

Dorset Schools' Forum

Date of Meeting:	25 September 2026
Report Title:	Updates to the Scheme for Financing Schools
Executive Director:	Paul Dempsey, Executive Director for People - Children
Corporate Director:	Jen Furnell, Corporate Director for Education and Learning
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Presenting Officer:	Tom Easterbrook, Schools' Forum Officer Schools' Forum Officer Schools, Finance & Support
Report Status:	Public
Reason for Submission to Schools' Forum:	For APPROVAL Under Forum power/responsibility: 1(e) Changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools
Recommendation(s):	That the maintained members of the Schools' Forum approve the updates to the Dorset Scheme for Financing Schools.
Reason for Recommendation(s):	To ensure the Council is compliant with latest statutory guidance and that the Dorset Scheme remains in line with Government best practice.
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

Local authorities are required to publish schemes for financing schools setting out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain, to meet the provisions of Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and Schedule 14 to that Act.

When making any changes to their schemes, they must consult all maintained schools in their area and then obtain the approval of the members of their schools' forum representing maintained schools, except in the case of presentational changes and changes known as 'directed revisions' requested by the Secretary of State. There are no directed revisions in this issue.

We last updated the scheme in September 2025 following approval from Forum, since then the DfE has issued updated guidance, so we are seeking approval for an updated scheme in the light of the new guidance and internal audit recommendations.

We consulted maintained schools on three proposed changes to the scheme from 7 September 2026 – 14 September 2026. 12 out of 46 maintained schools responded.

The changes consulted on were:

- There are no new directed revisions in this issue.
- Contact details have been updated to reflect changes in officers responsible for the Scheme, and the Schools' Forum contact link has been updated.
- Section 4.1 has been updated to introduce a new requirement for schools to retain financial records, including accounting records, invoices, payroll records and supporting documentation, for a minimum of seven years and to make those records available for audit and inspection when required.
- Section 4.2 has been revised. Previous requirements mandating use of the Dorset Council chart of accounts and prohibiting internal trading codes have been replaced with broader requirements for schools to maintain financial records and reporting arrangements that comply with the Local Authority's chart of accounts, coding structure and reporting requirements.
- A new subsection, Chart of Accounts and Financial Reporting Requirements, has been added to clarify expectations for schools operating their own financial systems, including alignment with the Local Authority coding structure and the Authority's right to require changes where reporting requirements are not met.
- Annex A has been updated to reflect changes to the list of maintained schools to which the Scheme applies.

There were no objections.

2. Financial Implications

n/a

3. Climate Implications

n/a

4. Other implications

n/a

5. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: low

Residual Risk: low

6. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

n/a

7. Appendices

Appendix A: Dorset Scheme for Financing Schools (September 2026 version)

8. Background Papers

n/a

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.