

SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN IN OXFORDSHIRE

Looking forward...

Oxfordshire County Council's reputation for the support it offers its schools with Service children on roll continues to grow. The **Learning & School Improvement Service** continues to be represented at all MOD-Local Authority Partnership meetings (MODLAP) aimed at developing and sharing good practice, and its Head of Service, chairs the [Oxfordshire and Central England SCiP Alliance Hub](#).

As a result of continued senior officer commitment, external grant funding has been secured which will allow a number of exciting projects and events to take place during 2023. Highlights include:

1/ Festival of Friends: 28 maintained schools and academies across Oxfordshire are currently working on a year-long project, led by School Improvement Adviser Matt Blyton, aimed at strengthening provision for Service children. Working across four geographic areas of the county, schools are accessing staff training and running small school improvement projects which will be shared in an electronic publication accessible to all schools, launched at a celebration event at the end of June at Oxford Brookes University.



2/ Support for Governors: Following the success of termly network meetings for school leaders, termly sessions are being run this academic year for governors of schools with any number of Service children on their rolls. The three **Armed Forces' Children: the board's role** sessions aim to:

- Provide an overview of the strengths that Service children bring to schools and the challenges they face
- Reflect on the Government's Service Pupil Premium funding
- Introduce governors to an evidence-based tool to support them and school leaders evaluate their provision
- Give updates on current projects and plans for development work in 2023
- Facilitate a forum for sharing good practice and exploring solutions to challenges

3/ SCiP Alliance Thriving Lives Toolkit case study project: The Council's



Learning & School Improvement Service has just been awarded a small grant from the Alliance to create an evidence-based template, guidance and fifty case studies linked to the seven principles of the Thriving Lives Toolkit. The case studies and guidance will help schools take a more rigorous approach to the *Thriving Lives Toolkit* self-assessment, where school staff will be able to assess their progress by learning from others' well-evidenced examples. If you'd like your school to be considered for inclusion, please contact: matt.blyton@oxfordshire.gov.uk

4/ Service children's voice event & practitioners' conference: Both events will run again in the autumn term—further details in due course.

5/ Parental Voice: We are keen to gather views from the parents of our Service children to reflect on our support. Details of an anonymous online survey will follow soon—please share widely and encourage participation.



June 2022—Celebrating Armed Forces Day at St John's the Evangelist, Carterton

FREE events for your diary:

1/ Network meetings for school Service children leads:

- 7 March (13:15-14:45)
- 14 June (13:15-14:45)

<https://educationservices.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

2/ Armed Forces' Children: the board's role

- 1 March (19:00-20:30)
- 6 June (19:00-20:30)

www.GovernorHub.com or email GovernorServices@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

3/ Festival of Friends project celebration - June (tbc)

Month of the Military Child April 2023

April is designated as the Month of the Military Child, which highlights the important role Service children play in the Armed Forces community. It is a time to applaud Armed Forces families and their children for the daily sacrifices they make and the challenges they overcome.

For lots of ideas, explore [SSCE Cymru :: Month of the Military Child](#) or [Month of the Military Child - Little Troopers](#)



Oxford's Astrophoria Foundation Year Programme

A one-year foundation programme for UK state school students with significant academic potential, who have experienced severe personal disadvantage and/or disrupted education which has resulted in them being unable to apply directly for an Oxford Undergraduate degree programme. See [Oxford's Astrophoria Foundation Year](#)



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Looking back...



Pupil Voice event, Kassam Stadium 22.6.22

'My dad serves in the army and he is really proud of what he does. This conference has been outstanding. The one thing I think I would change is more opportunities for military children to talk about their lifestyle.' (10 year-old)

Almost 80 Service pupils from 10 Oxfordshire primary and secondary schools attended a pupil conference where they participated in workshops with the charity [Never Such Innocence](#) creating a song and writing poetry about their lives, as well as providing feedback on the positives of being a child with military connections and how things could be improved further for them.

The vast majority shared a common view that they appreciate it when schools treat them differently to civilian children at times of Service-related challenges, such as parental deployment or postings, valuing sensitive support from staff who understand aspects of military lifestyle. Pupils were also asked what it means to be a Service pupil - the results of which will be displayed in a series of mosaics in County Hall, a sample of which is below.



'Today's conference was spectacular. I would like all schools to be more supportive of people when their mums and dads are away.' (11 year-old)

'Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces children': practitioners' conference, Defence Academy 8.7.22



Delegates received updates from a range of national figures in the field of Service children's education and welfare, as well as specialists from the Families Federations. The day then focused on raising participants' awareness of the lived experience of Service children and their families, exploring some of the unique challenges they face and sharing good practice aimed at mitigating the potential disadvantage such challenges can bring. As such, a key outcome of the day was getting everyone to reflect on the question: *'What more can I do in my role to further embed the intent of the Armed Forces Covenant so that our Service children thrive?'*

The day was a resounding success. Every evaluation form's response to the statement: *I feel better able to identify and understand some of the challenges facing children and young people from Armed Forces families and how I can contribute to the AF Covenant* was 'strongly agree' or 'agree'. The highlight of the event was hearing from two Year 11 ambassadors from Carterton Community College, who gave the 50 or so adults the very clear message that, in their view, schools should create opportunities to actively listen to Service children's voices and give them opportunities to provide peer support to one another.

Armed Forces week – June 2022

Amazing experiences took place across schools to mark Armed Forces week. At RAF Benson Primary school, for example, pupils from local schools joined together for a day of adventurous learning with the RAF including First Aid Training, work with Defence Fire and Rescue and survival skills on land and in water. The day ended with a Hurricane 'Fly past' and with Puma and Chinook Helicopter manoeuvres on the school field.

At Carterton Primary, children learnt about sending military Blueys through the British Forced Post Office (BFPO) system, with many having a go at writing one. All pupils celebrated the week on Friday 24th June with a Camo Day.

What will you do to mark 24th June 2023?



Wrap Around Care (WAC) roll-out

- Check if your Service families can claim up to 20 hours per week of funding for each child attending before and after school care during term time.
- To claim WAC funding, parents should search 'Wraparound child-care' on [Discover my Benefits](#) to check if the WAC scheme is right for their family, and to complete the necessary five steps.



STOP PRESS

Details of Balliol College's [Monday Maths programme for year 12 students](#) from this link. The programme is open to students in Oxfordshire and applications from service children will be prioritised.

The deadline for applications is **Sunday 15th January 5pm.**



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COUNTY COUNCIL**