booked, reflecting the confidence schools and governing bodies have in the service.
- Governing bodies have responded positively to the support provided by ECLs throughout the appraisal process. One appraisal panel highlighted the value of the 'advice, guidance and support' received, recognising its contribution to a robust and effective appraisal process.
- Twenty-six governors attended Headteacher Appraisal training during 2025/26. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with one governor commenting on the 'excellent training provided by the Local Authority to support governing bodies'. The training has helped strengthen governors' understanding of their responsibilities and increased confidence in undertaking the appraisal process.

### 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 continued to work 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 four School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) reviews during 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 from -£806k to -£349k at the end of 2025-26.
- The Schools' Finance team have issued one Notice 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 four 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.

### 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.
- ICFP for governors March 2026 - *"This was a very clear presentation of budget considerations for governors - will allow the GB to understand and question the presentation of resource allocations. Thank you."*

## Education Conference 2026

### Context

- The Dorset Education Conference 2026 was held on 29th June 2026 and focused on the theme of "Leading Inclusive Schools".
- The event was fully subscribed, with more than 130 delegates attending and over 70 schools represented.
- The programme included two keynote presentations and nine workshop sessions, from which delegates selected two to attend.
- Keynote speakers included Dr Alex Blower (Boys' Impact) and Martin Russell (UNICEF), alongside a range of workshops and information stands delivered by Dorset Council colleagues and external partners.
- The conference also promoted opportunities available to Dorset schools, including fully funded participation in the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award programme.



### Impact

- The conference provided a significant opportunity for school leaders, partners and professionals to come together to explore inclusive leadership and practice, supporting the delivery of Dorset's wider educational priorities.
- Delegate feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees valuing the quality of the keynote presentations, workshop content and opportunities for networking and professional discussion.
- The event fostered collaboration across the Dorset education system, creating opportunities to share knowledge, expertise and effective practice between schools and partners.
- Feedback gathered from delegates has identified opportunities to further strengthen future conferences, particularly through increasing the level of interactivity within workshop sessions. This will inform planning for future events and support continuous improvement of the conference offer.



## 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 provides advice and support to clerks, chairs and governing bodies. This includes guidance on statutory and legal procedures, governance responsibilities, and the effective management of roles and relationships within governing boards.

ECLs contribute to the governor training programme, delivering sessions including New to Governance, Understanding SEND, and Strategic versus Operational Leadership, to support governors in their role. Training events and face-to-face meetings for clerks and chairs are delivered throughout the year, covering a range of relevant topics identified through local and national developments and feedback from participants.

### Examples of work

- 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
- Supporting new Chairs of Governors in their role throughout the academic year

### Impact

- Bespoke training has been offered to schools across all locality areas and has given governors the opportunity to work together and access additional training beyond the National Governance Association (NGA) resources.

## Next steps: 2026 – 2027 Priorities

- Support schools to prepare for and implement any changes arising from national SEND reform proposals.
- Continue to strengthen and expand peer collaboration models across phases, promoting effective practice sharing, professional challenge and system-led improvement. Embed and evaluate the peer review model within the special school sector, supporting collaborative improvement and specialist quality assurance.
- Further embed the use of TEP programme findings to inform school improvement planning, identify priority areas for support and target resources effectively. Monitor programme usage, participation and feedback to evaluate effectiveness, measure impact and ensure value for money.
- Introduce a peer coaching programme (launching on 24<sup>th</sup> September at The Blandford School) for aspiring headteachers and serving headteachers to strengthen leadership capacity, support succession planning and enhance professional development opportunities.



- Continue to develop and expand secondary subject leader networks, enabling greater collaboration, curriculum development and leadership support across schools.
- Implement a tiered school support model to ensure intervention, challenge and support are proportionate to need and impact.
- Increase participation in the mathematics and English professional development offer, with a particular focus on targeted support for schools where outcomes indicate the greatest need.
- Plan and deliver the Dorset Education Conference 2027, providing opportunities for professional learning, collaboration and engagement with local and national priorities.
- Further develop the Dorset Post-16 Collaboration through six planned annual meetings, with a specific focus on improving A/A\* attainment and sharing effective practice in response to 2026 outcomes.
- Work in partnership with Finance Services to strengthen support for schools facing financial challenges, including those operating with or at risk of deficit budgets, ensuring timely intervention, robust financial planning and sustainable recovery strategies.
- Provide funded access to the FFT Reading Programme for all maintained schools, supporting improvements in reading attainment and the development of a positive reading culture. Monitor usage and gather feedback from schools to evaluate impact, inform future delivery and ensure the programme provides value for money.
- Work in partnership with the Governor Services Team to further strengthen the governor development offer, including the launch of a new suite of training programmes.
- Continue the Key Stage 2 Steering Group in partnership with the Department for Education and Multi-Academy Trust leaders, maintaining a focus on improving attainment, sharing effective practice and addressing identified areas of need.



# Dorset SACRE – LA Report 2026-27

## Lead Officers

Richard Howes – Education Challenge Lead  
David Rees (DR) – LA RE Adviser

## Purpose

This report provides Schools Forum members with an update on the work of Dorset SACRE, including the development of the Professional Adviser role and the support being provided to schools and academies across Dorset to strengthen religious education (RE) and collective worship.

## LA Update

### Impact of the Professional Adviser Role

Since September 2025, the Professional Adviser has:

- supported over 85 schools through conference attendance and professional development activity;
- established regular RE networks across primary, middle and secondary phases;
- provided bespoke support and school visits;
- strengthened communication between schools and Dorset SACRE;
- identified common curriculum, assessment and workforce development issues to inform future SACRE priorities.

This work supports schools in implementing the Dorset Locally Agreed Syllabus and contributes to improving the quality and consistency of RE provision across Dorset.

### Context

The RE Professional Adviser was appointed on a three-year commissioned basis from 1st September 2025 to 31st July 2028. The arrangement includes regular monitoring by Dorset SACRE and Dorset Council, with the role to be re-commissioned in line with Council procurement requirements to ensure continued value for money and alignment with strategic priorities.

To support implementation of the revised Locally Agreed Syllabus, Dorset SACRE delivered a county-wide launch conference in February 2025 attended by representatives from 85 schools. Feedback from attendees was highly positive and identified a continued demand for networking opportunities, curriculum support, and professional development. As a result, the conference has become an annual event.

The RE Adviser now has more of a direct role supporting collaborations across the maintained sector, providing group and individual support to RE leads.



### **Dorset SACRE's Professional Adviser has the following responsibilities:**

- Advising the LA and Dorset SACRE on the provision of training for teachers in RE. Offering strategic advice and national updates.
- Supporting the LA named adviser and chair of Dorset SACRE in managing aspects of Dorset Council's SACRE work programme.
- Supporting Dorset schools and academies with advice such as curriculum planning, assessment for learning, implementing the agreed syllabus, ensuring progression and rigour in RE and collective worship, and policy writing.
- Leading an annual Dorset RE conference and answering schools' questions on ways of teaching RE according to the Locally Agreed Syllabus, including the choice of teaching materials.
- Supporting the monitoring of standards and achievement in RE and collective worship through school visits and analysis of appropriate data including external examination results.
- Giving advice on ways of teaching RE and World Views according to the Locally Agreed Syllabus, including the choice of teaching materials.
- Considering complaints about the provision and delivery of religious education and collective worship referred to the adviser by Dorset LA.
- Being a point of contact for RE/Collective Worship support for schools/academies within Dorset.

## **RE Advisor Update**

### **SACRE RE Advisor support for maintained schools**

**From April 2026**

| Groups                               | Meeting date 1                 | Meeting date 2             |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Chesil collaboration                 | 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2026  | TBD                        |
| North Collaboration                  | 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2026  | TBD                        |
| West Collaboration                   | 11 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 | TBD                        |
| Learning First alliance (Dorchester) | 17 <sup>th</sup> November 2026 | TBD                        |
| Secondary group                      | 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2026  | 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2026 |

**2026/2027 dates to be established with each collaboration.**

#### **Issues raised from Primary sessions**

| Issue                           | DR comments                                                                                                                                                                    | Action (with SACRE approval) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Variety of resources being used | It's useful for us to be aware of all the different resources currently being produced – we could then be in a position to advise (in reference to fitting with the syllabus). |                              |
| Mixed age classes               | We could offer some advice on how this could be done – we know many schools are doing this in more rural areas. Jigsaw RE offers                                               |                              |



|                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                         |
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|                                                                                                  | guidance on this too – could be a conference workshop for those who need it.                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                         |
| Need guidance re assessment                                                                      | Everyone needs this in RE – there is no real clear definitive answer. We will keep an eye on the different methods but stress the need to assess what has been taught and use assessment to guide on how to develop. |                                                                                                                                         |
| Would like to share good practice                                                                | Through networks or at the conference – this would go down well – we could start to ask for suggestions                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                         |
| Aware of the need to keep an eye on new developments – how?                                      | DR is involved with national forums and organisations – information to be rolled out in January.                                                                                                                     | Could use some of my time for Strictly RE – allow SACRE meeting time for dissemination and actions going forward.                       |
| Case studies and lived experience – more needed                                                  | Still a major need – nationally.                                                                                                                                                                                     | Can SACRE ask religion and worldview members to reach out to their communities?                                                         |
| Need access to quality speakers – visits to Places of worship – locals needed                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                         |
| Help needed as no RE specialism in school                                                        | Recruitment and retention of RE specialists remains a challenge nationally, with many schools relying on non-specialist staff to deliver RE.                                                                         | Are schools actively seeking RE specialism? It is unlikely and difficult to know what we can do                                         |
| Would appreciate training (conference?) for other worldviews like Sanatana Dharma (Hindu Dharma) | We could ask schools what they want in the new academic year and can act on the responses either via networks or conference or both.                                                                                 | Conference should be able to provide sessions on this – we have access to trainers.                                                     |
| RE Hubs – difficulty accessing it                                                                | The hub is not monitored daily – the hub leader only has a small amount of time allocated.                                                                                                                           | DR can talk to the Hub leader.                                                                                                          |
| Interpretation of texts – need help – linking to diversity within tradition                      | Another national issue – there has been a push to include more texts and consider how believers interpret the meanings in a modern context. Diversity within tradition is part of this.                              | Conference could provide a session – but some prep needed as to which worldviews to include.                                            |
| Understanding Christianity – not working                                                         | Some teachers said it was unwieldy, and a new approach was needed.                                                                                                                                                   | Can ask the diocese if there are plans to refresh or offer refresher training courses as some staff will have changed since the launch. |

#### **Middle schools (in-person visits)**



1. Cranborne Middle School – DR visited the school on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026 pm – spent time with RE lead – reviewed the curriculum and discussed resourcing, monitoring RE and ensuring the locally agreed syllabus is embedded. Very useful session – to follow up.

2. West Moors Middle School – DR visited the school on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2026 pm – spent time with the RE lead looking at the curriculum – RE has been given more status in the school but some staff are reluctant to engage. Follow up meeting will be arranged for the Autumn term. DR to deliver a session for the staff on the importance of RE and how to teach it.

### **Issues raised from secondary sessions**

| Issue                                       | DR comments                                                                                                                                                                                           | Action (with SACRE approval)                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fighting for curriculum time                | This is a common issue due to timetabling pressures– until there is accountability for not teaching RE this will continue                                                                             | SACRE can try to find out what is happening and apply pressure, but this is hard to do, and we'd rather be a supportive group as this will lead to better communication |
| Non-specialists teaching RE                 | Schools report that RE is frequently taught by non-specialist staff, creating challenges for subject expertise and curriculum development.                                                            | Without help at a national level, it is hard to influence how schools are staffing RE.                                                                                  |
| Status of the subject                       | The status is often low due to the subject not being seen as important by some. Continued advocacy and support are required to ensure that RE maintains an appropriate profile within the curriculum. | SACRE could try to find out how RE is approached in the secondaries – this is not easy though.                                                                          |
| Speakers needed for worldviews like Judaism | There is a lack of speakers available for schools – the lived experience voice is more important than ever.                                                                                           | SACRE can reach out to religion and worldview groups to attempt to find speakers – SACRE members can and do offer themselves as speakers where possible.                |
| Introducing Humanism – struggling with it   | This is often down to a lack of experience – most people are aware that non-religious worldviews need to be incorporated but maybe do not know where to go for information.                           | There are excellent resources available online. We also have Humanist connections on SACRE. RE conference can run sessions on humanism – networks could cover it too.   |



|                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                       |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| AQA exam board – is there an overhaul coming? | National curriculum and assessment reforms are currently under consideration by government. SACRE will continue to monitor developments and communicate any implications for schools. | Monitor the situation |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

#### Key priorities for 2026/27:

1. Continue to monitor national developments in RE and disseminate guidance to Dorset schools.
2. Develop and deliver the Dorset RE Conference 2027 in response to identified training needs.
3. Strengthen collaboration networks to enable schools to share effective practice and address common challenges.
4. Enhance the Dorset SACRE website as a hub for guidance, resources, professional development opportunities and national updates.
5. Support schools in monitoring the implementation of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and identifying areas for further development.

