



**WESSEX**  
**MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST**

# Admissions Policy 27-28

<b>Adopted By:</b>	<b>Board of Trustees</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>March 2026</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>March 2027</b>

## Admissions Policy

Date of Issue:	02/03/2026
Policy applies to:	<b>All staff employed by the Wessex Multi-Academy Trust.</b>
Policy Version Number:	1
Purpose of the document:	To provide an understanding of the admissions policy and give guidance to parents, schools and the Local Authority respecting the admission of children to Wessex Multi-Academy Trust Schools.
Summary of the main points:	The document provides: 1. Step by step guidance on how to apply to attend a Wessex Multi-Academy Trust school
Approved by:	This policy has been adapted from the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education Model Admissions Policy for CE Schools and The School Bus Model Admissions policy, approved by the Admissions Authority for the CE Schools in the Trust – The Wessex Multi-Academy Trust Board of Trustees
Reviewer:	Head of Governance, Policy and Compliance
Summary of amendments:	N/A – first version for the year; No material changes from the previous year version.
Next review due:	01/03/2027

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## 1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 At Wessex Multi Academy Trust we welcome all pupils, and places at the school are offered in an open, fair, clear and objective manner. We work to the principle that any parent accessing our admissions arrangements will be able to understand easily how places for that school will be allocated and will not be alienated or discouraged from applying based on admissions criteria.
- 1.2 The table below sets out who the admission authority is and other responsible bodies in our schools.

Type of Trust school	CE Academy	Non-CE Academy
Who is the Trust admission authority?	Board of Trustees, Wessex MAT	Board of Trustees, Wessex MAT
Who deals with complaints about arrangements?	Schools Adjudicator	Schools Adjudicator
Who is responsible for processing first year admission applications (Year R, Year 5, Year 7 & Year 9)?	Academy Trust have appointed Dorset Council to facilitate this	Academy Trust have appointed Dorset Council to facilitate this
Who is responsible for arranging/providing for an appeal against refusal of a place at the school?	Academy Trust have appointed Dorset Council to facilitate this	Academy Trust have appointed Dorset Council to facilitate this
Who is responsible for processing in-year admissions applications?	School	School
Who is the religious authority for the school?	Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE)	N/A

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 This policy applies to all schools within Wessex Multi-Academy Trust.

School Name	Age Phase	PAN	Feeder Schools
Bere Regis Primary and Pre-School	Primary School	20	N/A
Damers First School	First School	90	N/A
Dorchester Middle School	Middle School	150	Cerne Abbas First School, Damers First School, Prince of Wales First School, Winterborne Valley First School
Frome Valley CE First School	First School	35	N/A
Manor Park CE First School	First School	60	N/A
Milborne St Andrew First School	First School	23	N/A
Piddle Valley CE First School	First School	23	N/A
Puddletown CE First School	First School	30	N/A

The Purbeck School	Secondary School only	180	Bovington Academy, Corfe Castle Primary School, Lulworth and Winfrith CE VC Primary School, Sandford Primary School, St Georges CE VA Primary School, St Mark's CE Primary School, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, St Mary's and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Stoborough CE VA Primary School, Swanage Primary School, Wareham St Mary CE Primary School, Wool CE Primary School
	Sixth Form only	100	N/A
St Mary's CE Middle School	Middle School	120	Broadmayne First School, Cheselbourne Village School, Frome Valley CE First School, Milborne St Andrew First School, Piddle Valley CE First School, Puddletown CE First School
St Osmund's CE Middle School	Middle School	180	Manor Park CE First School, St Mary's First School Charminster, St Mary's RC First School
The Thomas Hardy School	Upper School only	450	Dorchester Middle School, St Mary's CE Middle School, St Osmund's CE Middle School
	Sixth Form only	400* (*total capacity, with c.120 places for external students)	N/A

2.2 Wessex Multi-Academy Trust is the admission authority and responsible for the admission arrangements of its schools listed above. This document sets out the admission arrangements of its schools listed above for the academic year 2027/2028.

### 3. **Applying to Start School**

3.1 When applying to start school in Reception (Primary and First Schools) or Year 5 (Middle Schools) in September 2027 you must apply to Dorset Council. All applications for first admission must be received by Dorset Council by the closing date of 15 January 2027. Dorset Council will make a single offer of a place on 16 April 2027 (or next working day).

3.2 When applying to start school in Year 7 (Secondary School) or Year 9 (Upper School) in September 2027, you must apply to Dorset Council. All applications for first admission must be received by Dorset council by the closing date of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2026. Dorset Council will make a single offer of a place on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2027 (or the next working day).

	Applying to School Year R and Year 5	Applying to School Year 7 and Year 9
Deadline for applying to Dorset Council	15/01/2027	31/10/2026
Link	<a href="https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/education-and-training/schools-and-learning/apply-for-a-school-place">https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/education-and-training/schools-and-learning/apply-for-a-school-place</a>	
Deadline for submission of supplemental form to school (where applicable)	15/01/2027	31/10/2026
Offer of place by Dorset Council	16/04/2027 (or next working day)	01/03/2027 (or next working day)

#### 4. **Religious Character of the School**

- 4.1 CE schools listed in section 2.1 are designated with a religious character. Their religious authority is the Diocese of Salisbury. Wessex Multi-Academy Trust must have regard to any guidance from the schools' religious authority when constructing the faith-based terms of its admission arrangements.
- 4.2 Recognising their historic foundations, Trust CE schools will preserve and develop their religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the churches at parish and diocesan level. The schools aim to support children and their families by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. They encourage an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promote Christian values through the experience they offer to all their pupils.

#### 5. **Oversubscription Criteria**

- 5.1 The Trust Board will aim to ensure that oversubscription criteria is reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and compliant with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. This means that the oversubscription criteria will not unfairly disadvantage, whether directly or indirectly, any child based on a protected characteristic or economic disadvantage.
- 5.2 Where a school is oversubscribed (there are more applicants than places available) places will be allocated in accordance with the following criteria and in the following order (See section 6 explanatory notes for more detail):
- 5.2.1 Looked After Children or Previously Looked After Children – A child who is in the care of an LA or was in the care of an LA but immediately after being looked after became subject

to an adoption, child arrangement, or special guardianship order. This includes those children who appear to the admission authority to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

- 5.2.2 Vulnerable Children – A child is eligible in this category where the child has an identified social or medical need including those that have named the school in their EHCP.
- 5.2.3 Children living in the Catchment Area with a sibling at the school – A child living inside the Catchment Area is eligible for this category where they have a sibling attending the school on the date of application and the sibling will still be attending the school at the time of admission.
- 5.2.4 Children living in the Catchment Area and attending a designated feeder school – A child attending the designated feeder schools as shown in section 2.1. The schools are designated feeder school on account of their geographical proximity to the school into which they feed.
- 5.2.5 Children not living in the Catchment Area and attending a designated feeder school – see above.
- 5.2.6 Children living in the Catchment Area and not attending a designated feeder school.
- 5.2.7 Children living outside the Catchment Area with a sibling at the school – A child living outside the Catchment Area is eligible for this category where they have a sibling attending the School on the date of application and the sibling will still be attending the School at the time of admission.
- 5.2.8 Children living outside the Catchment Area who meet the faith criterion - A child living outside the Catchment Area is eligible for this category where the child is a regular practising Christian at a Recognised Church or Religious Group. (CE Schools Only)
- 5.2.9 Children of staff
- 5.2.10 All other children
- 5.2.11 Where two applications cannot otherwise be separated, the trust will follow a fair, clear and effective 'tie-breaker' procedure by allocating the place to the pupil who lives closest to school.

### 5.3 **Tie Breaker**

- 5.3.1 The school will adopt the measurement system of Dorset Council Local Authority to determine the distance from the school to the child's home address.
- 5.3.2 Where two or more applicants live an equal distance from the school and it is not possible to differentiate between them, priority will be determined by random allocation through the drawing of lots supervised by someone independent of the school.

5.4 When formulating the school's admission arrangements, the Trust Board will not:

- Place any conditions on the consideration of any application other than those in the oversubscription criteria published in their admission arrangements.
- Take into account any previous schools attended unless it is a named feeder school.
- Give priority to children whose parents rank preferred schools in their application.
- Introduce any new selection by ability.
- Give priority to children based on any practical or financial support their parents give to the school or associated parties, including any affiliated religious organisation.
- Give priority to children according to the occupational, marital, financial or educational status of parents applying – apart from where these factors determine a child's pupil premium eligibility, and for children whose parents work at school.
- Take account of reports from previous schools about children's past behaviour, attendance, attitude or achievement, or that of any other children in the family.
- Discriminate against any protected characteristic.
- Give priority based on a child's or their parents' past or present hobbies or activities.
- Interview children or parents.
- Request financial contributions as part of the admissions process.
- Request photographs of children – apart from for proof of identity when sitting selection tests.

## 6. **Oversubscription Criteria: Explanatory Notes**

6.1 **Catchment Area** means the geographical area from which children will be afforded priority for admission to a School.

6.1.1 The point within the school grounds from which the school will measure any distance or radii is the door of the school reception. This will be measured using the child's primary address. The catchment area for each Trust school can be found on the Dorset Council Admissions page <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/schools-in-your-catchment-area>. This should include the school's ecclesiastical parish.

## 6.2 **Vulnerable Children**

6.2.1 **Medical need** means where written evidence has been provided from a senior clinical medical officer or the child's general practitioner/specialist showing that the child's condition would make it detrimental to the child's health not to admit him/her to the school. This may include written evidence where the parent has a medical need and/or disability which would make it detrimental for the child to attend a different school; this may be supported by evidence of the child as a young carer. Evidence to be relied upon must be submitted with the Supplementary Information Form and sent to the school on or before the application deadline date.

- 6.2.2 Social Need means where the child is of confirmed refugee status. Written evidence of this from the home LA must be submitted with the Supplementary Information Form and sent to the School on or before application deadline day.
- 6.3 **Siblings.** For the purpose of this policy, "sibling" is defined as full sibling, half sibling, step sibling by virtue of marriage or civil partnership, sibling by virtue of adoption, and any other person the child regards as their sibling and with whom they have an established family life.
- 6.4 **Children of staff.** Where oversubscribed, priority will be given to children for whom staff members have parental responsibility, where the staff member has been employed by the school for two or more years at the time at which the application was made, and/or where the member of staff has been recruited to fill a vacant post where there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
- 6.5 **Faith Criterion Requirements**
- 6.5.1 Regular practising Christian means a child who attends a Recognised Church or Religious Group regularly prior to application.
- 6.5.2 Regularly means attending church monthly for 6 months prior to application.
- 6.5.3 Recognised Church or Religious Group means a church that is the same denomination as (or is in fellowship with or partnership with) a member of: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (see [www.ctbi.org.uk](http://www.ctbi.org.uk)); the Evangelical Alliance (see [eauk.org](http://eauk.org)); the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (see [www.fiec.org.uk](http://www.fiec.org.uk)); Affinity fellowship of Churches (see [www.affinity.org.uk](http://www.affinity.org.uk)).
- 6.6 **Home address** means the place where the child resides for the majority of the school week (Sunday to Thursday) with the person/s who legally has care of the child (childcare arrangements are excluded). Documentary evidence of house ownership or tenancy together with evidence of the child's residency at the property may be required.
- 6.7 **Equal Opportunities**
- 6.7.1 The Trust Board will not establish admissions criteria that excludes individuals with a particular protected characteristic. The admissions criteria will not exclude a greater proportion of pupils with particular protected characteristics, unless the Trust Board can justify how this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 6.7.2 The admissions criteria will not discriminate against disabled applicants, unless the Trust Board can justify how this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

## 7. **Admissions procedures**

- 7.1 Trust schools will offer open events and school visits to all potential applicants, irrespective of any protected characteristics. Where necessary, a school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants or disabled parents.
- 7.2 Trust schools may assess their ability to cater to the applicant's needs by:
- Inviting the applicant to attend the school for half a day.
  - Visiting the applicant's home.
  - Visiting the applicant's current education provision.

## 8. **Supplementary Information Form (SIF)**

- 8.1 Where seeking priority under the vulnerable children or faith criterion parents must fully complete the relevant part of the SIF and provide the required supporting evidence. Where relying on the faith criterion the SIF must be signed off by the relevant Church representative. Where relying on the vulnerable children criterion you must supply evidence to support the application.
- 8.2 The SIF must be returned to the school office on or before application deadline day. The SIF is available on the school website or a paper copy may be requested from the school office (also included as an appendix to this policy).

## 9. **Applications and Offers**

### 9.1 **Applications**

- 9.1.1 Parents will be provided with a common application form (CAF) by the LA where they will note their three preferred schools, along with a brief explanation, in rank order – the schools do not have to be located in the LA area where the parents live. Parents will provide LAs with the following information within the CAF:
- Their name and their child's name and date of birth
  - Their and their child's address and proof of residence
- 9.1.2 The CAF will be submitted to the parents' LA. Parents are not guaranteed to have their preferences met.
- 9.2 Supplementary information for the purpose of processing applications, where necessary, will be requested; however, it will not request any of the following:
- Any personal details, including information on criminal convictions or financial status
  - The first language of the parent or child
  - Details about the parents' or child's disability, medical or SEND requirements
  - Any parental agreement to follow the ethos of the school in a practical way
  - For the child to complete any part of the form or for two parents to provide signatures

- 9.3 Once a place has been offered, the child's short birth certificate may be asked for as a proof of birth date.
- 9.4 A school will never give priority to applications solely on the basis that they have completed a supplementary form.
- 9.5 For previously LAC (PLAC) and current LAC, a copy of the adoption order, child arrangements order or special guardianship order, and a letter from the LA confirming that the child was looked after immediately prior to the order being made will be requested. Evidence that demonstrates a child was in state care outside of England prior to being adopted may be requested.
- 9.6 **Allocating places**
- 9.6.1 Places will only be allocated on the basis of determined admissions arrangements. A clear record will be kept of all decisions made on applications.
- 9.6.2 Admission for a child will not be refused on the basis that:
- They have applied later than other applicants.
  - They are not of the faith of the school.
  - They followed a different curriculum at their previous school.
  - Information has not been received from their previous school.
- 9.6.3 Pupils not of usual school age will not be given less of a priority where a school is oversubscribed.
- 9.6.4 In the event that parents of a child wish for their child to be admitted outside their normal age group, Head Teacher/Head of School will decide which year group the child will enter in consultation with relevant Trust leaders. Once a decision has been reached, the child's parents will be informed in writing along with an explanation of how the decision was reached and any reasons why.
- 9.7 For children of UK service professionals and crown servants, the following procedure will be adhered to:
- A place will be allocated to the child in advance of the family arriving in the area named in the application form, where one is available.
  - The application must be accompanied with an official letter confirming the relocation date.
  - The address at which the child will live will be used when considering the application against the oversubscription criteria – a Unit or quartering address must be used where this is requested by the child's parent. The application will not be refused on the grounds of the child not currently living in the area or not currently having an intended address, nor will places be uniquely reserved.
  - The arrangements for service children will be in line with the government's commitment to removing disadvantage for service children.
- 9.8 Schools must admit all children who have an EHC plan where the school is named. Children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) who do not have an EHC plan will be

treated equally to all other applicants in the admissions process. This includes children who may need extra support or reasonable adjustments to be made. The details of Trust schools' SEND provision can be found in their Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policies and SEN Information Reports on their respective websites.

## 9.9 **Offers**

9.9.1 Primary, First and Middle Schools – All offers will be made on National Offer Day, i.e. 16 April or the next working day where this date falls on a weekend or bank holiday.

9.9.2 Secondary and Upper schools – All offers will be made on National Offer Day, i.e. 1 March or the next working day where this date falls on a weekend or bank holiday.

9.10 Where a school is oversubscribed, applications will be ranked in accordance with the determined arrangements, and will ensure that only one offer will be made per child by the LA.

9.11 **Withdrawing an offer.** An offer will only be withdrawn if it has been made in error, a parent has not responded within 20 working days, or if the offer was made to a fraudulent or misleading application. Where an offer has not been responded to within the designated time frame, the parent will be given a further opportunity to respond and will explain that the offer will be withdrawn if they do not. If any application is found to be fraudulent after a child has started at a Trust school in the first term of the new academic year, the school may withdraw the place. If the fraudulent application is found after this time, the pupil will not be removed, but further action may be taken against the parent, including criminal action.

## 10. **Coordination scheme**

10.1 The LA will publish a scheme to coordinate admissions arrangements for the normal admissions round and late applications by 1 January in the determination year. The LA will consult with the Trust Board in the event that the scheme is changed substantially from the previous year. The LA will also consult with the Trust Board and other admissions authorities in the area at least every seven years, even if no changes have been made in that period.

10.2 The Trust Board is under a legal obligation, to participate in coordination for the normal admissions round, and will provide the LA with all information it needs to coordinate admissions.

## 11. **Appeals**

11.1 Where an application is unsuccessful the parents/carers and in some cases children, have the statutory right to bring an appeal against the decision to refuse admission to an independent appeal panel. Details of how to appeal will be included in the letter advising that the application has been unsuccessful.

- 11.2 The admission appeal timetable is published on Trust's behalf by the LA, Dorset Council on their website by 28<sup>th</sup> February each year.
- 11.3 In our Trust, we engage our LA, Dorset Council, to manage appeals. They will ensure the appeals panel acts in accordance with this Code, the School Admissions (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, the School Admissions Code, other law relating to admissions, and relevant human rights and equalities legislation, for example, the Equality Act 2010.
- 11.4 Timetable for appeal will include:
- A deadline for lodging appeals which allows appellants at least 20 school days from the date of notification that their application was unsuccessful to prepare and lodge their written appeal.
  - Ensures that appellants receive at least 10 school days' notice of their appeal hearing.
  - Reasonable deadlines for appellants to submit additional evidence, for admission authorities to submit their evidence, and for the clerk to send appeal papers to the panel and parties.
  - Ensures that decision letters are sent within 5 school days of the hearing wherever possible.
- 11.5 **The following timescales will apply:**
- For applications made in the normal admissions round, appeals will be heard within 40 school days of the deadline for lodging appeals
  - For late applications, appeals will be heard within 40 school days from the deadline for lodging appeals where possible, or within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.
  - for applications for in-year admissions, appeals will be heard within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.
- 11.6 **Notifying appellants of the right to appeal and the appeal hearing** - Written notification of decision will be sent informing a parent of their unsuccessful admissions application. It will include:
- The reason why admission was refused.
  - Information about the right to appeal.
  - The deadline for lodging an appeal.
  - Contact details for making an appeal.
- 11.6.1 Parents will be informed in the letter that, if they wish to appeal, they must make the appeal in writing. The grounds on which an appeal can be made will not be limited.
- 11.6.2 Appellants will be provided with written notification of the date and all final arrangements of the appeal hearing no later than 10 school days before the hearing. This notification will include the deadline for the submission of any further evidence that was not sent in the original appeal.

11.6.3 Any reasonable request for information from parents to help them prepare their case for the appeals hearing will be complied with.

11.6.4 Appellants will be asked whether they intend to call any witnesses or be represented at the hearing and inform them that they may waive their right to 10 school days' notice of the hearing if they so wish.

### 11.7 **Constitution of appeals panels**

11.7.1 A clerk to the appeal panel who is independent of the school and the education functions of the trust will be appointed. The clerk will have sufficient knowledge of the 'School Admission Appeals Code', the 'School Admissions Code', other law relating to admissions and other relevant law, as well as being able to offer advice to enable the panel to undertake its judicial function.

11.7.2 The appeals panel will comprise of a chair and at least two other panel members.

11.7.3 The panel will also include at least one lay person and one or more people with experience in education.

11.7.4 In accordance with 'The School Admissions (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, the clerk to the panel will ensure that no disqualified person is allowed membership of the panel. A person will be disqualified if they are:

11.7.5 A member of the LA in whose area the school is located.

11.7.6 A member or former member of the Trust Board of the school.

11.7.7 An employee at the LA, or the Trust Board of the school, other than a teacher or TA.

11.7.8 Any person who has, or at any time has had, any connection with the Trust Board, school or LA who may not act impartially.

11.7.9 Any person who has not attended training required by the Trust Board arranging the appeals panel.

11.7.10 Panel members and clerks will not take part in hearings until they have received appropriate training as outlined within the 'School Admissions Appeals Code'.

11.7.11 Panel members will be independent from the school and will remain independent for the duration of their service.

11.7.12 The chair of the appeals panel is responsible for the conduct of the hearing, including introducing parties, explaining the roles of the clerk and the panel and how the hearing will be conducted, and ensuring that parties have sufficient opportunity to state their case and ask questions.

11.7.13 The LA will indemnify the members of the appeals panel against any legal costs and expenses they incur in connection with any decision taken in good faith whilst acting as a member of the appeals panel.

- 11.7.14 Members of the appeals panel will be eligible to receive travel and subsistence allowances where applicable, and will, where appropriate, be compensated for any loss of earnings or expenses.
- 11.8 **Evidence** - All evidence relating to the appeal hearing will be passed on to the clerk. This evidence will include details of:
- 11.8.1 How the admission arrangements and the co-ordinated admissions scheme apply to the appellant's application.
- 11.8.2 Reasons for the decision to refuse admission.
- 11.8.3 How the admission would cause prejudice to the education provision of the school.
- 11.9 The clerk will send all the papers required for the hearing to both parties and the members of the panel seven days before the hearing.
- 11.10 **Attendance and representation** – The LA will make arrangements for appeal hearings. Appeal hearings can be held in person, remotely by video conference or a mixture of the two (a hybrid hearing).
- 11.11 Appeal hearings held entirely by telephone will only be permitted where video conferencing cannot be used relating to connectivity or accessibility and if the appellant and presenting officer both agree.
- 11.12 Regardless of the forum chosen, appeal panels will allow appellants the opportunity to make oral representations.
- 11.13 The LA will provide a presenting officer to attend the hearing and present the trust's case to the panel, ensuring that this person is a member of staff who is well acquainted with the school.
- 11.14 The presenting officer will be responsible for relaying to the attendees the decision not to admit the child, and answer questions where necessary, either in person or remotely
- 11.15 Appellants may attend in person or be represented by another individual. Where appellants cannot attend, a decision will be made based on the written evidence.
- 11.16 **Appeals hearings** Where appeal hearings are held in person, all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the venue is appropriate, accessible to appellants, and has a suitable area for appellants and presenting officers to wait separately from the panel before and between appeals.
- 11.17 Appeal hearings that are held remotely will be held in such a way that means the appeal is capable of being heard fairly and transparently. Attending parties will be able to present their cases fully and the Trust Board will be satisfied that each participant has access to facilities that allow them to engage in the hearing at all times.
- 11.18 Where a hybrid hearing is to take place, the arrangements above will be complied with as appropriate.
- 11.19 Hearings, whether conducted in-person or remotely, will be held in private.

11.20 The order of appeal hearings will be as below:

- 11.20.1 Case for the school
- 11.20.2 Questioning by the appellant(s) and panel.
- 11.20.3 Case for the appellant(s).
- 11.20.4 Questioning by the Trust Board and panel.
- 11.20.5 Summing up by the school
- 11.20.6 Summing up by the appellant(s).

11.21 **Reaching a decision** When reaching a decision, the LA will follow the specific two stage process outlined in section three of the 'School Admission Appeals Code'.

11.22 Admission appeals regarding infant class sizes only - In cases where the LA has refused to admit a child on the grounds that admitting an additional child would breach the infant class size limit and there are no measures that can be taken to avoid this without prejudicing the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources, the two-stage process outlined in Section four of the 'School Admission Appeals Code' will be followed.

11.23 Decisions will be decided by a simple majority of votes cast. If votes are split equally, the chair will make the casting vote. The panel will either uphold or dismiss an appeal and will not uphold an appeal subject to any specified conditions.

11.24 To communicate the decision made, the panel will send a letter to the appellant, signed by the clerk or chair of the appeals panel, no later than five school days after the decision has been made.

11.25 The decision letter will contain clear reasons for the panel's decision and a summary of the relevant factors raised by the parties and considered during the hearing. In the case of applications outside the normal admissions round, the Trust Board will ensure that the pupil is admitted to the school without unnecessary delay.

11.26 Appeals by the parent of a child with an EHC plan against the choice of school named in the EHC plan will be considered by the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) and not the appeals panel.

11.27 In cases where there are multiple appeals, the LA will ensure that, where possible, all appeals are heard by the same appeals panel with the same members, and that no decisions are made until all the appeals have been heard.

11.28 In all hearings the clerk to the panel will ensure that an accurate record is taken of the points raised at the hearing, including the proceedings, attendance, voting and reasons for decisions. These notes will be kept securely by the LA for the trust for a minimum of two years and are, in most cases, exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

11.29 **Further appeals and complaints** Appellants will not have the right to more than one appeal in respect of the same school for the same academic year unless, in exceptional circumstances, the LA has accepted a second application from the appellant due to a

material change in the circumstances of the parent, child or school but still refused admission. Appellants can apply for a place at the school for a different academic year.

- 11.30 The LA will inform parents about their right to complain about maladministration on the part of an appeal panel and the arrangements to follow.
- 11.31 If appellants have an issue with the appeal process, they can complain to the Secretary of State.

## 12. **Other Important Information**

- 12.1 Waiting Lists – If the school is oversubscribed for September entry a waiting list will be maintained until 31<sup>st</sup> December that year. The position of the child on the waiting list will correspond with the oversubscription criteria; it will not be based on length of time on the waiting list. When additional children are placed on the waiting list, the list will be re-ordered in line with the oversubscription criteria. The right of appeal remains. You may request your child's name be removed from the waiting list at any time. If a place is offered but refused, then the child's name will be removed from the waiting list.
- 12.2 For in-year admissions, if there is a waiting list for that year, the child will be placed on a waiting list until a space becomes available, or the child finds a new school setting. The list will set out the priority for places in the same order as admissions at the start of the year – when a place becomes available, it will be offered to the parents of the child at the top of the list.
- 12.3 Summer Born children – Primary. Summer born children (which refers to children born from 1 April to 31 August) are not required to start school until a full year after the point at which they could first have been admitted – the point at which other children in their age range are beginning year 1. Should the parent wish their child to be admitted to Reception, rather than year 1, they may request that the child is admitted out of their normal age group. Please note the following:
  - 12.3.1 **You must make an application for admission to the School for September 2028 entry but make it clear on the application form that you wish your child to enter the reception class in September 2028.**
  - 12.3.2 Discussions with the school are strongly recommended prior to making a decision to decline entry for an entire year **and** to be admitted to reception in September 2028. Any decision will be on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned.
  - 12.3.3 If the request is agreed the September 2027 application may be withdrawn before a place is offered **but a fresh application will need to be made** for September 2028 entry **which will be processed as a fresh application along with all other applications and in accordance with Trust Schools' admission arrangements**. PLEASE NOTE that it is possible even if the request is agreed that the child may not be admitted in September 2028 as there is no guarantee of a school place.

12.3.4 If the request is refused the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in-year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday.

12.4 Deferred entry and part time attendance below statutory school age – A child may start at a Trust school in the academic year in which he/she reaches the age of 5. Where the child has not yet reached statutory school age (5 years old), the child is entitled to a full-time place and parents may choose for their child to attend full time. Alternatively, parents may choose for their child to attend part time until their child attains compulsory school age. If parents do not consider their child is ready to start school, then they may defer entry altogether to later in the school year but not beyond the point at which the child reaches compulsory school age or not beyond the beginning of the final term in the school year (whichever is the sooner).

12.5 Admission of children outside their normal age group - Parents may seek a place for their child outside their normal age group.

12.6 Multiple Birth Applications – Where there are multiple birth applications the PAN will, provided it is practicable, be exceeded or increased at the point of allocation in order to ensure that multiple birth siblings can be allocated places at the school.

### 13. In-Year Admissions

13.1 Our schools will follow the same process for in-year admissions as for admissions at the start of the academic year

13.2 The Trust Board will publish in-year arrangements on the school website by 31 August each year, detailing how applications will be dealt with between 1 September until the following 31 August. These arrangements will set out how parents can apply for a school place, including whether the Trust Board will handle applications or whether the LA will accept these applications on its behalf.

13.3 Where a school has places available in-year, it will offer a place to every child who has applied for one without condition or use of oversubscription criteria, unless to do so would be to prejudice the efficient provision of education or use of resources.

13.4 The published in-year admissions arrangements will also provide a suitable application form for parents to complete, including a supplementary information form, where necessary, and set out when parents will be notified of the outcome of their application and details about the right to appeal.

13.5 The school will consider all such applications and if the year group applied for has space available, then a place will be offered. If a place is not available, then the child's parent can ask for their child's name to be added to the appropriate waiting list. As with admissions at the start of the academic year, parents whose applications are turned down are entitled to appeal through the process outlined below.

- 13.6 All parents will be notified within 15 school days of receipt of an in-year application of the outcome of this application. The school will notify the LA of every application and its outcome within two school days or as soon as is reasonably practicable beyond this.
- 13.7 Where an offer is accepted, the school will make arrangements for the pupil to start as soon as possible.
- 13.8 LA in-year coordination scheme. The Trust will inform the LA by 1 August of whether it will participate in the LA's in-year co-ordination scheme and will send any relevant information for the LA to publish on its website.
- 13.9 Where the Trust is participating in the LA coordination scheme, it will provide the LA with details of the number of places available, via its schools, no later than two school days following the request of such information from the LA. It will also provide information to parents about how they can find details on the relevant scheme.

#### 14. **Legal Framework**

- 14.1 This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
- Equality Act 2010
  - Human Rights Act 1998
  - School Standards and Framework Act 1998
  - DfE (2021) 'School Admissions Code'
  - DfE (2022) 'School Admission Appeals Code'
  - The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- 14.2 This policy operates in conjunction with the following Trust policies:
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
  - Data Protection Policy
  - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
  - SEN Information Report

#### 15. **Roles and Responsibilities**

- 15.1 The Trust Board is responsible for:
- Acting in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance when carrying out the overall admission of pupils into its schools.
  - Overseeing, and determining annually, admissions arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applicants than places at a Trust school.

- Ensuring that oversubscription criteria does not discriminate against any child.
- Ensuring that the practices and criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective.
- Publishing the admissions arrangements on its schools website, including the oversubscription criteria.
- Publicly consulting on any proposed changes to the admissions arrangements.
- Clearly communicating any reasons for rejecting the admission of a pupil, as well as the parent's right to appeal and the appeal process.
- Implementing any advice or recommendations given by the Schools Adjudicator without undue delay.

15.2 The Schools Adjudicator is responsible for:

- Acting in line with the relevant legislation and guidance pertaining to admissions.
- Receiving concerns and objections regarding the admission of pupils and making recommendations to the admission authority as a result of these concerns and objections.
- Approving variations to determined admissions arrangements where there has been a major change in circumstances or law.

15.3 The appeals clerk is responsible for:

- Having an in-depth knowledge of the relevant appeals codes and other relevant law.
- Providing an independent and impartial service for admission appeals.
- Making the necessary administrative arrangements for hearings.
- Notifying all parties of the order of proceedings in advance of an appeals hearing.
- Responding to queries from appellants in advance of an appeals hearing or identifying who will be appropriate to respond.
- Being an independent source of advice on procedure and admissions law.
- Keeping accurate records of proceedings and providing written notification of the appeals panel's decisions

15.4 The Headteacher/Head of school is responsible for:

- Liaising with the Trust Board where relevant regarding admitting pupils to their school.
- Working with the Trust Board when determining their school's capacity.
- Ensuring that the Trust Board has all the information it needs to set admissions arrangements and participate in LA coordination schemes.
- Making arrangements for pupils admitted through in-year admissions to start as soon as possible.

## 16. **Determining a PAN (Published Admissions Number)**

- 16.1 The Trust Board will determine PANs for each school within the trust that educates a relevant age group. The Trust's PANs for each school are shown in the table in section 2.1.
- 16.2 The Trust Board will publish the PANs annually. The Trust Board will notify the Local Authority (LA) of any increases to the agreed PANs, and the schools will reference the changes on their websites. The Trust Board will consult on any proposal to decrease the school's PAN – consultation will not occur where it is proposed to increase or keep the same PAN.
- 16.3 If the Trust Board decides that it can accept more pupils than laid out in its PAN, it will notify the LA in good time so that the LA can deliver its coordination responsibilities effectively.
- 16.4 Schools will admit up to the PAN in the normal year of entry which is the Reception year for Primary and First Schools, Year 5 for Middle Schools, Year 7 for Secondary Schools and Year 9 for Upper Schools.
- 16.5 Where a child has an education, health and care plan (EHCP) which names a school, then that child will be admitted to that School and the number of available places in the PAN will reduce correspondingly. Admission of children with an EHCP is dealt with by the home LA (which is where you reside). This is Dorset Council.
- 16.6 In line with statutory requirements, the Trust Board will not refuse admission to any age group, other than the relevant age groups, on the grounds that the number of children admitted has already reached the PAN; however, the Trust Board may refuse admission on the grounds that the admission of another child would prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources.
- 16.7 In Primary and First Schools, Infant Class Size Regulations apply to the normal year of entry (and Year 1 and Year 2). These regulations require classes to be no bigger than 30 children although the PAN may be much lower than 30.
- 16.8 Where there are more applications for admission than places available at a school, places will be offered in accordance with the general oversubscription criteria at section 8 of this policy and any school specific variances. Any school specific variances to this will be added in the appendices for reference.

## 17. **Consultation, determination and publication**

- 17.1 **Consultation** - The Trust Board will consult on any proposed changes to the admissions arrangements. Consultation will last for a minimum of six weeks and will take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year. The Trust Board will consult on admissions arrangements at least once every seven years, even if no changes have been made in that time.

17.1.1 The Trust Board will consult with the following:

- Parents of children between the ages of two and 18 (via childminders, pre-schools, nurseries, feeder schools and colleges located within a 5-mile radius of all Trust schools)
- Stakeholders
- Other admission authorities within the relevant area
- The LA
- Any LAs in which pupils have historically come from
- The individual representing the religion or religious denomination of the school.

## 17.2 **Determination and publication of admissions arrangements**

17.2.1 The Trust Board will publish a copy of the full proposed admission arrangements and the contact details of the individual responsible for admissions liaison on school websites. A copy of the proposed admission arrangements will be made available upon request.

17.2.2 Admission arrangements will be determined by 28 February in the determination year on an annual basis, even when no changes to the arrangements have been made.

17.2.3 The Trust Board will notify all appropriate bodies of the finalised admissions arrangements when they have been determined. A copy of the finalised admission arrangements will be sent to the LA for entry by 15 March in the determination year. Finalised admission arrangements will also be published on school websites by 15 March in the determination year, and will continue to display them for the whole offer year.

17.2.4 A copy of the admission arrangements will be sent to the individual or body representing a CE school's religious character.

17.2.5 Any objections to the admission arrangements will be directed to the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May in the determination year.

17.2.6 The Trust Board will provide the LA with all of the information it needs to compile the composite prospectus by 8 August in the determination year.

## 18. **Variations**

18.1 The Trust Board will not revise the admissions arrangements for a school year once they have been determined, unless this would be necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement, a determination of the Schools Adjudicator, or any misprint in the admission arrangements.

18.2 The Trust Board may, in exceptional circumstances, propose variations where there have been major changes in circumstances that necessitate a change.

18.2.1 Any proposals to vary the admissions arrangements will be referred to the Secretary of State.

## 19. **Monitoring and review**

- 19.1 This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Board on an annual basis. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff and other interested parties.
- 19.2 Important information published by the LA applies to some aspects of school admissions. If you are considering applying for a place at one of the schools listed in section 2.1 you are advised to refer to Dorset Council's or Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council's website.

## Appendix 1 – Supplementary Information Form

### Dorchester Middle School

#### 2027/2028 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION FORM – Faith – All Schools (except 6<sup>th</sup> Forms)

##### **Part A – Please ensure that you read before completing**

The oversubscription criteria set out in section 5 of the school's published Admission Arrangements will be used to prioritise the offer of school places where there are more applications received than places available. There are two criteria which, if you wish your application to be considered against, require this Form to be completed: Vulnerable Children (All Schools); Children outside the Catchment Area who meet the Faith Criterion (CE Schools Only)

##### **This Page Applies to Criterion 6.5 - Children outside the Catchment Area who meet the Faith Criterion**

##### **A child who is a regular practising Christian at a Recognised Church or Religious Group**

*Regular practising Christian means a child who attends a Recognised Church or Religious Group regularly prior to application.*

*Regularly means monthly attendance for 6 months prior to application).*

In the event that during the period specified for attendance at worship the Recognised Church or Religious Group has been closed for public worship, the requirements in relation to attendance will only apply to the period when the Recognised Church or Religious Group has been available for public worship. Where the Recognised Church or Religious Group has made available alternative premises for public worship the requirements in relations to attendance shall apply to that period as well –

*Recognised Church or Religious Group means a church that is the same denomination as (or is in fellowship with or partnership with) a member of: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (see [ctbi.org.uk](http://ctbi.org.uk)), the Evangelical Alliance (see [eauk.org](http://eauk.org)), the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (see [www.fiec.org.uk](http://www.fiec.org.uk)), Affinity fellowship of Churches (see [www.affinity.org.uk](http://www.affinity.org.uk)).*

If you wish your admission application to be prioritised on this basis you must ensure that this Supplementary Information Form is completed by the vicar, priest, minister, pastor or church-warden of the attended Church in order to confirm that the requirements of the above statement have been met.

##### **Part B – Submitting your Supplementary Information Form**

When applying to start school in Reception (Primary and First Schools) or Year 5 (Middle Schools) in September 2026, this form must be submitted to the school by the 15 January 2026.

When applying to start school in Year 7 (Secondary School) or Year 9 (Upper School) in September 2026, this form must be submitted to the school by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025.

For a child to join any year group during the 2026/2027 school year - your completed Supplementary Information Form must be delivered with your admission application form directly to the school office.

##### **Part C – Declaration to be made by vicar, priest, minister, pastor or church warden**

I have consulted with the local church leadership team and can confirm that

..... (enter child's name) attends.....  
Church and has done so at least monthly for the last 6 months

**Signed**.....

**Print name**.....

**Position**.....

**Date**.....

**Note:** The church leadership team includes clergy, church wardens and those responsible for Sunday School

## Dorchester Middle School

### 2027/2028 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION FORM – Vulnerable Children – All Schools (except 6<sup>th</sup> Forms)

#### **Part A – Please ensure that you read before completing**

The oversubscription criteria set out in section **3** of the school's published Admission Arrangements will be used to prioritise the offer of school places where there are more applications received than places available. There are two criteria which, if you wish your application to be considered against, require this Form to be completed: Vulnerable Children (All Schools); Children outside the Catchment Area who meet the Faith Criterion (CE Schools Only).

#### **This Page Applies to Criterion – Vulnerable Children (See Paragraph 6.2)**

A child is eligible in this category where the child has an identified social or medical need.

Medical need means where written evidence has been provided from a senior clinical medical officer or the child's general practitioner / specialist showing that the child's condition would make it detrimental to the child's health not to admit him/her to the school. This may include written evidence where the parent has a medical need and/or disability which would make it detrimental for the child to attend a different school; this may be supported by evidence of the child as a young carer. Evidence to be relied upon must be submitted with the Supplemental Information Form and sent to the School on or before application deadline day.

Social Need means where the child is of confirmed refugee status. Written evidence of this from the home LA must be submitted with the Supplemental Information Form and sent to the School on or before application deadline day

#### **Part B – Submitting your Supplementary Information Form**

When applying to start school in Reception (Primary and First Schools) or Year 5 (Middle Schools) in September 2026, this form must be submitted to the school by the 15 January 2026.

When applying to start school in Year 7 (Secondary School) or Year 9 (Upper School) in September 2026, this form must be submitted to the school by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025.

For a child to join any year group during the 2026/2027 school year - your completed Supplementary Information Form must be delivered with your admission application form directly to the school office.

