

Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset Council 2024-2025

This policy commences for children applying to schools to start in September 2024 and should be read in conjunction with the Parent's Guide. The guide along with admissions policies for other types of schools and further information and clarification are available on Dorset's school admissions website.

1. Admission of Pupils – General Principles

- The School Admissions Code, legislative guidance including co-ordination, equal preference scheme and infant class size legislation are adhered to,
- The majority of schools serve traditional areas (catchments/communities) to ensure fair access. The school's catchment area is a geographical area defined by the authority following consultation with the governors and neighbouring schools and is available for parents to view on the Dorset for You website,
- Where possible, within the current constraints and legislation, children attend schools preferred by their parents,
- Every (Dorset Council) child will be allocated a place in an educational setting once an application is submitted,
- Admission arrangements are consistently and equally applied to all,
- Resources are used efficiently,
- Allocation of school places are made up to the planned admission number, and where over-subscribed places are allocated in accordance with the oversubscription criteria.
- The Dorset Council Admissions Arrangements adhere to the principles of the Equalities Act 2010.

2. Published Admission Numbers (PANs)

All admission authorities must set an admission number for each 'relevant age group' and places will be allocated to all children who apply, or where there are more applications than places, then places will be allocated according to the published oversubscription criteria.

A school will be asked to exceed the admission number only where:-

- The last place within PAN is allocated to one of multiple birth siblings, then the other birth siblings will be admitted,
- Where an error occurs and the child should have been offered a place,
- A large group of families with children arrive in the area where it has not been possible to accommodate them within the normal allocation of places because of the short notice. If this is the case, the Local Authority will identify an appropriate setting to accommodate the children as quickly as possible,

- An unexpected event/incident occurs necessitating urgent/temporary placement,
- There is a need to comply with other agreed protocols, e.g. Children in Care, Fair Access, SEN Code of Practice and the Military Covenant

3. Admission of Pupils to School for the First Time at Age 4+/5

3.1 Statutory school age

Children reach compulsory school age the school term following their fifth birthday. The start of term is defined as 1 September/January/April (this may not be the first day of term for the school being considered).

3.2 Admission at 4+

An application must be submitted for every child to the LA. Children are able to attend full-time in September of the year they are due to start school. Some schools offer a phased integration. Where parents wish, children may attend part time until compulsory school age is reached. Parents can defer entry until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age within the first academic year or until compulsory school age. A record of the deferment should be kept by the school and parent. The place is held and is not available to be offered to another child unless it is not taken up by the agreed date when it will be considered vacant. If this request for deferred entry goes beyond the start of the academic year, the parent will need to reapply for a school place in the next academic year for entry to year 1.

4. Transfer to the next school by age – Normal Year of Entry

Different age ranges of schools in the Dorset Council area means children may transfer to the next school, depending on where they live, at ages 7+ (Year 3), 9+ (Year 5), 11+ (Year 7) or 13+ (Year 9). In all cases an application should be submitted by the published closing date and through the Home Local Authority. This is the local authority in whose area the child resides. Applications should be submitted by the person who has parental responsibility for the child.

5. In Year Admissions

In year or casual admissions to schools for whom the Local Authority is the Admissions Authority – (all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools) will be processed through the LA.

A formal application must be made in all instances with relevant information attached to the application. Should a place be refused at a school for which they applied, the parents have a right of appeal. Any alternative placement offered will take account of the distance to travel consistent with the national guidance on journey times i.e. the alternative placement will not exceed a journey of 45 minutes for primary aged children and 75 minutes for secondary age children.

6. Admission of children outside their normal age group and Summer Born

All families should make an application for a reception place for the September after a child's 4th birthday.

Families may decide that they want their child, who is born after the 1st April, to start school the September after their fifth birthday. This is referred to as delayed entry (Summer Born).

Families should still make an application for the September after their 4th birthday, then discuss with the preference schools their intention to delay entry to reception until after the child's fifth birthday and once this is agreed with the preferred schools, the family may withdraw the existing application and then make a new application the following year.

Full details of the processes for the admission of children outside their normal or chronological age group can be found in the "Dorset Council – Guidance on placement outside normal age group".

Where a child is already placed outside their normal or chronological year group and they are due to transfer to the next phase – moving up to Junior, Middle, Secondary or Upper School – then the family needs to discuss with the next school during the academic year prior to when the child who have normally transferred. Once agreement is reached for an application based on a child's actual year group – as opposed to the normal or chronological year group – then the family makes an application the following year. Again details are available in the "Dorset Council – Guidance on placement outside normal age group".

7. Placements in Alternative Settings and Managed Moves

Policies are available on In Year Fair Access and Managed Move protocols on Dorset's school admissions webpage.

Pupils from outside of Dorset Council area who have been placed in alternative provision (PRU) and move into Dorset may initially be placed in a Learning Centre where consideration will be given to the most suitable placement to support the child's educational achievement. Should integration to mainstream be considered appropriate, and on receipt of an application from the parent, this will be considered by the In Year Fair Access Panel.

It is also expected that where the PRU or Alternative Provision is clear that the young person needs to be returned to a mainstream setting this will be facilitated by the IYFA panel.

Where a young person is placed in a Learning Centre or Alternative Provision, the IYFA panel will also allocate a mainstream school to hold the roll for that child until their needs are understood and appropriate plans for their education and/or return to mainstream are finalized.

8. Children in Care

There is an additional policy and guidance available for Children in Care. Children in Care applications are given the highest priority on the oversubscription criteria.

9. School Transport

Details about school transport are provided in the Home to School Transport Policy.

Advice is also provided in the Policy and Parents' Guide to ensure parents, guardians and carers are aware that their preference of school and the admissions criteria will affect their entitlement to 'free' school transport. This includes later changes (e.g. change of address) which could have a bearing on continued eligibility for school transport.

10. Withdrawal of School Places

Places will only be withdrawn where:

- A place has been offered in error by the admission authority and the affected child/ren have not yet started at the preferred school,
- A place has been offered on the basis of a false, fraudulent or deliberately misleading application. The place will be withdrawn if the case has been identified by the first October half-term following admission,
- The place has not been taken up by the specified date – the parent will be contacted in advance of the withdrawal of a place,
- The place has been declined by the parent.

11. Waiting Lists

The LA operates a limited waiting list policy. Parents can apply to have their child's name placed on a waiting list for a period of one term following refusal. If parents wish to keep a child on a waiting list beyond this term they will need to write in for an extension. There is no guarantee of a school place by remaining on the waiting list.

12. Appeals

If the LA is unable to offer a place at a school that has been applied for, the parent has the right to appeal to an independent Appeals Panel. The decision of the Panel is binding on all parties and where parents succeed with their appeal, the place at the school originally offered by the LA will be automatically withdrawn.

13. OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

The admission of children with Education Health & Care Plans and Statements of Special Educational Needs is covered by Sections 324 to 328 of, and Schedule 27 to, the Education Act 1996. Guidance on the Admission of EHCP pupils is given in the Special Education Needs Code of Practice. Where a school is named on an EHC Plan, the child will be admitted.

1. Where all parental preferences for places at the school can be satisfied, all children seeking a place will be admitted.
2. Where there are too few places available to satisfy all preferences, places will be allocated according to the following priority order:-
 - i) A "Child in Care" or who was "previously a Child in Care" (see footnote 1)
 - ii) Children who the authority accepts have an exceptional medical or social need and where there is a need for a place at one specific school (see footnotes 2).
 - iii) Children living within the school's catchment area who will have a sibling(s) attending the school at the time of admission. (see footnote 3 & 4)

- iv) Children living within the school's catchment area who are attending the preferred school's recognised maintained feeder school during the previous year and are on that school's roll at the time of application. (see footnote 5).
 - v) Children living within the school's catchment area.
 - vi) Children living outside the school's catchment area who will have a sibling(s) attending the school at the time of admission. (see footnote 4)
 - vii) Children living outside the school's catchment area and who are attending one of the preferred school's recognised maintained feeder schools during the previous year at the time of application. (see footnote 6,7)
 - viii) Children living outside the school's catchment area and whose parents wish them to attend a CE Voluntary Controlled school on denominational grounds. (see footnote 8)
 - ix) Children of staff with at least two years continuous service at the school or who have been recruited to a vacancy to meet a demonstrable skills shortage as at the date of application (in year) or relevant closing date under the LA co-ordinated scheme (normal year of entry) and who still intend to be employed at the school at the time of the child's admission. (see footnote 9 & 10)
 - x) All other children living outside the school's catchment area.
3. If oversubscribed within any of the priority order categories above, places will be allocated on the basis of the shortest straight-line measurement using a geographical information-based system which identifies an Easting and Northing for the home address and the school and calculates the distance between the two locations. NB. School transport is based on walking and driven distances.
 4. In the event that the LA is unable to distinguish between applications despite applying the priority categories above, lots will be drawn by an independent (of the LA) person to determine the final place(s).
 5. Where applications are received from families with multiple birth siblings and by adhering to PAN these siblings could not be offered the same school, the admission number will be exceeded to accommodate the multiple birth siblings. This is not an indication that schools can exceed the admission number other than under these exceptional circumstances.

Footnotes

1. A "Child in Care" means any child who is in the care of a local authority in accordance with Section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989. A child who was "previously a Child in Care" means a child who after being Looked After became subject to an Adoption Order under Section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, a Child Arrangement Order under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 or Special Guardianship Order under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989. This category also includes Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Children (IAPLAC). These are also children outside of England, who were deemed to have been in the care of the State (or by the 3rd sector where no state provision is available) prior to their adoption. This category comes into effect September 2021 in accordance with the new DFE School Admissions Code 2021.
2. Applications will only be considered under this category if there is evidence provided such as a Child Protection Order, Children in Need document or a written statement from a doctor, social worker or other relevant independent professional. The information must confirm the exceptional medical or social need and demonstrate how the specified school is the only school that can meet the defined needs of the child. The local authority is all inclusive and will meet all

- legislative requirements to accommodate children within their educational setting as appropriate to their need.
3. Applications will also be considered under this category for a child who has or will have a sibling with an Education Health & Care Plan and where that sibling attending their nearest Complex Communication Needs Base, Physical Disability Base or a Social, Emotional Mental Health Base at the time of the admission.
 4. The term 'sibling' means full brother or sister, half or step brother or sister, adoptive brother or sister and other non-blood related children who live with married or cohabiting parents in the same household and relates to all year groups provided by the school. In the case of an infant school the sibling link will apply to the related junior school and vice versa.
 5. This feeder school criteria only applies to those moving from Wyke Regis Infants to Wyke Regis Junior
 6. This feeder school criteria only applies to:
 - a) moving to Beaminster School, Gillingham School, Ferndown Upper, Sturminster Newton High School or The Blandford School and attend one of the designated feeder schools as detailed in the Parents Guide.
 - b) those children moving to Cranborne Middle or West Moors Middle school who attend one of the designated First Schools as detailed in the Parent's Guide.
 7. This does not include independent schools, pre-schools or nurseries.
 8. In order to qualify for consideration under this category, parents/guardians will need to show that at least one adult family member and the child to whom the application relates to have been attending their local church at least once a month for a minimum of a year prior to the closing date for applications. The application must also be supported by a written statement from the vicar/priest/minister or leader of the church confirming this. In the event that during the period specified for attendance at worship the church has been closed for public worship and has not provided alternative premises for that worship, the requirements of these admissions arrangements in relation to attendance will only apply to the period when the church or alternative premises have been available for public worship. See Appendix 1 for schools with a designated religious character for which the Local Authority is the Admissions Authority.
 9. The term 'children' includes full, half, step, adopted and those non-blood related but resident through marriage, civil partnerships or single family co-habitation arrangements at the time of application or deadline.
 10. Staff are defined as all Dorset Council employed teaching and support staff at the preferred school. 'Children of staff' refers to situations where the staff member is the natural parent, the legal guardian or a resident step parent. If applicants wish to be considered under this criterion then a letter from the Headteacher confirming the above applies to the applicant must be provided at the time of application.

Failure to provide sufficient evidence will result in the application being processed against the next highest criteria.

All policies and the Parents' Guide which provides further information and clarification are all available at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/Policies

APPENDIX 1

Voluntary Controlled Schools under footnote 8 above and for which Oversubscription Criteria viii applies.

Broadwindsor CE VC Primary School
Greenford CE VC Primary School
Pimperne CE VC Primary School
Cerne Abbas CE VC First School
St Mary's CE VC First School (Charminster)
Lulworth & Winfrith CEVC Primary School
All Saints CE VC Primary School (Bishops Caundle)
Holy Trinity CE VC Primary School

Beaminster School
The Gillingham School