Dorset Council
Admission of Armed Forces Community Children Policy
2028-2029

This policy applies to all schools where Dorset Council (DC) is the admissions authority (community and voluntary controlled schools) – it will also be promoted for adoption with Dorset schools which are their own admissions authorities (academies, foundation, voluntary aided and free schools).

Dorset Council is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant which is a binding commitment between the Government, the Nation and the Armed Forces to ensure that people in the Armed Forces Community aren't disadvantaged because of their Service, and that the people who have given the most receive special consideration for the sacrifices they have made for the country.

DC is committed to look out for any problems these families might face because of their part in the Armed Forces Community, and then to assist in finding solutions to those problems.

A family may be disadvantaged when applying for a school place (during service or upon leaving service). When an application is made from the Armed Forces Community and a place cannot ordinarily be offered, an assessment will be made of the circumstance.

In order to establish (by admissions department or appeal committee) whether a place should be offered, it needs to be identified as to whether being a member of the armed forces has disadvantaged the family in applying for a specific school place and consider the impact of placing the child over number (see Consideration of Prejudice).

The School Admissions Code has been revised to enable schools to admit service children as exceed the 30-pupil limit for infant classes in order to accommodate Service children.

Infant class size – Infant classes (those where the majority of children will reach the age of 5, 6 or 7 during the school year) must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single school teacher44. Additional children may be admitted under limited exceptional circumstances. These children will remain an 'excepted pupil' for the time they are in an infant class or until the class numbers fall back to the current infant class size limit. The excepted children are….

f) children of UK service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round;

Admissions Authorities when considering admissions placement from Forces Families should take account of the expectation that families will move as a new posting comes through or when discharged at the end of service: the family have little or no choice in the location or the timing of this move and so, in many cases, will be forced to apply to schools outside of the normal admissions round.

In order to ascertain if they should be considered for a place at a school that is full in the year group applied for (especially where this would contravene infant class size legislation) it should be considered whether or not it would have been reasonable for a family living at the stated address and applying 'on time' at the normal year of transfer to obtain a place.

1. Did the fact that a parent is serving in the armed forces prevent an 'on time' application being made?

Yes – This should be taken into account in the decision-making process
No – There has been no disadvantage and therefore no account need be taken.

2. Would it have been reasonable to expect a place at the named school had the application been made 'on time' at the normal age of transfer?

Yes – This should be taken into account in the decision making process
No – There has been no disadvantage and therefore no account need be taken.

3. Would the alternative offer NOT have been one that other families in the locality were offered?

Yes – This should be taken into account in the decision making process
No – There has been no disadvantage and therefore no account need be taken.

4. Would the alternative placement offered have a negative long term impact e.g. not keep them within the same pyramid of schools for next age of transfer?

Yes – This should be taken into account in the decision making process
No – There has been no disadvantage and therefore no account need be tak**en.**

If all the answer to all questions is 'No', then there has been no disadvantage and normal procedures should be followed.

If the answer to one or more questions is 'Yes', then the case will need to be considered more carefully in line with this undertaking but this does not mean

that a child will automatically be admitted, as there still remains a need to balance the case of the child and the specific situation of school.

Consideration of prejudice

The admissions officer/appeal panel must balance the prejudice to the school against the appellant's case for the child to be admitted to the school.

It must take into account the appellant's reasons for expressing a preference for the school, including what that school can offer the child that the allocated or other schools cannot.

In reaching a decision as to whether or not there would be prejudice the panel may consider the following factors:
a) what effect an additional admission would have on the school in the current and following academic years as the year group moves through the school;
b) the impact on the organisation and size of classes, the availability of teaching staff, and the effect on children already at the school.

If the admissions authority/appeals panel considers that the appellant's case outweighs the prejudice to the school it must admit the child/uphold the appeal.

The Local Authority may also consider applications that are submitted more than 6 weeks before the place is requested to provide service families with advance notice of the likely school placement.