

November
2024

State of Dorset Children



Experiences in a child's early years lay a foundation for health and wellbeing and our services for children and families have an important role in building future resilience.

By identifying those most at risk of poorer outcomes later on, our resources can be targeted where they are needed most so that we can respond to risk and vulnerability.

The number of 0-4 year olds is expected to decrease by about 500, while the number of 5-15 year olds is projected to decrease by about 5,000 between 2024 and 2034¹.

Big Numbers Box

Sources 2 and 3

66,000 total children

63% Pupils with an EHC Plan educated in mainstream schools

446* Children and young people in care in Dorset

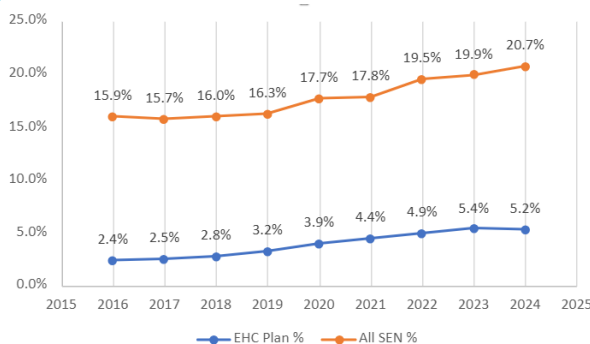
68 Looked after children in every 10,000 in Dorset

Primary school children with an EHC SEN plan **3.7%**

18% Percentage of pupils achieving 9-5 in English and Maths (Free School Meals Gap)

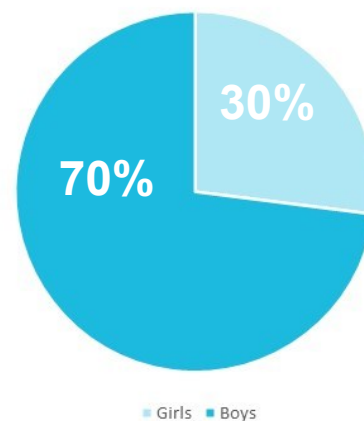
Box 1: Special Educational Need³

SEN Pupils in Dorset Council Schools



The percentage of children with Special Educational Need has increased in Dorset each year since 2017. The figure has increased from 17.8% in 2021 to 20.7% in 2024. The percentage with either a statement or an EHC Plan has increased every year since 2016, until this year. There has been a more pronounced increase since 2019 where the data has risen from 3.2% to 5.4% in 2023 before dropping to 5.2% in 2024.

Dorset Council School Pupils Education, Health and Care (EHC Plan)



- One in four of pupils with an EHC plan has an Autistic Spectrum Condition and just over one in five have speech language and communication needs.
- It is likely that a pupil may have more than one special educational need.
- 63% of pupils with an EHC Plan are educated in Mainstream Schools in Dorset.
- 70% of Dorset Council School Pupils with an EHC are boys and 57% with SEN Support are boys. This is very similar to the national picture. The proportion of girls with SEN is increasing.

Acronyms

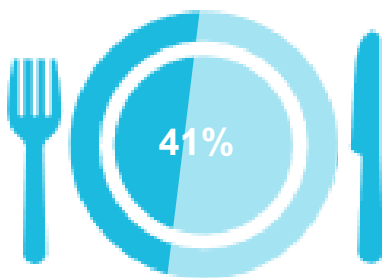
EHC = Education, Health and Care Plan
FSM = Free School Meals
SEN = Special Educational Needs
* Doesn't include unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Box 2: Education

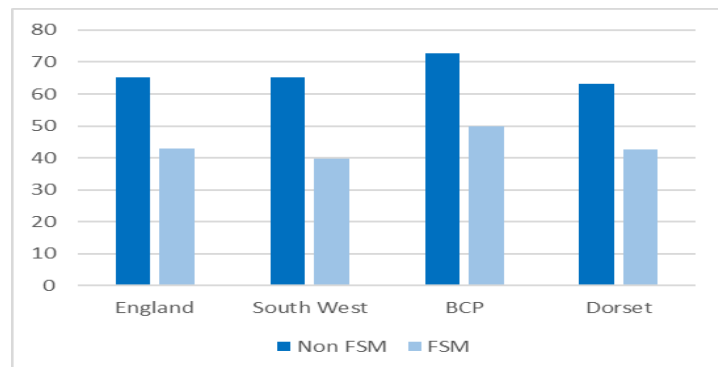
³ data from 2024 n/a

- In 2024 67% of pupils achieved a 'Good Level of Development' at the end of Reception year, a decrease of 4% on 2019 the figure was very similar to the national figures.
- 63% of pupils achieved the 'Basics' measure (standard pass or higher in English and Maths GCSE). Of those on Free School Meals this figure is 22% lower at 41%.
- 20% of pupils eligible to claim Free School Meals, compared to the national average of 25%⁴.

Pupils eligible for FSM achieving Basics measure at GCSE



Percentage of Pupils GCSE pass English and Maths 2023/24



■ % FSM Grade 4 and upwards GCSE
■ % Total Grade 4 and upwards GCSE

Box 3: Post 16 opportunities

⁴ (2024 data n/a)

- The percentage of 16 and 17 year olds in Dorset in education or training in 2023 was 90.6% this figure is much the same as for the South West 90.5% but lower than England 92.3%
- Accessing services is a considerable issue in rural Dorset, approximately 44% of Dorset residents fall within the top 20% most geographically access deprived in England for accessing a range of services including schools.
- Travel time in minutes to nearest further education college by public transport/walking in Dorset is 31 minutes which is in the top 10 highest of any Unitary Authority in England. This compares to 21 minutes for England and 25 minutes for the South West.

However, apprenticeship rates in Dorset at a 'Higher' level are strong with 1,922 participation rate for under 19s per 100,000 population. This compares to a figure of 382 for the South West and 332 for England. It is in fact the highest of any Unitary Authority in the country.

There are two levels of a 'Higher' apprenticeship Level 4 and Level 5:

- Level 4 apprenticeships are equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree, or a Higher National Certificate.

Level 5 apprenticeships are equivalent to a foundation degree, or a Higher National Diploma.

Sources

- 1 2020-trend based population projections (experimental), Dorset Council
- 2 2023 MYE, 0-17 year-olds, ONS
- 3 Dorset Council, Children's Services 2022/23 and 2023/24
- 4 Local Government Inform 2022/23