# Secondary co-ordinated admissions scheme normal point of entry 2028 to 2029

## 1.0 Background

1.1 In accordance with the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, all Local Authorities (LAs) are required to formulate schemes for coordinating arrangements for the admission of children to maintained primary and secondary schools and academies. Details of the Dorset Council scheme for 2028 to 2029 for the secondary and upper school entry are set out in this document. All maintained schools and academies are required to take part.

## 2.0 Interpretation

2.1 Admissions arrangements
The arrangements for a particular school or schools which govern the procedures and decision-making for the purposes of admitting pupils to the school.

2.2 Admissions authority
In relation to a community or voluntary controlled school means the local authority and, in relation to an academy, foundation, free, trust or VA school, means the board of governors of that school or the multi-academy trust where this applies

2.3 Equal Preference Scheme
The model where whereby all preferences listed by parents on the CAF are considered under the over-subscription criteria for each school without reference to parental rankings. Where a pupil is eligible to be offered a place at more than one school within an LA, or across more than one participating LA, the rankings are used to determine the single offer by selecting the school ranked highest of those which can offer a place.

2.4 CAF
The common application form.

2.5 The home local authority (LA)
The LA in which the applicant/parent/carer is resident.

2.6 The maintaining LA
The LA which maintains a school, or within whose area an academy is situated, for which a preference has been expressed.

2.7 National Offer Day
The day on which outcome letters are posted to parents/carers. For primary school places it is 16 April in the year following the relevant determination year except that, in any year in which that day is not a working day, the prescribed day shall be the next working day.

2.8 Pupil Admissions Number (PAN)
The published admissions number for the year of entry at a school.

2.9 In-Year Fair Access protocol (IYFA)
The purpose of Fair Access Protocols is to ensure that - outside the normal admissions round - unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a place quickly, so that the amount of time any child is out of school is kept to the minimum.

2.10 Supplementary Information Form (SIF)
Some schools have a SIF that allows parents to provide evidence to allow the schools to place children based on that schools over subscription criteria where denominational criteria exists.

2.11 This scheme will apply to all applications for admission to year 7 for secondary schools and year 9 for the area's 3 upper schools in the academic year 2028 to 2029 for schools within the following Admission Authorities:

- Dorset Council (DC), as Admission Authority for community and voluntary controlled secondary and upper schools in Dorset
- own admission authority schools (academies, foundation schools, free schools and voluntary aided schools).
- admission authorities for other maintained secondary schools with year 7 points of entry and upper or studio schools with a year 9 point of entry in England

2.12 The scheme shall be based on the equal preferences system.

2.13 Where a child is not resident with his or her parent/carer, parental responsibility must be conferred by the parent/carer directly on the person with whom the child is to reside and not on a third party or a commercial or charitable organisation. Where this involves a person who is not a close relative of the child, it is the responsibility of that person to refer the arrangement to social care as a private fostering arrangement.

2.14 In regard to admissions to schools, the Dorset Council Admissions Team will:

- act as champion for children and families
- offer advice to parents and schools

- monitor and challenge the admission arrangements of schools within Dorset
- operate an admissions scheme (this scheme) for normal point of entry to infant, first, primary, junior and middle schools in Dorset
- operate a local in-year admissions scheme to assist in the coordination of admissions to school at points outside the normal point of entry in reception to year 6 and year 7 and 8 at middle schools
- operate an In Year Fair Access Protocol to ensure that outside the normal admissions round - unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible
- liaise with other teams within Dorset Council and other LAs in the planning of school places
- report to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator on admissions for all schools in Dorset for which we coordinate admissions
- offer a traded service to own admission authority schools to support them in the delivery of their responsibilities for school admissions and appeals, including the verification and ranking of applications, managing waiting lists, preparing and presenting appeals and processing in year applications

## The Scheme

## 3.0 Applications

3.1 All parents must complete a Common Application Form. Dorset Council will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that the common application form is available on the Dorset Council's website. The website will also display a guide for parents which provides a written explanation of the scheme. Paper copies of the form are available on request or from the website.

3.2 Dorset will only consider one school admissions application for each child. This should be completed by the person with parental responsibility who has care of the child for the majority of school days/weeks (unless a Court Order states differently). If there is joint parental responsibility, the applicant must indicate on the application that all those with parental responsibility are aware of and agree to the application and the preferences being made.

3.2 The CAF may be used to name up to 3 preferences for schools in Dorset or in any other Local authority. Dorset will inform the maintaining local authority of those applications for schools outside of Dorset. The CAF cannot be used to express a preference for an independent school.

3.3 Applications for places at a Dorset School by parents/carers of children resident outside of Dorset should be made through the home local authority. The home local authority will inform Dorset of the preferences made for Dorset schools.

3.4 All applications must be received by 23:59 on the relevant national secondary closing date of the 31 October. Applications received after this date and before the late closing date will be treated as 'late' (see section 6).

3.5 Paper applications may be submitted to a preference school or by post to Dorset School Admissions Team. Parents/carers will have to provide proof of posting or of submission to the school to show it was submitted/posted on or before the 31 October 2027.

3.6 Some schools may require applicants to complete a supplementary information form (SIF) in order to apply their oversubscription criteria. The requirement will be stated in the relevant school's admissions arrangements. The supplementary form should be returned direct to the school as the relevant admissions authority. Applications submitted using the common application form but without completion of a supplementary form will still be considered but the school will be unable to assess the application against the relevant criteria. Parents/carers should be made aware that they must also complete a common application form; the supplementary form is not regarded as an application in itself. Applications will only be considered if a common application form has been completed and sent to the home local authority. For an application to be considered as on time, the common application form must be submitted to the home Local authority before midnight on 31 October 2027.

3.7 The home address is where the child spends the majority of the time and is living with the person who has parental responsibility and is the main 'carer' as defined in section 576 of the Education Act 1996.

3.8 Dorset Council will not accept more than one address as the child's home address. Where a child regularly lives at more than one address the Local authority will have to reach a conclusion about which should be counted as the main address when allocating places. This will normally be the address where any Child Benefit is paid. If Child Benefit is not received, then where the child is registered with a medical GP will be used as the address. Where parents are living separately and do not agree on the child's home address they are urged to reach agreement. If the steps above do not lead to a resolution then the application will be suspended.

3.9 Dorset Council may undertake checks to ensure that the information provided in the application is true and accurate. Documentary evidence may be requested.

3.10 Parents/Carers must inform Dorset Council of any change of address as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in any offer of a place being withdrawn. Documentary evidence will be required before any change is accepted.

3.11 Applications may be based on either a current address or a future address. Applications can only be considered based on a future address if that address is appropriately evidenced as at the closing date.

3.12 Evidence required for a change of address or a future address will be:

- a solicitor's letter confirming an exchange of contract dated prior to the national closing date
- a copy of a tenancy agreement (giving property address, date and duration of tenancy) signed by the applicant and the landlord as well as any notice to quit from the previous address. The new tenancy agreements must be signed and dated prior to the national closing date
- a letter from the friend/relative confirming arrangements that the applicant and the child are moving into their home address, with a date confirming the move. The friend or relative is required to provide proof of address such as a council tax bill or a utility bill. This address can only be used by the applicant once they are actually resident
- written confirmation from parents and or carer/previous carer that the child's residency is changing on a long-term basis
- members of the Armed Services and Crown Servants may submit a posting order as proof of a future address stating the date of the start of the posting
- written confirmation from refuge staff that the applicant and their child or young person has been accommodated in the refuge due to domestic abuse or violence

3.13 Where parents share parental responsibility for a child and two applications are received for the one child, Dorset Council will ask the parents to determine which application should be considered. The other application will be withdrawn. This is because DC will offer only one school place to a child at any one time. If parents cannot agree, they should resolve the issue through the court system, for example to obtain a 'Specific Issues Order' which specifies which parent has responsibility to make decisions on school preferences. If no agreement is reached the application for transfer will be suspended until such time as agreement is reached. Failure to reach an agreement may result in a child not having a school place to start their next phase of education or if agreement is reached after National Offer Day (or the late round offer day), then the application will be processed in the appropriate round, and it is possible that there are no longer places at the preferred schools. The home address will still be the address the child spends the majority of time.

## 4.0 Processing

4.1 Details of applications will be available to all schools through the School Admissions Module (SAM) as they are submitted though preference order is not provided based on the equal preference protocol.

4.2 Schools are not permitted to make any contact with parents based on the information they are privy to as a result of being able to view these applications.

4.3 Dorset Council will undertake the Application Exchange with other Local Authorities for applications for schools outside of Dorset on 15 November 2024.

4.4 Own Admissions Authority Schools for whom the Admissions Team has not been delegated to undertake the checking function through a Service Level Agreement will verify, check, apply a criterion and rank the applications and return this information to Dorset Council in a format prescribed by the Council and by the Deadline date of 11 January 2028.

4.5 Dorset Council will undertake the verifying, checking, application of a criterion and rank the applications for all community and voluntary controlled schools and those own admission authorities that, through an SLA, have delegated these functions to the Dorset Council Admissions Team.

4.6 All schools may be required to verify any sibling links and staff links in accordance with that schools over subscription criteria.

4.7 All schools that require a SIF to verify a denominational link, where the denominational criteria is likely to be the highest ranking criteria for an application, will be responsible for receiving the SIF, verifying the link claim and informing Dorset Admissions of the criteria under which the application is to be considered.

## 5.0 Determining Offers

5.1 Dorset Council will make an initial allocation of places based on:

- the criteria allocated to each application for a Dorset School and
- when a school is oversubscribed (applications exceed the Pupil Admissions Number), based on the oversubscription criteria of that school.

5.2 The local authority, having regard to the ranked lists received from schools in Dorset and the information received from other local authorities, will:

- where the child is eligible for a place at only one of their preference schools, allocate a place at that school to the child
- where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the preference schools, allocate a place at whichever school is the highest ranked preference

5.3 Where a child or young person resident in Dorset and looking for a Dorset school has not been offered a place at any of their preference schools, Dorset

Admissions will place at their catchment school.

5.4 If a child has not been allocated their catchment school having not been allocated any of their preference schools, the local authority will then allocate a place at their next nearest appropriate school with the relevant point of entry.

5.5 Where a child or young person is leaving a school based on the age range of that school, but is unable to secure a place at the next school in the education system (for example, unable to secure a place at year 9 in a secondary having left a middle school at the end of year 8) and the only available places within a reasonable distance are at schools for which there is not a formal point of entry, the application will be suspended. Applicants will be advised that they may make an in-year application to a local secondary school or allow Dorset Council to allocate a place. These allocations will not take place until after the summer half-term as in year applications do not get processed more than 6 school weeks before the place is required.

5.6 Dorset Council will make the first exchange of offers with other Local Authorities on 25 January 2028. A series of exchanges will take place with the final exchange with other Local Authorities taking place on 8 February 2028.

5.7 Dorset Council will notify all schools of the final allocations on 22 February 2028. Schools are not permitted to divulge any information to parents with regards to the allocations until that family is informed of the allocations on the National Offer Day by the local authority.

5.8 Dorset Council will inform all Dorset resident applicants of the outcome of their application on National Offer Day, 1 March 2028 including those who have been offered a school in another local authority. Those who have submitted their application electronically, will receive an outcome email confirming the school offer on or soon after 9am on National Offer Day. A second email will also be sent later that day that will provide the applicant with a link to a letter that can be downloaded. This letter not only confirms the allocation, it will also detail any eligibility to transport. Those who made an application by paper form and supplied an email address will only receive this second email with a copy of the outcome letter but will not receive the outcome email sent around 9am.

5.9 Those applicants who have only supplied a postal address through a paper application will receive their notification by second class post with the letters being dispatched from County Hall on National Offer Day – or the first working day thereafter if the National Offer Day falls on a non-working day.

## 6.0 Late applications

6.1 Dorset Council manages a single late co-ordinated late round. Any application received after the national closing date through to the day before national offer day will be processed as part of the ‘late round’.

6.2 All applications received in this period or round, along with all appellants and those on waiting lists from the previous allocation round, will be checked verified and ranked against the oversubscription criteria of the relevant schools.

6.3 All address evidence as detailed 3.12 in must be dated prior to the closing date of 28 February 2028 for it to be considered as part of the 'late round'.

6.4 Dorset Council will liaise with other local authorities where there are applications for schools outside of Dorset.

6.5 All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application by email or text message on 30 March 2028.Where no email or mobile telephone number has been provided, then letters will be sent on the 30 March 2028 by second class post.

6.6 Any application received after 28 February 2028 will be processed in the order that they are received but will be managed and co-ordinated by the local authority until 31 August 2028.

## 7.0 Waiting lists

7.1 Where an applicant has not received their highest preference school, they may ask to be placed on a waiting list for that school.

7.2 Dorset Council will co-ordinate waiting lists for all schools until the end of co-ordination, 31 August 2028.

7.3 When an applicant submits an appeal, they will automatically be placed on the waiting list for that school.

7.4 When a place(s) becomes available at an oversubscribed school, all outstanding applications, pending appeals and waiting list applicants will be ordered against the oversubscription criteria and the highest ranked applicant will receive the place(s).

7.5 All schools are required to hold a waiting lists for the year of entry cohort until 31 December. Applicants will have to contact the Local authority or the School to confirm if a waiting list for that school is held beyond 31 December in any given year and request that they remain on the waiting if desired.

7.6 Where the local authority maintain waiting lists for schools beyond 31 December, then the family will have to renew their waiting list place each and every September. It is the responsibility of the family to make the renewal.

## 8.0 Right of appeal

8.1 All letters making an offer of a school place will detail the right of appeal if the school offered is not the first preference.

8.2 The local authority, as the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, and publish their appeals timetable on 28 February of the year in question. This appeal timetable will also cover schools who have entered into a service level agreement for the local authority to manage their appeals.

8.2 If an applicant who has not received a place at one of their higher preference schools, they have the right to lodge an appeal within 20 days of notification of the refusal of a place.

8.2 The Admissions Authority must hear the appeal within 40 days of the deadline of lodging an appeal. For late application appeals, these should be heard within 40 days of the deadline for lodging of an appeal where possible, or at least within 30 days of the appeal being lodged.

8.3 Appellants will be given 10 days' notice of the appeal hearing date and the arrangements for the hearing.

8.4 The Appeals process will be conducted in accordance with the statutory guidance contained in School Admissions Appeals Code – October 2022.

## 9.0 Children with education, health and care (EHC) plans

9.1 As part of the annual review prior to transition, those children that are due to start a new school will identify a new school as part of that process. The family do not have to submit a new school application.

9.2 Once the annual review is complete and the consultation is complete, the SEND team will advise the School Admissions Team of the identified school. All children with existing EHC plans and their destination school will be identified to the Admissions Team by 16 January 2028.

9.3 Where a child has yet to be issued an EHC plans, but has been put forward to be assessed, then the family must ensure they submit a normal mainstream point of entry application regardless of which age group. Dorset will progress the application as normal. If the EHC plans is completed by 16 January 2028, and a mainstream school is named on the plan, then the original application will be withdrawn and the placement will be confirmed as that from the EHC plans. If the EHC plan names a base or specialist provision, then the application will also be withdrawn. The SEND team will advise the Admissions Team of the outcome of any completed EHC plans by 16 January 2028.

9.4 Where an EHC plan is yet to be finalised and is still not completed by 1 February, then the original mainstream application will be processed and a place offered on National Offer Day. If the EHC plan, once completed, differs from the mainstream allocation, then the provision stated in the EHC plan will remain and the admissions team allocation will be withdrawn and the place rescinded and re-allocated.

9.5 If a mainstream place is offered to a child with an EHC plan, after National Offer Day and the school has reached its PAN because this differs from the

family's normal mainstream application, then the SEND team will liaise with the school around the allocation and issues of having to ask a school to go over PAN if in Key Stage 3.

## 10.0 Children Resident Abroad

10.1 Applications may be made from outside of the UK for children who are moving to the UK to attend schools.

10.2 If the parent is a UK citizen or a citizen of a country that is part of the European Economic Area, the application needs to have the following supporting documentation:

- Copies of parent/guardian and the relevant child's passports
- Proof of the intended address
- Date of probable arrival in the UK.

10.3 A place may be offered at a preference school is there is a place available and the application is not more than half a term in advance of the place being required. If places at any of the preference schools are not available then the local authority will not provide an alternative until the child has arrived in the country and resident at the proposed address. Parents may add preferences while they are resident outside of the UK.

10.4 If the parents and child are from outside of the European Economic Area applications need to have the following supporting documentation:

- copies of parent/guardian and the relevant child's passports
- appropriately endorsed visas
- proof of the intended address
- date of probable arrival in the UK

10.5 Applications for citizens from outside the European Economic Area can only be processed once the child is resident in the UK.

## 11.0 Children and Young People who are LGBT

11.1 Children and young people who are LGBT should feel able to apply to a school without any restrictions.

11.2 Where a school or college is co-educational, the gender a person associates with has no bearing on an admissions application. Dorset's application forms ask for the child's gender. At this point, the gender appropriate to the birth certificate should be entered. Further information relating to gender identity and the reasoning for selection of a particular school can be given on the application form.

11.3 Dorset Council does not host single sex schools, though neighbouring

authorities do have single sex schools within their boundaries. In the case of transgender applicants, where a parent selects a placement in a single sex school opposite to the birth gender, the application will be accepted by Dorset Council as the home local authority and the relevant admissions authority will be asked to consider the application and advise Dorset Council on any allocations. This is a complex decision and not all children will be competent to take it at the time of transfer. A single sex school may seek evidence from the family that they have thought through the issues carefully and in most cases would expect the family to be able to provide the school with some independent evidence from a medical professional or other worker who has been involved in the situation.

## 12.0 Applications for UK Service Personnel

12.1 Dorset Council is committed to supporting service families through the Armed Forces Covenant. Further detail is available in the Armed Forces Policy 2028 to 2029.

## 13.0 Withdrawing a School Place Offer & Fraudulent Applications

13.1 An offer will only be withdrawn if:

- it was based on an application that was fraudulent or deliberately misleading
- it was made in error
- it was made by someone who did not have the authority to offer a school place
- a parent (having been issued with reminders from the school or admissions team and made aware of the consequences) failed to accept their school place within one week of the final reminder. This includes failure to respond to contact from the school regarding transition arrangements/"taster" sessions
- we receive written confirmation from a parent that they wish to decline the school place offered

## 14.0 Acceptance of Places

14.1 Once a place is offered on National Offer Day Dorset councils assumes a family's acceptance of place under the family formally declines the offer of a place whether it is a first, second, third preference or the Local Authority has allocated a place as an offer at one of the preference schools could not be made due to the levels of oversubscription.

14.2 Families may decline a place, but this will only be accepted if proof of an alternative school offer is made or the family confirms in writing that they are no longer looking for a place as they are moving overseas or they intend to Electively Home Educate.

14.3 Schools will advise all families who have accepted the place of the start date for that relevant cohort.

14.4 Schools will enter the child's details on the agreed date that the child will start school at or before the beginning of the first session on that day. Attendance on the first day is not required for the child's name to be entered on the Admissions Register.

## 15.0 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

15.1 The information that you give on an application form will be used by Dorset Council for the purpose of processing your application for a school place and determining school transport eligibility where appropriate for your child. The information will be shared with schools, the Department for Education, and where relevant and pertinent to your application, diocesan bodies, appeal panels and with other maintaining authorities and school admission authorities in their area. It will not be used for any other purpose unless required to do so by law. A record of the information you provide will be kept whilst your child is of compulsory school age plus a further academic year. Should you have any queries about Data Protection more detailed information is available on our Dorset Council website.