

Dorset County Council

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Policy for Admission to Learning Centres
(Pupil Referral Units) in Dorset**

October 2015

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Policy for Admission to Learning Centres (Pupil Referral Units) in Dorset

1. Statutory Duties of the Local Authority

Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils, and for other pupils who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such provision. Full time provision must be made unless the pupil's health (mental or physical) means that full-time education would not be in his or her best interests. This applies to all children of compulsory school age resident in the local authority area, whether or not they are on the roll of a school, and whatever type of school they attend. Full-time education for permanently excluded pupils must begin no later than the sixth day of the exclusion. (Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, as amended by section 3 of the Children, Schools and Families Act 2010). The school will provide education for students on fixed term exclusions.

Any school that is established and maintained by a local authority to enable it to discharge the above duty is known as a pupil referral unit (PRU). There is no requirement on local authorities to have or to establish a pupil referral unit, and they may discharge their duties by other means. However, only a local authority can establish a pupil referral unit. Others can establish Alternative Provision Academies or AP Free Schools.

Provision in PRUs is defined as Alternative Provision (AP). However AP also encompasses education arranged by schools for pupils from the sixth day of a fixed term exclusion and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

1.1 Dorset's approach

In Dorset PRUs are known as Learning Centres. The Local Authority (LA) has established five Learning Centres so that it can make suitable provision for children and young people described in Section 19 of the Education Act 1996. Places are commissioned in the five Dorset Learning Centres to enable the LA to fulfil this function.

In addition Dorset Learning Centres are able to receive pupils who are at risk of exclusion and for whom the school wishes to make off-site provision. Such pupils are dual registered and may receive a substantial part of their provision in school.

The Local Authority is required to set an overall policy for admission to its alternative provision, based on clear criteria for requesting involvement and admitting pupils, including those who are dual registered.

2. Dual registration

Most students at Learning Centres will dual main registered at their mainstream school and dual subsidiary registered at the Learning Centre. For the purpose of the school census a pupil should be dual main registered at their school and dual subsidiary registered at the alternative provision.

In such cases, the school has organised off-site provision for the pupil to address specific issues that have become a barrier to accessing education. The objective of the Learning Centre intervention is to ensure that the pupil can return to appropriate education successfully.

As such, requests for involvement will be time limited with specific objectives for the intervention. The time limit on a placement will reflect the nature of the work to be undertaken. In signing the request for involvement form, head teachers are agreeing to the length of placement. At the end of the placement the situation for the pupil will be reviewed and the reintegration process started unless it is felt that the student needs more time at the Learning Centre. The Head of Centre is best placed to make this decision in conjunction with the partner school. It is recognised that pupils will need support to reintegrate successfully.

2.2 The expectation on the School

In accepting a dual registration place at a Learning Centre, the partner school undertakes to

- ensure that the student remains on roll
- contribute financially to provision for that student up to AWPU
- retain responsibility for students' provision and progress
- transfer Pupil Premium on a pro rata basis for all pupils dual registered at the Learning Centre for longer than one term (13 weeks)
- provide accurate baseline and KS2 data
- maintain existing provision (e.g. EQ) for as long as it is of benefit to the student
- send a representative to the Centre's Management Committee
- work with the Learning Centre to ensure that the young person can move onto suitable post-16 education or training if appropriate

Head teachers and governing bodies should be aware of the requirements of the Statutory Guidance on Alternative Provision which was issued by the DfE in January 2013 and revised in January 2015.

When the School requests intervention in the form of a dual registered place at a Learning Centre it must ensure that parents are given clear information about the placement and why it has come about. Parents should also be informed when and how the place will be reviewed.

The school will keep the placement under review and involve parents in this process. Review dates will be set by the school, with Learning Centre representation. This process is designed to evaluate whether the placement is achieving its objectives and when the pupil's reintegration into mainstream schooling will take place. Heads of Learning Centres will work with the partner school to ensure that the shared responsibility for the review is met.

If a child is dual registered at a Learning Centre at the point of transition (e.g. from middle to upper school), the Learning Centre will support that transition for up to one term. It is essential that the child is main registered at the new school.

3. Admission to Learning Centres

Each Learning Centre has a set number of full-time places commissioned through the Local Authority. All alternative provision places at Learning Centres are allocated through admissions panels or, on rare occasion, by one of the Alternative Provision team (see 5.6). Schools or other professionals should not seek to engage the Learning Centres by any other route.

3.1 Areas covered by Admissions Panels

There are two panels which meet every three weeks in term time which consider and decide upon requests for involvement from a range of professionals.

Weymouth and Portland Panel: covers all Weymouth and Portland schools, for consideration for places and support from the Compass Learning Centre.

Central Panel: covers those schools not covered by the Weymouth and Portland Panel for consideration for places and support from Dorchester, Forum (Blandford), Christchurch and Sherborne Learning Centres.

3.2 Panel decision making processes:

Dorset's Learning Centres will admit those pupils whom the Admissions Panels have deemed to be appropriate admissions in accordance with this policy. Any request for involvement must follow the process outlined in section 4.

Both panels have head teacher, Learning Centre, Learning and Inclusion Services and Family Support service representation.

The panel will make decisions on the nature of intervention appropriate to meet the needs as identified on the Request for Involvement application/form (Appendix 1). This will include the length of the placement; the desired outcomes of the intervention and the review date.

4. Who can make a request for involvement?

The decision to make a request for involvement will always be collaborative, with the lead officer seeking the views of parents/carers, the pupil, schools and other key adults who work with the child and drawing together information about current areas of need and of success and levels of attainment. This information will be used to complete the request for involvement/ information passport which will inform the panel's decision and will be passed to the Learning Centre.

The table below identifies the appropriate referring professionals for each area of need.

Area of need	Who leads?	How?
Permanent Exclusions	Exclusions Officer	Completed request along with <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion letter• Relevant dates

<p>At risk of Permanent Exclusion</p> <p>Pupils 'at risk of permanent exclusion' from school may be referred for full or joint provision which will be subject to regular review.</p>	<p>Exclusions Officer</p> <p>Head of Virtual School for Children in Care</p> <p>SEN Team Leader</p>	<p>Completed Request for Involvement Form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Background reports/statements & evidence of appropriate interventions and graduated response, including use of a Pastoral Support Plan ● Details of multi-agency involvement
<p>Medical</p> <p>Pupils who are unable to attend school as a result of long term illness or mental health difficulties.</p>	<p>A Medical/CAMHS Consultant or a Community Paediatrician (not a GP) must support a request for provision</p>	<p>Completed Form must be accompanied with supporting documents from a Medical or CAMHS Consultant or Community Paediatrician.</p>
<p>High level of Emotional/Social Vulnerability</p> <p>Pupils needing a flexible, supportive, individual educational programme which will support a return to mainstream school or a move to a specialist school.</p>	<p>Educational Psychologist</p> <p>Early Intervention or Family Support Social Workers</p> <p>Head of Virtual School for Children in Care</p> <p>SEN Team Leader</p>	<p>Completed Form along with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relevant background history ● Areas of difficulty ● Desired outcome
<p>Fair Access</p> <p>Applies to those students who have been in a Learning Centre in another authority as identified by School Admissions or on the rare occasion when the panel deems a referral to AP appropriate.</p>	<p>Admissions Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Admissions Form ● Admissions Additional Information Form ● Case history

4.1 Notification of panel outcomes

The expectation is that the referring professional will be informed of the panel decision within 24 hours by email. As such it is essential that email contact details are included on the Request for Involvement form. The professional will then inform school and parents of the decision. Where a request for involvement is agreed, a representative of the Learning Centre will be in touch with the family within one week of the panel decision.

5. What criteria apply for successful placement?

5.1 Permanent Exclusions

The LA has a statutory duty to make provision for all pupils who have been permanently excluded by the 6th day of their exclusion. For this reason decisions about the placement of permanently excluded pupils do not rest with the panel and are the responsibility of the Schools Exclusion Guidance and Training Officer who will gather additional information from the excluding school and other agencies, liaise with parents/carers and with the pupil, seek advice from other professionals as appropriate and reach a decision on whether the pupil should access a place at another mainstream school or be placed at a Learning Centre. If the former, the Officer will identify an appropriate placement according to an established protocol with the admissions team which is consistent with the Fair Access Policy. The choice of Learning Centre will largely depend on where the pupil lives, although other factors may be taken into account.

5.2 At risk of permanent exclusion

Consideration of a request for Learning Centre involvement should be made only once there is evidence of a graduated response or in response to an exceptional one-off incident that would normally result in permanent exclusion.

When considering the appropriateness of a request for a placement for a pupil who is at risk of permanent exclusion because of a series of incidents over a period of time, school leaders should be aware of the need to evidence work undertaken to support the child in school.

There is an expectation that a young person experiencing difficulties with managing his or her behaviour will have a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP). The purpose of the PSP is to support the pupil in addressing the underlying causes of any undesirable behaviour. It is important that the parent/carer, pupil and school have come together to agree the support strategies in the PSP and the plan has been given sufficient time to succeed.

Given that a request for Learning Centre involvement is a response to a level of behavioural, social or emotional difficulty that cannot be managed within the school there should be evidence of:

- Meetings with parents/carers and the appropriate involvement of other agencies

- Appropriate and personalised behaviour support in addition to that delivered through the school's universal provision – this can be delivered in-house or through an outside agency
- Tailoring of the curriculum offer at KS4
- Personalisation of programmes including literacy support were necessary
- Mentoring

Schools should also be able to demonstrate that their actions are compliant with the Statutory Guidance on Alternative Provision which was issued by the DfE in January 2013.

Children in care are a priority group. The Head of the Virtual School for Children in Care is a member of the Admissions Panels. He will make a detailed assessment for presentation to the panel where a child in care is at risk of exclusion.

5.3 Medical

Dorset guidance concerning request for involvement on medical grounds may be found on dorsetforyou. The title of this document is "Access to Education for Children and Young People with Medical Needs" which is based on the DfE's statutory guidance "Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs" (January 2013).

Although school staff will be involved in providing pupil information, the request for out of school provision may only be made by a Consultant or Community Paediatrician. All avenues to support the pupil's continued provision in school will be explored. On going Learning Centre involvement is subject to agreement at review meetings which must be attended by the referring professional or a suitable representative.

5.4 High level of Emotional/Social Vulnerability

Requests for involvement must be able to demonstrate fully that all avenues to support attendance at school have been explored. They must evidence the involvement of other agencies. We would expect most pupils referred in this category to have a CAF and have been given Team Around the Child support and that the school would have sought EP advice.

Requests must be clear about the required outcomes and how a Learning Centre place would contribute to these outcomes. There must be a clear timetable for reviewing the effectiveness.

5.5 Fair Access Admissions

Admissions to Learning Centres may be agreed under the fair access protocol only under exceptional circumstances.

5.6 Are requests ever considered outside panel?

On rare occasions there may be cause for provision at a Learning Centre to be agreed outside panel. This is likely to be in circumstances when there are significant safeguarding issues or when there are overwhelming reasons why education provision

must be made without delay. Such requests will be considered on a case by case basis by the Alternative Provision and Elective Home Education Adviser and/or Head of Virtual School and must be ratified at the earliest opportunity at Admissions Panel.

Short stay “turn around places” may also be discussed and commenced outside panel. Such requests will be considered on a case by case basis by the Exclusions Officer and must be ratified at the earliest opportunity at Admissions Panel.

5.7 Safety net referrals

Pupils will not be accepted on a “safety net” referral as these block places for other students who need immediate intervention.

6. How are placements funded?

The LA has commissioned places at each Learning Centre. Centres will have received base funding for each place from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. This is currently determined by an agreed funding matrix.

The overwhelming majority of pupils will be dual registered with schools and a proportionate amount of AWPU will be recouped from schools to support placement. In such cases the school and the LA will be deemed to have jointly commissioned the place. The amount recouped will not exceed the Age Weighted Pupil Unit except when negotiated and with explicit agreement school.

Schools are expected to transfer Pupil Premium funding for any pupils dual registered at the Learning Centre for longer than one term (13 weeks).

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