

Job description

Job title: Corporate Director – Education & Learning

Grade: Chief Officer

Purpose and impact

The Corporate Director – Education & Learning provides strategic and operational leadership across Dorset Council's Education and Learning Services. This includes fulfilling statutory duties, acting as the professional lead for education, and ensuring inclusive, future-ready services that demonstrate value for money and outstanding outcomes. The postholder plays a central role in shaping the Council's education strategy, digital transformation, workforce development, and system-wide collaboration.

Key responsibilities

1. Lead the development and implementation of a strategic vision for Education and Learning, aligned with local priorities and national frameworks.
2. Oversee all statutory education functions, including School Admissions, SEND and SEN assessments, Elective Home Education, Alternative Provision, Virtual School and Attendance Services, Specialist Teaching and Advisory Services, School Improvement, Post-16, and Business and Governor Services.
3. Act as the professional lead for education across the Directorate, including strategic oversight of workforce development and acting as professional advisor for learning and development.
4. Strive to strengthen Dorset Council's voice regionally and nationally, aiming to reduce costs of service delivery while creating sustainable public services. Ensure that the vision for Dorset fosters a thriving community where residents can live, learn, and work.
5. Champion safeguarding and inclusive education, working with health, police, care partners and schools to promote the wellbeing and achievement of all learners, with particular attention to vulnerable groups.
6. Lead budget setting, delegation, monitoring, income generation and delivery of cost reduction plans across complex funding streams and statutory services.
7. Provide corporate leadership, contributing to council-wide strategic direction, corporate project delivery, and supporting the council's transformation and digital ambitions.
8. Represent Education and Learning at civic functions and strategic boards, contributing to emergency planning, business continuity planning, and acting as a named Gold rota participant.
9. Build strong relationships with elected Members, national bodies (e.g. Ofsted, CQC, DfE), regional partners, and local educational settings to influence and shape delivery.
10. Lead inspection readiness and performance improvement across services, providing both support and challenge to schools and settings to secure positive outcomes.
11. Prepare and implement a strategic service plan that aligns with corporate priorities, focusing on improving service delivery and reducing costs.
12. Develop opportunities to secure new funding to support long-term corporate objectives, ensuring financial sustainability.



13. Establish and maintain effective political relationships with elected Members and support all aspects of the democratic process.
14. Manage core school improvement services, specialist teaching and advisory services, and comprehensive services related to school admissions, alternative provision, and SEND assessments.
15. Actively engage with the community, parents, and local organisations to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard in the council's decision-making processes.
16. Collaborate with schools and educational settings to develop a shared vision and strategic plan for educational improvement.
17. Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation including equality law, data protection, freedom of information, bribery, and public interest disclosures.
18. Demonstrate and promote the values of leadership, ambition, resilience, commercial insight, continuous improvement, technology integration, and teamwork across the organisation.
19. Demonstrate a commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity, and ensuring that services are accessible and fair.
20. Lead the digital transformation of Education and Learning Services, modelling effective use of technology and digital solutions to enhance service delivery and operational efficiency.

NB: The duties and responsibilities of this post are not restrictive, and the post holder may be required on occasion to undertake other duties. This will not substantially change the nature of the post.

Supervision and management

Reporting to: Executive Director of People - Children

Responsibility for: Children – Education & Learning

Other factors

This is a politically restricted post as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Our values

Our values act as guiding principles, defining what we believe is important in the ways we work together. Our values are Respect, Together, Accountability, Openness and Curiosity. You will need to be able to demonstrate these values in action through the way you work, regardless of your role within the organisation. Information about our values can be found on our website.



Person specification

Your application will be assessed based on your demonstration of how you fulfil the following criteria; you should include clear examples of how you meet these criteria within your application form and during the assessment process.

Essential

Essential criteria are the minimum requirement for the above post and will be assessed through a combination of your application form, assessment and interview (as specified below). We'll also use references to confirm that you meet the criteria for this role. We will require evidence of the qualifications, training or registrations listed below.

Qualifications, training or registrations Required by law or essential to the performance of the role or both	Assessed through:
1. A professional qualification within Education or equivalent experience	Application form
2. Evidence of continuous management, professional and personal development in educational leadership.	Application form
Experience	
3. Significant experience of leading large-scale and complex transformation programmes in education and children's services	Application form
4. Successful track record of improving educational outcomes, especially for vulnerable groups	Application form
5. Experience of delivering statutory duties in education, including safeguarding, SEND and inspection frameworks	Application form
6. Proven leadership in cross-agency partnership working including health, police, care and national regulators	Application form
7. Demonstrated ability to lead delegated budget management, cost control, and income generation	Application form
8. Experience of representing services at regional and national level, including with Ofsted, CQC, DfE	Application form
Knowledge	
9. Extensive understanding of the educational landscape and legal responsibilities of local authorities	Application form Interview Assessment
10. Knowledge of safeguarding duties and service integration with children's social care and health	Application form Interview Assessment
11. Familiarity with performance frameworks, inspection criteria and workforce development planning	Application form Interview Assessment
12. Understanding of digital tools, governance processes and the political landscape of local government	Application form Interview Assessment
Skills & abilities	
13. Strong financial and resource management skills, with the ability to manage pressure and competing demands	Interview Assessment
14. Inspiring leadership skills with a track record of leading high-performing, multidisciplinary teams	Interview Assessment
15. Demonstrate strategic thinking and the ability to navigate complex governance environments effectively	Interview Assessment
16. Excellent communication and influencing skills across complex governance environments	Interview Assessment
17. Exhibit political sensitivity and the capacity to influence and leverage opportunities across the council.	Interview Assessment



18. Be politically insightful with a commitment to engaging with national and local agendas to influence positive outcomes for children and young people.	Interview Assessment
19. High emotional intelligence, enabling the candidate to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and build rapport with stakeholders	Interview Assessment
20. Ability to build trusting relationships with internal and external partners, fostering collaboration and collective action.	Interview Assessment
21. Capable of modelling digital leadership and fostering innovation	Interview Assessment
22. Promote innovative and effective change initiatives that align with organisational aims and enhance service delivery.	Interview Assessment
Our values	
23. Respect	Interview Assessment
24. Together	Interview Assessment
25. Accountability	Interview Assessment
26. Openness	Interview Assessment
27. Curiosity	Interview Assessment
Other	
28. Strong commitment to citizen-focused services with an emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion.	Interview Assessment
29. Experience in developing strategic plans that consider the educational, social, and emotional needs of children and young people.	Interview Assessment

Desirable

Desirable criteria will be used in the event of multiple applicants meeting the minimum essential requirements and if applicable, will be assessed through a combination of your application form, assessment and interview (as specified below). We'll also use references to confirm that you meet the criteria for this role. We will require evidence of the qualifications, training or registrations listed below.

Experience	Assessed through:
30. Experience in international educational settings or collaboration with international partners.	Application form
31. Familiarity with emerging educational technologies that can drive future improvements.	Application form
32. Experience contributing to corporate governance, including scrutiny panels or cross-cutting council initiatives	Application form
Knowledge	
33. Familiarity with emerging educational technologies, digital learning platforms or AI in education	Application form Interview Assessment
34. Awareness of economic development and skills agendas and how they interact with education policy	Application form Interview Assessment

