

Oxfordshire's Festival of Friends

A schools' project to support Service children.

Autumn 2022 – Summer 2023



Funded by the Armed Forces Education Trust

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Introduction

The **Festival of Friends** was a successful school improvement project created by Hampshire County Council's Inspection and Advisory Service, in partnership with the University of Winchester, and held across the 2017-18 academic year. It involved a group of schools with children from armed forces families (Service children) on their rolls which were supported in area-based networks to review their provision for Service children and then enhance aspects of it through small improvement projects.

Between autumn 2019 and summer 2021, a second Festival of Friends initiative was held involving 16 schools across North Yorkshire and York, led by a partnership between the two local authorities' school improvement services and one of the government-funded UniConnect partnerships, **Inspiring Choices**, based at York St John University

The UniConnect programme was set up in 2017 and supports the strategic goal that students' access to higher education is not limited by their background, location or characteristics.

This publication showcases the work undertaken by 20 schools and one early years setting in the third iteration of the Festival of Friends, this time based in Oxfordshire. We are indebted to the trustees of the **Armed Forces Education Trust**, as without their generous grant this project wouldn't have been possible. We are also grateful to the **Study Higher** UniConnect programme who supported us through the project as well as the RAF Family Federation for officer time and some resources.

School Improvement Team
Learning & School Improvement
Children, Education & Families
Oxfordshire County Council
SchoolImprovementTeam@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Overview and aims

The Festival of Friends is a collaborative programme for supporting Service children. Its key aims are to develop, and then share, good practice in the education and pastoral support for this potentially vulnerable group of children. It also promotes progression to further and higher education, thereby improving opportunities and ultimately outcomes.

The project provided opportunities for building links between participating schools to support one another, share good practice and disseminate professional development across their staff teams. The project was designed to be of particular benefit to schools that have small numbers of Service children on their rolls, as is the situation involving most of the 3000+ Service children that attend schools in Oxfordshire. A key element of this version of the project was the required use of the evidence-based Thriving

Lives Toolkit created by the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance [SCiP Alliance](#).

The collaborative activity involved in the Festival of Friends has promoted the identity of Service children amongst their non-Service peers, raising their profile by celebrating their lived experiences. The project brought together key stakeholders to support Service children's educational progression and strengthen their integration with their civilian peers, by raising the awareness of their distinctive needs.





Project organisation:

Project schools were allocated to one of four groups (networks), each based on a geographical area aligned to the county's main military bases / stations. Each network was led by an area Service pupils' coordinator (ASPC), a school-based middle or senior leader who had kindly volunteered to support the project:

- Brize Norton – Hannah Owen, senior teacher Carterton Community College
- Benson – Rob Lyons, Head of House system / Services Champion, Wallingford
- Bicester - Sue Khawaja, Assistant Head at Five Acres Primary School
- Shrivenham – Gemma Rogan, Faringdon Learning Trust's central team

The four ASPCs met four or five times across the year with their participating network schools' nominated Service children's champions. These 'champions' ranged from senior leaders to welfare support staff, depending on individual schools' circumstances. Supply cover was



provided to the four lead schools to support some of the work undertaken by their ASPCs (whose schools were also project schools).

The ASPCs met six times during the project with Matt Blyton, school improvement officer, to receive training and support. Following these, the ASPCs then led their own network meetings to cascade some of the CPD and to help their school-based champions develop school-based projects to strengthen their Service children provision. Schools' improvement projects were linked to at least one of the seven principles of effective support detailed in the SCiP Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit.

The project culminated in a celebration event held at Oxford Brookes University in June, planned for representative Service children from all the participating schools.



Name and phase of school:

Brize Norton Primary School

Brize Norton
Primary School

Title of project	Raising the profile of our military connections	
School context	Number on roll	140
	Percentage of Service children	29
	Class structure	Mixed year groups
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	2 miles
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part	To raise the profile of the Service children within the school.	

Project overview

To improve communication and strengthen the positive profile of the Service children within our school.

Main project objective

To improve the support offered for our Service children and raise the profile of them and their families within the school setting.

Intended outcomes of the project

- To establish a newsletter for our Service families to improve communication.
- To create a staff role within the school who supports Service children when required, as well as running specific interventions – post box set up to aid communication for children to staff.
- To raise the profile of Service children within our school amongst their peers and the community.

Description of what you did

We created a dedicated space within the school (The Wing) where Service children could meet and receive bespoke, targeted support. The Service lead staff member supported Service children across the school on a weekly basis. Events were held throughout the year to raise the profile of the children, as well as celebrating the Month of the Military Child in April, holding camo days, and inviting members of the RAF in to speak to our children.





A post box was established within The Wing for Service children to post any worries or to make links with the Service champion. A newsletter was then written to parents which charted the events over the course of the year. A review of incoming and outgoing information for children also took place. An iPad was bought to aid communications for those children whose parents are deployed.

Details of any funding costs

£500 was spent, to furnish and decorate The Wing as well as resources such as the post box.

What has been the impact?

The profile of Service children has been successfully raised. Children feel supported and listened to. Other children within our community are now more familiar with what life as a Service child is like.

Next steps

- To continue to develop the role of the Service leader.
- To continue to build on communications with parents (e.g. offer coffee mornings and regular newsletters).
- To ensure all staff know about what it means to have Service children within their class.



“I now have someone I can talk to if I need to.”

(9 year old boy)



Name and phase of school:

Carswell Community Primary School

Title of project	Service home school link worker (HSLW)	
School context	Number on roll	220
	Percentage of Service children	21
	Class structure	One form entry
	Military base(s) served	Dalton Barracks
	Distance to military base	1.6 miles
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	No
Project objective	The school wanted to reintroduce a Service home school link worker who would be dedicated to the welfare and wellbeing of Service families – championing them in the community.	
Why the school agreed to take part	Historically, we had a Service HSLW who was invaluable to us and our Service families. Funding meant the role could not continue. We feel it is the best way to address all the principles of the Thriving Lives Toolkit, having an actual person dedicated to the welfare and wellbeing of our Service families will have a great impact.	

Project overview

To employ a Service home school link worker to support the emotional health and wellbeing of our Service children and families.



Main project objectives

Increased support for Service families, particularly new families. Pastoral support for Service children in school and someone to understand and champion their lived experience. Ongoing Service community support long term.

Intended outcomes of the project

To have someone in place to support with deployment, mobility, bus issues, family difficulties, school community engagement and who can be a voice for Service families.

As a result, Service children's educational outcomes and attendance will improve and their experience of their time at Carswell will be a positive one.

Description of what you did

The post advertised as a one year post was for three days per week, 8am to 3.30pm, to enable the successful candidate to supervise the bus from the barracks and engage with parents and carers at the bus stops, as well as supporting the children in school. The Service HSLW has been in post since the beginning of term six.



Details of any funding costs

The Service HSLW works three days a week – approximate cost (from Service pupil premium) is £16,000 per year.

What has been the impact?

Although the Service HSLW has only been in post for four weeks at the time of writing, she has already engaged with unit welfare staff and parents, run a successful camo day at school, began running nurture groups and has worked 1:1 with individual children. She has also put in place a pupil passport and a 'moving on' lap book to strengthen transition.

Next steps

- To continue to strengthen our links with the Service community.
- To put together resources to support deployment.
- To improve educational outcome by supporting Service children with reading and plugging gaps in education.



Name and phase of school:

Carterton Community College Secondary and Sixth form



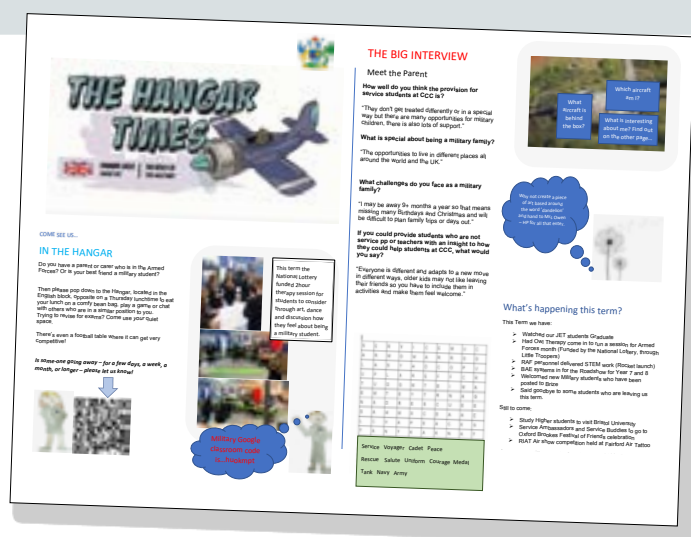
Title of project	Launch of The Hangar Times and Service book club	
School context	Number on roll	649
	Percentage of Service children	24
	Class structure	Years 7-13
	Military base(s) served	Mainly RAF Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	0.9 mile
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	The school's Service support team has two military spouses, one ex-military student and one ex-military personnel.
Why the school agreed to take part	As a school, our support network, facilities and the resources offered to our Service pupil premium (SPP) students has widened over the last three years. We are very proud of what we offer our Service students and how we support them daily. Using the Thriving Lives Toolkit, we had identified areas where we wanted to improve; the Festival of Friends gave us an opportunity to close those gaps and further strengthen what we offer.	

Project overview

The Hangar Times was launched to ensure Service student, parent, community and our staff voice was heard. Service students could be involved in writing, editing, photography and interviewing. A book club would also allow students to improve literacy. Books would also then used as a stimulus for Service club conversations about problems that the characters face.

Main project objective

Spreading awareness of SPP children's lived experiences.



Intended outcomes of the project

The journalism club would allow skills to be developed in editing, writing, photography and journalism to help with CVs and employability.

The Hangar Times would allow all voices to be heard and celebrated but also understood. Each edition would feature the JET project photos (an activity created by the students or SPP staff), an interview with a Service parent and student and a QR code link to a podcast with our students in it.

“I felt nervous joining the journalism team but I am enjoying interviewing parents and students, as well as taking photos”

(year 7 Charlie)

The book club was aimed at closing gaps in literacy skills of SPP students, and themes within the chosen books would be used in mentoring sessions to explore how they may be feeling and how we can better support them.

Description of what you did

We used Google Classroom to put together a list of ideas on how we could close the gaps we had identified from the SCiP Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit self-evaluation. From this, we then met with Service students in our Hangar (our Service students' support base) and discussed the two most popular choices suggested by them: a journalism club and a book club.

From there, Service students signed up to different roles they would be interested in leading on or being part of. A draft of our first newspaper was drawn up and a meeting with the SPP team and headteacher took place to agree what the newspaper would look like and what it would involve each term. We approached a graphic designer to help us come up with a unique masthead and then some students designed our figures to appear in each edition. The first edition was launched, and feedback was positive from students and parents. The second edition has since also been launched and we are awaiting parent and community feedback.

Our book club was set up with 10 SPP students joining for the first term – three books were agreed on and two had been read at the time of writing. We have used the excellent charity Reading Force to help fund and support this club. Now we know it is



successful, this will be something we continue, as the topics in our chosen books have helped explore feelings of isolation, bullying, prejudice, parents going away, split families and identity.

Details of any funding costs

Reading Force has funded our first three books and the project booklets that go with the novels.

Our SPP budget has funded the newspapers that go out to the community, school staff and students and the online copy that goes home to parents.

What has been the impact?

Students have been far more open about how they are feeling, wanting to know what goes on in the Hangar. More Service students have joined in and got involved in events, with more staff talking about SPP more openly and starting to understand its impact more. Finally, more parents now know what we are doing as a school to support their children.

Next steps

- Newspaper editions to be placed on our website and copies in our reception area.
- Journalism group to have a graphics workshop to introduce new graphics and skills for making the newspaper.
- New year 7 SPP to join the hangar Service club and be buddied up with the new KS3 SPP buddies and to meet our KS4 SPP ambassadors.
- Book club to continue with KS4 and another one for KS3 to start.
- We also plan to do some work with our KS5 Service students who get no SPP funding to ensure they are supported through their next transition period.

Name and phase of school:

Clanfield Church of England Primary School



Title of project		Celebrating Service children and their families
School context	Number on roll	99
	Percentage of Service children	9
	Class structure	Early years, KS1 and KS2
	Military base(s) served	Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	5.3 miles
	Military member on GB?	No
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part		We wanted to be able to celebrate our Service children and their families through a whole school approach. As we are a small school, we wanted them to have the opportunity to meet other Service children of different ages. By being part of the Festival of Friends, the children were able to do this at the celebration event at the end of the project.

Project overview

Our project was all about celebrating our Service children and their families. We wanted to achieve this by engaging parents, children, and the local community, so that everyone felt a part of our project.

Main project objective

Spreading awareness and celebrating our Service children.

Intended outcomes of the project

Our intended outcomes of the project were:

- To hold a whole school military day, to help other children within our school understand what life may be like for a Service child.
- To celebrate our Service families and community that work within the RAF.
- To further support our Service families and children by reaching out to our Service parents and starting a lunch time club for their children.

Description of what you did

To begin our project, we held a meeting for our Service parents to get their feedback and ideas on how we could support them and their family further at Clanfield CE Primary School. The parents showed support for both a whole school celebration day and a military club.

At our first military club session, we spoke to the children about their ideas for the club and what life was like for them as Service children. There have been high levels of engagement with the lunch time club. The children have done art and craft activities, completed their reading journals from the charity Reading Force, and completed special journals/calendars if one of their parents is on deployment. (This is also an opportunity for the children to talk and support each other through their experiences.)

On our whole school military day in April,



**“Today was amazing!
We saw lots of different
things and got to talk
to people in the RAF.
My favourite was the
Falcons, I learnt that a
parachute could open
in four seconds.”**

(7 year old girl about the school’s Military Day)

we were very lucky to be able to welcome in lots of different teams from RAF Brize Norton – The Falcons, STEM Team, RAF Police and two of our military parents who work in logistics and engineering. Our two military parents did a fantastic presentation talking about their roles in the RAF. They also brought in kit, medals and photographs for the children to look at and try on. The Falcons showed the children videos of their displays and modelled how a parachute is deployed. The children also had the opportunity to try on some of their kit. The RAF Police talked about their role and again allowed the children to look at their equipment. The children particularly enjoyed looking at, and going in their custody vehicle and police car. The STEM team brought in sphero robots: the children’s challenge was to code these to change colour and navigate them through an obstacle course. After our engagement with the STEM team, some of our students took part in a coding interview with BBC Radio Oxford.

All the children in our school community were really engaged with every activity that they took part in during the day. The visitors provided inspiring hands-on experiences which sparked lots of questions about people’s roles in the RAF. Our Service children were able to celebrate their parents’ work and share this with other pupils in the school.



What has been the impact?

The impact of being involved with the Festival of Friends project is that it has given us the platform to celebrate our Service children. It has also given us the opportunity to inspire and engage other pupils to think about different roles within the RAF. Our Service children now have a closer connection with each other. They have had the opportunity to discuss their experiences, as well as support and celebrate each other within our military club. By working with other schools, it has also given us the opportunity to look at different provisions to reflect on how we can continue to develop ours for our Service children.

Next steps

To continue to build on communication with our Service parents and to invest in a military bear.





Name and phase of school:

Carterton Primary & Nursery School

Title of project		Forces families: a fully integrated voice in our school community
School context	Number on roll	260
	Percentage of Service children	30
	Class structure	1.5 form entry, mixed year classes (e.g. year 3&4)
	Military base(s) served	Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	0.6 mile
	Military member on GB?	Yes, 3
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes, several
Why the school agreed to take part		The impact of being a member of a military family is huge in positive ways and also in more challenging ways. 30 per cent of our children are from military families and this is a very special characteristic of our school. Many staff also have serving spouses. It is vital that the diversity this brings to our community is understood, supported and celebrated by all.

Project overview

To establish more effective communication mechanisms between school and home, and within school among pupils and staff, to give Service children a stronger voice.

To develop a community understanding of what it means to be a Service child, and to celebrate and support these members of our school community.

Main project objectives

- Improving support for Service children.
- Raising and spreading awareness of a Service child's lived experience.
- Creating mechanisms to give Service children a stronger voice in school.
- Creating systems to ensure parents can easily communicate changes, deployment and challenges affecting Service children.

Intended outcomes of the project

- Simple and effective communication systems in place between home and school to alert school to deployments.
- Service children sharing their stories and experiences proudly and openly.
- Service children having a supportive base in school for sharing feelings with staff and with other Service children.
- Older children proactively supporting younger children with their new experiences around deployment and posting.
- All members of the school community understanding the underlying implications of being a Service child and being interested to know more to support children and families well.
- KiT Club enabling all Service children to support one another in a safe and positive space.

Description of what you did

We sought increased opportunities for groups of children and staff to attend events at RAF Brize Norton. We also featured stories in our weekly newsletters specifically around Service families. We



celebrated the Month of the Military Child in April with a 'wear purple day'. All events attended, were shared and celebrated by Service and non-Service children alike.

The headteacher contacted all parents of Service children to request that information about any deployments is shared with school. By prioritising this, virtually all parents responded. We established a QR code system for reporting deployments electronically.

We then embedded our KiT club to enable Service children to relax and chat to others particularly about issues and feelings linked to deployment. We recorded and displayed children's stories and quotations about their unique experiences as Service children.

We ensured that all staff development sessions, meetings with governors and leadership conversations raised Service pupils as a group.

Based on evidence from children's voice, we could see that 1:1 reading and phonics practice at home was difficult for some Service children due to deployment and parents' shift work. This was impacting on the development of phonics skills for these Service children. Interventions were created to support them with daily phonics and to have a reading for pleasure session with Service children in KS1 daily.

What has been the impact?

KiT club was well attended and enjoyed by Service children who sometimes bring their non-Service friends. The unique lived experiences of Service children are captured in their stories which are displayed in the school hall. Service children have spoken more openly about their life as a Service child.

We found out that there is a shift in feelings from Service children about being a Service child when they enter the last year or two of primary school. Our younger children feel very upset when a parent leaves for deployment whereas older children unanimously said they were used to it but it was hard due to extra burdens and jobs around the home which they needed to support with. Older children all shared that they would not want to work in the military because of the disruption this causes to family life. This demonstrates the need for different approaches and support packages for our Service children.

90 per cent of Service children passed the year 1 phonics screening check in June 2023 as a result of the intervention we introduced.

Above all, the impact has been a far greater level of communication and support between Service families and school because of the project. There has also been a dramatic increase in whole school and staff understanding of the impact of having a family member in the armed forces.

Next steps

To create a space and means of supporting families of Service children with SEND. This may be in the form of a SEND support newsletter (with advice on transferring to a new school after a military posting) and coffee mornings to create a support network, led by the SENDCo and the school's Service families support worker.

"One year, I did not open some of my Christmas presents until mid February because my dad was away"

(11 year old boy)

Name and phase of school:

Edith Moorhouse Primary School



Title of project	Mobility, tracking and transitions	
School context	Number on roll	373
	Percentage of Service children	40.24
	Class structure	Pre-school, 2 x reception, 2 x Y1, 2 x Y2, 2x Y3, 2 x Y4, 3 x Y5&6
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	1.1 miles
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	Military spouse staff. Deputy Headteacher is also the school's Service pupil champion and is ex-RAF
Why the school agreed to take part	With a high number of Service children in the school, it is important that the provision for them is the best it can be. Staff at the school are determined to ensure Service children are celebrated and supported as best they can be.	

Project overview

Provision for children transitioning into school will be improved, so that we can capture the wider curriculum they have been exposed to and plug gaps in learning. Communication will also be improved to encourage deployed parents to inform school when going away. A Service pupil promise will be designed, showing new families how we support our Service children. Staff and governors will be more aware about the lived experiences of Service children.

Main project objectives

- Improving the support for, and education of, Service children both on roll and those transitioning into our school.

- Improving opportunities that ensure no child is missed from receiving pastoral support when a serving parent is away.
- Improving communication between parents and school staff.
- Raising awareness of Service children's lived experience amongst staff.

Intended outcomes of the project

Communication between parents and school will be improved – this will be seen through the number of parents completing our notification form.

School staff will have an increased awareness of Service children's prior learning when they join our school so that any interventions, including pastoral support, can be timetabled ensuring that they are not missing out on vital areas of the curriculum.

The number of children attending pastoral groups such as 'Friendly Forces' will increase because of improved awareness of parents being deployed, resulting in these children feeling better supported across the school.



Description of what you did

We started by creating a Google form with a QR code for Service parents use, to encourage them to inform school when they are going away on deployment. This is displayed on every class window, in the school entrance, on the website and on school newsletters.

A case study was carried out on a year 4 child who joined the school part way through year 3, with a low outcome in maths but 'expected' or 'greater depth' in all other areas. As a result, a pupil transfer form was created for children transitioning into Edith Moorhouse Primary, which is now sent out to schools when we are made aware by the local authority of pupils moving to us. On receipt of these completed pupil transfer forms, teachers can tailor support in the curriculum to fill gaps in knowledge/provide pastoral support, at the right time so no further learning is lost.

A Service pupil promise was then designed from the outcomes of Service parent and pupil voice, which acts as a mobility policy for the school.

A display board has also been created in the school hall - Say Hello / Wave Goodbye - for children transitioning in and out of school, so that they can be celebrated. A staff meeting was delivered, using the Thriving Lives Toolkit CPD resources, to ensure staff are fully aware of Service children's lived experiences and information has been shared with governors to raise awareness amongst the governing body.

Our parent and pupil voice work also identified the need for a Service pupil after school club. 'Dandelions Club' is now up and running weekly, on Tuesdays for KS2 and Thursdays for reception/KS1, using Little Troopers well-being resources. This is an eight week programme that will continue to run three times across the year.

Details of any funding costs

The main cost has been staffing - release time and printing. Dandelions Club has been funded by the charity Armed Forces Education Trust for the first eight weeks, paying for staff time, the wellbeing resource package (£150), four teddy bear mascots and some books. Travel costs to the Festival of Friends celebration event have also been funded.

What has been the impact?

The Google form has been completed by many parents. This is clearly working well.

Dandelions after school club started in May and has been attended weekly by 30 children, with positive feedback received. The Leuven scale was used at session one and will be used again on the last session to measure any changes in emotional well-being.

The Y4 pupil case study before the transfer form was designed highlighted the need for one. It also highlighted where targeted interventions could be put in for the child who has since shown accelerated progress in her areas of weakness. Another received transfer form for an incoming Service child, highlighted that an area of our history curriculum had already been covered allowing us to target other intervention during history curriculum time.

Our Service pupil promise has received positive feedback from prospective parents who have commented on having read it on the school website before their visit.

Next steps

Funding has been approved in the school budget for Dandelions Club to continue into the 2023/24 academic year. The next steps for this is to invite the next group of children ahead of the end of the school year.

Name and phase of school:

Ewelme C.E. (V.A.) Primary School



Title of project	Service children pastoral support group – ‘Dream Team’	
School context	Number on roll	74
	Percentage of Service children	33
	Class structure	4 classes: reception and year 1, year 2, year 3/4 and year 5/6
	Military base(s) served	R.A.F. Benson
	Distance to military base	Approx 1.5 miles
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part	We wanted to develop and improve our support for Service families and raise the profile of the military community within the school. We also wanted to build links with other schools with Service children on roll in order to share best practice.	

Project overview

Establishing a one hour weekly pastoral support group for children from Service families, aimed initially at pupils in key stage 2. This would be run by a teaching assistant with her own experience of military family life. We wanted the group to be fun and informal and provide opportunities for the older children to offer advice and support to their younger peers.

Main project objectives

Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles 2 and 5:

- Wellbeing is supported
- Children are heard.

Intended outcomes of the project

To ensure Service pupils’ emotional well-being is monitored and supported effectively so that it doesn’t become a barrier to learning. Pupils whose emotional well-being could be impacted due to

circumstances specific to their Service background (i.e. deployment, weekending etc.) to be monitored and supported so that these factors do not, as far as possible, impact on their attitudes to school, behaviour or learning.

Description of what you did

Following liaison with nearby RAF Benson Primary School, reference to the SCiP Alliance’s Thriving Lives Toolkit, and discussion with other local schools, we decided to create a pastoral support group for Service pupils to promote their emotional well-being, particularly during periods of vulnerability, such as when parents are deployed, immediately preceding or following a posting or during a period of parental ‘weekending’.

The idea of the group was initially introduced to the children during whole-school assemblies focused on the Month of the Military Child in April. In conjunction with class teachers, the head teacher and the teaching assistant who would lead the group, identified children from Service families and invitations and further information were sent out to parents/carers. The response to this was positive and take-up was strong.

This group met on a weekly basis for 45-60 minutes



throughout the spring and summer terms in a dedicated space which included displays of work and maps showing where family and friends have been posted or deployed, now and in the past.

The group was aimed at children in Key Stage 2. It was made up of children in a variety of different situations, including a year 4 boy whose father was currently deployed, a year 3 girl whose father had been recently deployed and then returned home injured, and a year 4 boy who was leaving school at the end of the year due to a family move, with the RAF, to Shropshire.

The group was planned and run by a teaching assistant who already knew the children from lunch times and general classroom support and who had experience in her own background of life in a military family.

Activities within the group included artwork to express their identities and characteristics, likes and dislikes to others and the creation of acrostic poems based on the qualities of military children (including terms such as 'determined' and 'remarkable'). They were also given the responsibility to name their group and came up with the title, 'The Dream Team' because, the children explained, it represented how being in a military community was like being part of a team and how working in the RAF often meant working in a team.

Three members of the group also attended the Festival of Friends celebration event at Oxford Brookes University in June, hosting a display of their work and answering questions about the project. They were also taught to juggle at this event and, in their next group session, taught this skill in turn to their fellow Dream Teamers.

Details of any funding costs

Approximately 1.5 hours of teaching assistant time per week, including time to prepare and run the group = £18.47 per week = £665 across the year (assuming 36 weeks) + resource costs (paper, photocopying, stationary etc.)

What has been the impact?

The group has helped to support the well-being of the children involved. The pupils who attended the group demonstrated no significant signs of stress or anxiety and continued to achieve well in their academic work.

The group also gave the pupils involved a stronger sense of pride and identity. It increased, for example, their awareness of those peers around them in school who were also from a military background and encouraged them to fulfil an informal mentoring role towards Key Stage 1 Service children. They also enjoyed the voice it gave them, providing them with the opportunity to name the group and meet with the head teacher to share their experiences as Service children at Ewelme.

The creation of the group also generally raised the profile of this important part of the school community, for other pupils, parents and staff alike. Going forward, it will dovetail with our weekly pastoral check-ins during staff meetings and our termly updates to our 'Vulnerable Pupils Register', to provide another means of supporting Service children's' needs.

Next steps

- Extend the group to include Key Stage 1 children.
- Use our newly purchased 'mood tracker' app to monitor self-reported well-being of those pupils included and to identify those who may need to be included in the future. This will also allow us to monitor the impact of the group in a more objective manner.



Name and phase of school:

Faringdon Community College

Title of project	Communication is the key to our community	
School context	Number on roll	1,261
	Percentage of Service children	7.2
	Class structure	Year 7–13
	Military base(s) served	Defence Academy, Shrivenham / RAF Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	3.6 miles/ 10 miles
	Military member on GB?	No
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part	To improve our understanding of Service families and ways to effectively communicate with them.	

Project overview

We decided to create more sections for our school website based on Service families. We wanted parents to know how important supporting their child is for us as well as them along with what we can offer.

Main project objective

To improve communication and supporting Service families.

Intended outcomes of the project

To have great relationships with these families and offer all our Service pupils a safe, secure and enriching environment with staff who understand what they go through.

Description of what you did

Several of our Service pupils answered questions and created PowerPoints explaining what they thought would be useful for transitioning into the school and what would help our Service pupils to feel welcome. We then collated this together and came up with a plan for improvement.



“It’s so hard moving around but knowing I could see and speak to people before I arrive would make it less scary.”

(year 7 Student)

“More often than not it is really hard to find resources etc to help when you are not situated by the camp or have to search loads of different sites. Having the links on the website will be a huge help. The more time we save on searching the more time we can enjoy as a family.”

(year 7 parent)

Details of any funding costs

This has been extremely low cost due to it being an addition to the website rather than starting something from scratch. This enables us to use funding elsewhere and still provide a great place for our Service families.



What has been the impact?

The new website section was not currently live at the time of writing up this case study. But expanding the College's understanding of Service pupils throughout the school, and what we can offer to support them, has had a fantastic reception.

Next steps

To finalise the designs and to go live on our website.

Name and phase of school:

Five Acres Primary School



ENJOY
PERSEVERE
IMPROVE
CREATE

Title of project	Let's Talk	
School context	Number on roll	353
	Percentage of Service children	29
	Class structure	Two form entry (except for 3 x mixed age group year 3/4 classes)
	Military base(s) served	1 Regiment (St David's Barracks) and DEMS (St George's Barracks)
	Distance to military base	1 mile
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	We currently have a significant proportion of Nepalese children, as well as Fijians, who have a parent serving in the army.
Why the school agreed to take part	To support our community of Service families better and improve liaison.	

Project overview

We wanted to develop a nurture space where our Service Children's Champion can meet with individual children and small groups, and to raise awareness amongst non-Service pupils and staff about the challenges that military children face.

Main project objectives

- Improved awareness in the community of the support we can provide in school for Service children and their families.
- Improved communication between Service parents and school in order to improve support for children during times of separation/deployment.
- Improved awareness within school and the community of the challenges Service children face.

Intended outcomes of the project

- The voices of Service children and parents are heard and actions are taken as a result of what they say.
- An increased number of Service parents inform office staff and teachers about deployments/postings and ask for support.
- Parents of Service children have a greater understanding of the challenges their children can face and how the school can support them

Description of what you did

A member of staff (HLTA) was appointed as our Service Children's Champion (SCC), with 2 days a week of designated time to work with Service children and their families. The role has developed over the year, beginning with setting up a welcoming space for children. This included resources such as large maps of the world and UK, soft furnishings, toys and games, books (and other Little Troopers resources) and other interesting objects to use as talking points.

“I have definitely witnessed a change and growth in my daughter over the last few months and am sure that the support you have given her has played a big part in that”

(Parent)

The SCC introduced her role at a staff meeting and has subsequently liaised with individual teachers, parents and admin staff. This has enabled us to better identify children whose parents are absent for any reason so that they can receive some 1:1 support. This may involve looking at maps, talking and playing games. The SCC has also supported children and parents with strategies to use at home in a parent's absence, for example coping with a younger sibling who may not understand what is happening.

During the Month of the Military Child, we increased awareness of the life of military children. In our Key Stage assemblies, some year 5 Service children described the highs and lows of military life and held a Q and A session afterwards. This enabled other Service children to understand that they were not alone in their experiences and gave them the confidence to share their thoughts and feelings.

In order to liaise with parents, each month the SCC now attends a coffee morning run by the Welfare team from DEMS. This has enabled parents to discuss personal matters in an informal situation, covering issues such as clubs, funding for Nursery places, SEND processes and transition arrangements.

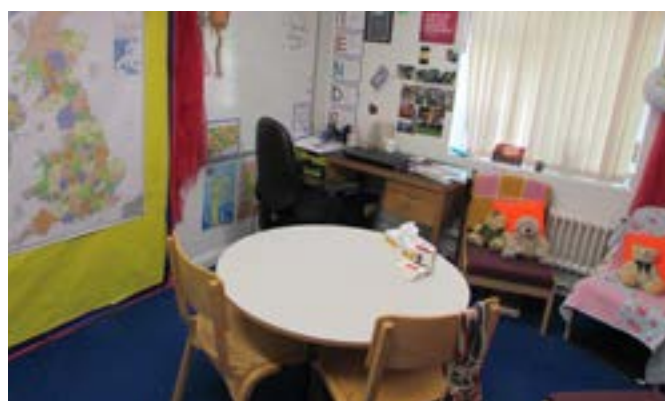
In addition, provision for Service pupils is now a standing item on the agenda of all SLT and staff meetings, so there is more discussion amongst all school staff about their well-being and support.

Details of any funding costs

Approximately £100 spent on resources for the nurture space.

What has been the impact?

- Teachers and teaching assistants are better informed when a parent is absent through deployment or training, whether just for several weeks or for months.
- The children that have been supported by the SCC feel that their voices have been heard and they have valued their time with her when a parent is absent.
- Military children have become more aware that other children in the school are experiencing the same feelings and issues as themselves, and there is more conversation within classes. Some children have also written about their experiences as military children in the school newspaper.
- The SCC is now liaising informally with parents at coffee mornings and can support parents with strategies and advice.



Next steps

- Having the SCC available before the start of the day for parents to meet.
- Introducing a lunchtime club for children whose parent is absent.
- Improving links with the military through its welfare departments (1 Reg).

Name and phase of school:

Gateway Primary School



Title of project	Buddy Captains	
School context	Number on roll	272
	Percentage of Service children	58
	Class structure	Reception to Y6 with some mixed-age classes
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	Situated alongside the Station
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	Our current mobility is 29% which is very high. From September 2022 – June 2023 we had 53 new starters and 24 children moving on.
Why the school agreed to take part	To look at our existing provision and expand on something that is already working successfully. Greater networking with other schools is also beneficial as we can all help each other.	

Project overview

Buddy Captains will be in place to support the class buddy system for when new children join our school. Their role will extend to meeting with the SPP lead to discuss what can be improved, and to come up with ideas on how to evolve the role.

Main project objective

Thriving Lives Toolkit principle 5: Children are Heard.

We offered more roles to our pupils to hear and act on their voices. We already had pupils as house captains and school council representatives, but we wished to add to these by having Service children in a role to share their experiences and support others in the same situation. They can then share their views with staff, so that the voice of the Service child is strengthened.



Intended outcomes of the project

To give our year 6 Service pupils the chance to use their experiences to support others and to share their voice to make a difference to all.

To introduce more pupil leadership roles to ensure all aspects of our school are covered.

To have children involved in the Service pupil support team - to fully empathise with the life of a Service child, you have to have experienced it yourself, so our Buddy Captains will become a huge asset to our SPP support.

“Having someone stood waiting at the door for my child on their first day made me feel at ease, knowing they had been welcomed and supported reassured me that they would be ok. I heard children saying, “We knew you were coming!”. What a wonderful idea.’ ”

(New parent)

Description of what you did

As this was a project that started during the 2022/23 academic year, we used Service students that already had a role within the school to assist the Family Support Worker staff member with events. During the Month of the Military Child, they assisted with organising a cake sale and helped sell the cakes. We already have a very successful buddy system in place and these children have had the chance to share their voice about their experiences. We have taken part in a few research projects over the years and our Service pupils speak very candidly about what it is like to be them. We even sponsored an Owl called Buddy for the year to be a mascot and hope that our Buddy Captains can meet him in the new school year.

Details of any funding costs

New badges - maximum of £20,

The support from the children costs nothing, but it is worth its weight in gold.



What has been the impact?

Our buddy system is extremely successful and is the reason why children feel settled very quickly when they join the school. It is important to us at Gateway that our children have a sense of belonging. When facing the unknown, having someone that greets them at the door on their first day, makes those early moments so much easier.

The school's Family Support Worker has a welcome chat with all new children on arrival, and this is always something that comes up as the thing that helped children when they joined us. It is also a role that the children aspire to have, and they take the role very seriously, understanding its importance.

Next steps

Moving forwards, we will ask students to put themselves forward for this role and be voted for in the same way our house captains and school council are decided. They will get badges to wear and they will be involved with organising Service events, including our assemblies for Month of the Military Child.

“Having a buddy really helped me. I didn't feel alone and it helped me make other friends and feel part of my class straight away.”

(Poppy, year 5)

Name and phase of school:

Hanborough Manor CE Primary School



Title of project		Hanborough Heroes and Reflection Space
School context	Number on roll	200
	Percentage of Service children	5
	Class structure	Single form entry
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton
	Distance to military base	11.7 miles
	Military member on GB?	No
	Any staff with serving spouses?	No
Why the school agreed to take part		We wanted to improve the provision and support we offer to our Service pupil premium learners. Some have been in our school for many years, and the support has been mostly academic, so we want something more bespoke so that the pupils know that they are visible, important and a strong part of our community.

Project overview

To raise the visibility and support for our Service pupil premium children through the creation of Hanborough Heroes and a reflection space.

Main project objectives

Creating a specific club 'Hanborough Heroes' which will cater for our Service children's pastoral needs. This will meet regularly, with the children taking part in trips and having visits for them and their friends. Also, we wanted to create a reflective space in which these children can feel settled and supported during difficult times.

Intended outcomes of the project

Improving the visibility of the nearby Base and the Service children in our school.

Making sure that staff are aware of these children and the unique challenges that they face.

Providing appropriate support for these pupils which will help them self-regulate and become successful learners now and in the future.



Description of what you did

Initially, we engaged with our families in the Services to gain insight into any difficulties they encounter. We arranged regular coffee gatherings where families could openly discuss their circumstances in a friendly environment. It was acknowledged that this was the first time these families had all met in this manner, and all agreed that it was exceptionally useful. We created a communication network, via the school, which these families have used since. We then extended this support to the children as well, discussing ways to assist them when a family member was absent.

As we explored various options, it became evident that each child required bespoke support and care.



To address the needs of all our Service children, we established a club called Hanborough Heroes. Throughout the year, we held multiple meetings, giving these children the opportunity to express their emotions, engage in diverse activities, and share their experiences with friends. Each child pursued different activities, such as completing homework, scrapbooking, or utilizing resources from Little Troopers. Despite the differences, all children benefited from feeling acknowledged and sharing their stories with others. We also deliberated on creating a dedicated space for the children, eventually deciding on an outdoor garden where they could nurture plants and enjoy a space to connect with friends or seek privacy.

After this, we wanted the children to get a taste of the creative and expressive activities that they could partake in, so we organised for the charity Never Such Innocence to come in and work with our Service children and their friends. Together, they created a Christmas song, very much centred around the feelings and emotions of the children. Feedback from a friend of a Service pupil in year 3 was, “I didn’t know that her dad would be away for so long, even over Christmas.” Others also admitted that they were unaware of these challenges, which confirmed the importance of such workshops.

Finally, we embarked on a project to create artwork featuring the RAF Brize Norton symbol, which will be proudly displayed in our school. Furthermore, we collaborated with our Service children to design a suitable area that offers moments of reflection and contemplation when needed. The Hanborough Heroes club will utilise this space regularly to assess progress and provide a platform for children to connect with their peers.

Details of any funding costs

Materials for the mural and the planters

What has been the impact?

Our Hanborough Heroes project has made a profound impact on our school community. The Service children, who previously felt unseen and overlooked, now experience a newfound sense of visibility and validation. Their feelings are recognized and valued, as their friends have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges they face. No longer do they have to explain their different behaviours during difficult times; people are now aware and empathetic.

Moreover, the project has fostered a stronger bond among Service families and the school. The termly coffee mornings provided a platform for them to connect, share experiences and offer support. As a result, the families have become more engaged with the school, actively participating in various activities and events. They have formed a supportive network, organising lifts and assisting each other when needed.

The Hanborough Heroes initiative has created a more inclusive and compassionate environment where everyone feels seen, understood and supported. It has brought about positive changes in the lives of our Service children and their families, promoting a stronger sense of community within our school.

Next steps

Hanborough Heroes will run every half term, with specific trips, as well as in-school sessions. The coffee mornings will continue to take place, and the links between the school will continue. We will also offer deployment forms at the front desk, for Service families to inform us of when they will experience periods of absence. Additionally, we will display the RAF Brize Norton logo on internal displays to show everyone how proud we are of our Service families.

Name and phase of school:

Longcot and Fernham CE Primary School



Title of project	Service with a Smile	
School context	Number on roll	135
	Percentage of Service children	14
	Class structure	FS - one class KS1 - one class KS1/2 mix - one class KS2 - two classes
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton, Defence Academy (Shrivenham), Salisbury, Hullavington, Portsmouth, North Holt
	Distance to military base	Brize Norton – 8 miles Defence Academy – 1.5 miles Salisbury – 49 miles Hullavington – 34 miles Portsmouth – 89 miles North Holt – 65 miles
	Military member on GB?	No
	Any staff with serving spouses?	2
Why the school agreed to take part	We wanted to improve opportunities to support Service children and their families (Trust initiative).	

Project overview

We wanted to recognise the unique challenges of Service families in our school community, and develop the support we give to our Service children and their families by creating opportunities to share experiences, create friendships and have fun together. Our school values of love, honesty and respect play an integral part in everything we do, and we used these as the foundations of our project.

Main project objectives

- Recognising our Service children and their families as a community.
- Supporting our Service children and their families by creating opportunities for their community to thrive.

Intended outcomes of the project

- **Respect:** To recognise our Service children and their families as a community.
- **Love:** To create opportunities for Service children to meet and develop a sense of community through regular meetings with activities linked to Little Troopers.
- **Honesty:** To provide emotional support for Service children by providing sessions with ELSA trained TA.
- **Respect/Love/Honesty:** To introduce a home school link for Service families.
- **Love:** To create opportunities for parents/carers of Service children to meet and develop a sense of community by organising and hosting coffee mornings for Service parents.
- **Love:** To create opportunities for Service families to meet and develop a sense of community by

hosting a Forest School session where families were encouraged to explore, create and have fun in the school grounds and finishing with a campfire and hot chocolate.

- **Respect:** To celebrate the lives of Service families with the rest of the school community by inviting Servicemen/women into school to share their stories and explain what being a Service family is all about.

Description of what you did

Our Service families are not attached to a garrison or just the Defence Academy, so they do not have a ready-made community to recognise and support their unique challenges.

We started by evaluating our current provision for Service children. All teachers were aware of the group as we already monitored their academic progress and attainment. In addition, daily planning highlights any interventions to support progress for this group of children. We felt confident that our welcome and initial assessment procedures for this group were good. Despite this, our Service children did not yet have a unique identity within the school and their parents did not necessarily meet due to the diverse locations of their jobs, so they did not have a network of support to meet their unique challenges.

The project offered us a chance to enrich the school community and the families it served. We took a three-pronged approach.

The needs of the children

Our newly appointed military children's lead began by timetabling regular sessions with our ELSA-trained TA to work with our Service children. The TA led the group in fun activities to build a sense of togetherness, using ideas from Little Troopers as well as other games and activities to build a sense of cohesion within the group. She was also available for 1:1 support, particularly at times of deployment and relocation. Despite early resistance, all children are keen to be involved and feel special.

The needs of the parents

One parent was invited to work as a parent/school liaison contact. She would understand Service parents' unique challenges and would have access



to contacts within the wider community. Most parents were supportive of the children's group, but some were initially ambivalent. A coffee afternoon for Service parents allowed them to meet each other and begin to form a supportive group. Parents were told about the family support officer within the Faringdon Learning Trust and introduced to the PTA representative who could offer opportunities for parents to help the school.

The needs of the families

A Forest School session for the families of Service children gave families a chance to meet each other in an environment which was led by the children. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and the event was celebrated in the school newsletter.

By inviting Serving parents into school to share their stories, we have raised their profile and added to the pride for which the Service child has about their serving parent.

Details of any funding requirements to date

About six days of dedicated staff time and various sundries for coffee afternoons and the Forest School event.

What has been the impact?

Service children and parents better support each other and enjoy the special feeling of being in a community. They have better tools and strategies to help each other at difficult times.

This has all strengthened the school community.

Next steps

Celebrate our achievements within the trust by publishing a report in the trust newsletter.

Create a new policy and access local training for staff

Timetable parent and family events as regular entries in the school diary.

Name and phase of school:

North Leigh CE Primary School



Title of project		Dandelion Art and Bake Sale	
School context	Number on roll	181	
	Percentage of Service children	7	
	Class structure	One form entry	
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton	
	Distance to military base	9 miles	
	Military member on GB?	No	
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes	
Why the school agreed to take part		We have a growing number of Service families within our school community and raising the profile this group of children is important to us to maximise their achievements.	

Project overview

In the words of the children: To create an assembly because we wanted to raise money for Little Troopers, explain why the dandelion is the flower of the military child and explain to our friends what it's like to be part of a Service family.

Main project objective

To spread awareness of Service Children's lived experience.

Intended outcomes of the project

For the Service children within our school community to feel that they have had their voices heard and to have the opportunity to plan and carry out a charitable event.



Description of what you did

On Wednesday 7 June 2023, our Service children presented an assembly that outlined what makes being part of a Service family special. They talked about the work *Little Troopers* do for Service families and explained how they were going to hold a fundraising event by creating a school wide art sale, where parents could buy their children's artwork. They combined this with a bake sale.

Every child in the school created a piece of Dandelion artwork and lots of people donated cakes and bakes. On the 9 June 2023, they held their art and bake sale. It raised nearly £400 for *Little Troopers*.

Their success was shared by *Little Troopers* on their [Instagram](#) page, they also had an article written in the [Oxford Mail](#).



“My two boys enjoyed the special assembly they prepared to show their friends and peer groups what it actually means to be a child of a Service family, and a little bit about what they are going through when the Service person is away from home due to work commitments such as deployment. They really felt part of a special group and enjoyed it all.”

(Parent)

You can see all of their photos [here](#) on the Pastoral page of our school website.

Details of any funding costs

For the Art sale, we needed to purchase canvases. We were lucky to secure £200 funding from the RAF Brize Norton Thrift Shop committee grant scheme for charities, schools and groups which allowed us to purchase a canvas for every child in the school and allowed all of our profit to go to Little Troopers.

What has been the impact?

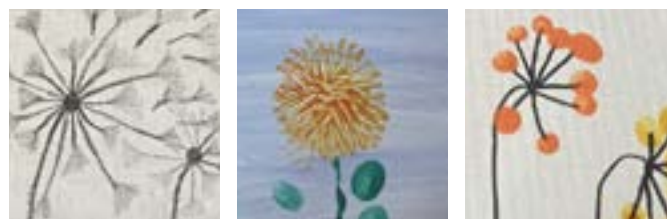
The impact the project has had is most effectively summed up using this feedback from one of our Service parents:

‘I am very impressed at how well the children came together to raise awareness and so much money for the cause. Although it is great being out of the immediate vicinity of the station, or the “bubble”, and we do love the North Leigh community, we often miss out on the military community experience and support. I think it’s very important for this group of children to get together to know they aren’t alone and that there are others like them who share the same feelings and have to go through the same experiences.’



Next steps

The children were inspired by all of the ideas at the Festival of Friends and have a long list of ideas they would now like to try out. We will be getting together in September to finalise our plans but the top of the list were having a teddy to go home with each of the Service children, to write a diary and share with the other children, and running a camo day.



“It went amazingly well, and we all feel really proud!”

(year 5 girl)

Name and phase of school:

RAF Benson Community Primary School



Title of project	Introduction of a welcome package for Service children starting at our school	
School context	Number on roll	167
	Percentage of Service children	97
	Class structure	One form entry
	Military base(s) served	RAF Benson
	Distance to military base	On site
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	We have significant trickle posting mobility (generally between 50 and 60% a year). Families are deployed throughout the year to various locations and we have a pastoral officer to support removing barriers to learning.
Why the school agreed to take part	We wanted to bolster the extensive support we already offer Service children at our school, ensuring their transition to us is as smooth as possible, and that they are warmly welcomed into our school community when they arrive. Our mobility rate is very high due to the high percentage of Service children attending and the location of our school being onsite at RAF Benson, so it's important that transition is effective.	

Project overview

To improve the current support for the new Service children joining our school by making a robust welcome package for children starting our school using pupil voice to guide the process.

Main project objectives

- Improving our support for mobile Service children.
- Ensuring their wellbeing is supported.
- Ensuring that transition is effective.
- Ensuring that Service children are heard.

Intended outcomes of the project

To encourage peer to peer support within the high percentage of Service children we have in our school through shared experiences, and for new Service



children to feel welcome and well supported when they arrive, thereby achieving a seamless transition.

Description of what you did

We began with a pupil questionnaire to measure the effectiveness of our current welcome experience to gain measurable data, asking children who had

“I really enjoyed making the video for our school because I want other children to know how much fun we have at our school!”

(10-year-old girl)

started at our school within the previous term. Questions covered how children felt before they started, what they thought of our school website, how welcome they felt when they started, what they thought about the pastoral support offered, and how they felt after a period of time with us. Questionnaire responses highlighted that none of the children asked had been shown our school website prior to starting with us, therefore our Admin and Pastoral teams now signpost all parents to the school website on initial joining enquiries. We also created an ‘arrivals/leavers board’ to identify children joining and leaving us, so they can be supported by their peers and the entire staff team.

Our School Council also gathered pupil voices from each class with their ideas of how we can support new children in the best possible way when they join our school. It was identified that they wanted to create a welcome video showcasing our school to new children. Some children shared their thoughts about our school and provided the voice-overs in the video. All classes were included in the video, with children providing a friendly ‘welcome wave’ into their classroom. The completed Welcome Video was shown to all the children during a whole school assembly and is being shared with new children before they join our school.

Details of any funding costs

No costs were incurred as we produced the video in-house featuring the children who attend our school.

What has been the impact?

Children from across the school have been involved in the production of our Welcome Video and they have taken great pride in what they have achieved from their initial ideas. They enjoyed seeing the result of their hard work when the completed Welcome Video was shown during a whole school assembly. Children starting with us have enjoyed learning about our school before they arrive, particularly hearing the voices of children already attending our school.

Next steps

We will continue to review effectiveness of our Welcome Video with children who join us and obtain regular feedback from the children about ways we can improve support for Service children into our school.



“I’m proud that I got to make something that will help other children learn about our school and so they can see how friendly it is here.”

(9-year-old boy)

Name and phase of school:

St Christophers CofE Primary School



Title of project		Raising Force Club awareness and communication	
School context	Number on roll	135	
	Percentage of Service children	24	
	Class structure	Mixed year groups reception to year 6	
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton	
	Distance to military base	4.8 miles	
	Military member on GB?	Yes	
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes	
	Any other relevant information	Children aged between 4-11 years old	
Why the school agreed to take part		To raise awareness of our Service pupils and their families and show their value. To improve staff and parental engagement through communication in various platforms, in the hopes that it will dispel any prejudices or common misconceptions about being part of an Armed Forces family.	

Project overview

We wanted to raise the profile of Service pupils within our school community through various platforms. We hoped to ensure that all staff have a deeper understanding of the challenges Service children face and how these can impact on their school progress. We planned for all our Service families to feel heard through various events and to improve parental engagement and communication.

Main project objective

Spreading awareness of Service pupils.

Intended outcomes of the project

To strengthen a home-school link for our Service families by initiating contact and making use of our online platform, Dojo, and a QR code linked to a deployment form.



To undertake a review of our staff awareness of our Service pupils and related impacts on learning.

“The Forces children of Willow class have really benefited from having a Forces club and have enjoyed the support and activities on offer. Many speak highly of the nurture and care that they receive and also love taking Dandelion home for weekend adventures!”

(year 5/6 teacher)

Description of what you did

Our staff Forces Liaison Officer (FLO) started the project by leading a fully staffed teacher meeting to outline the project to all staff. A question was put forward to see how many teachers were aware of who their Forces children were and the importance of knowing these. The staff were then introduced to the Thriving Lives Toolkit and were encouraged by its use to identify further improvements within the school for this group of learners. It was agreed that the allocation of a Dojo page for Service family communications, alongside a monthly staff email, would help to spread greater awareness of our Service pupils.

A Service children Dojo page was then created, initiating contact with all military families electronically. It contains up to date information for these families on forthcoming events, both in the school community and out, and also in-school activities that have a specific Service pupil participation focus. In addition, an opportunity for Service families to communicate any forthcoming deployments or courses that may affect the emotional wellbeing of their children was created through a deployment form, which can be accessed through school reception or via a QR code found on an external display board. Service pupils can also ask for a paper one on request.

A page has also been added to the school website highlighting the work done with Service pupils and events held by the school.

Details of any funding costs

The funding of this project has mainly been the FLO's time to help plan and implement the project, as well as her regular work requirements.

What has been the impact?

The staff meetings and emails have been accessed by all teachers. Anecdotal feedback suggests that more staff are now aware of the possible needs and barriers to learning that our Service pupils may face. One staff member has come forward and offered support to our Service pupils with any future events and to help create awareness in the wider community. The move to online communication has been supported by Service families. Engagement with parents has seen a marked increase and communication between these families and school has improved so that we are able to provide more targeted support when needed. To create easier access to our deployment form, we have now taken it a step further by creating a QR code which sends parents to a digital copy of the form to fill in.

“I love Forces Club and eating cake!”

(6-year-old girl)

Next steps

Continue structured communications between staff and Service families to further embed processes.

Update the Dojo page and school website regularly on Service pupil support.



Scan here for the
Deployment/course

Name and phase of school:

St John the Evangelist CE Primary School



Title of project		Raising awareness and celebrating the contributions of our Service pupils and families	
School context	Number on roll	479	
	Percentage of Service children	12	
	Class structure	Two form entry	
	Military base(s) served	RAF Brize Norton	
	Distance to military base	1.5 miles	
	Military member on GB?	No	
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes	
Why the school agreed to take part		We primarily wanted to raise the profile of our Service pupils both within the school and the wider community and share with our community how their experiences and values impact positively on all of us within school.	

Project overview

For each year group to have an exciting project or piece of work to be celebrated in a published book. We then planned to celebrate the children's book in a school celebration and sharing event.

Main project objectives

To raise the profile and celebrate the experiences of our Service children, within and beyond our school community, emphasising how these are unique.

To celebrate the lived experiences of our Service children.

To increase all children's understanding of the Service community within our school.

To capture the voice of all our Service children and their parents' thoughts to increase the tailored support we offer.

Intended outcomes of the project

We wanted to create a forum for our Service pupils to feel more confident in sharing their stories, feelings and experiences with others and to enable

them to recognise the value they have and bring to our community in being military children. In turn, we wanted all children in our school community to share in our joint values. We wanted to improve the communication with, and voice of, our Service pupils and their families to gain a deeper understanding across the whole school community.

Description of what you did

In each year group, we created roles of responsibility for nominated pupils who became our Service pupils Advocates. They are always on hand to look out for their friends and work alongside staff to support their peers and also raise the profile of our Service pupils across the school.

Across the school we have all worked on different projects to reflect the experiences and feelings not only of our Service pupils but also of their peers, staff and parents. These were compiled into our Festival of Friends Portfolio book.

As part of the project Service children from across the whole school recorded their voice on what makes their Service parent a hero to them. They sent hugs out to a wide range of members across the Service community; they designed and created fabric squares representing military life (which were used



to create a cuddly Nurture Bear for our Eagles Club); they shared thoughts and feelings about how they and their friends support each other; they created written accounts about the joys and challenges of being in the Services; they worked with the charity Never Such Innocence to create poetry about friends near and far; and they compiled 'postcards of pride' which they wrote to their parents to express their gratitude and pride.

We hosted a sharing event at school in June which was attended by invited friends of the children, Service parents, school governors, local authority representatives and guests from RAF Brize Norton. The children showcased all the amazing things they have worked on this year, sharing their presentation book, singing and celebrating with our guests. The children then invited these guests to enjoy cream tea refreshments while they took a closer look at the work produced and talked to the children about the project.

The work was then all presented at the wider Oxfordshire Festival of Friends celebration event on a display board at the end of June.

Details of any funding costs

Publication of the Festival of Friends Portfolio Book = £50

Art materials and Creation of our Bear = £90

What has been the impact?

The provision we offer at St John's has always been important to us. The opportunity to focus on how we make this even better has been a very positive experience for all involved and it's great to see the positive impact the work has had on our children.

They have said that they feel more supported and know that they have their peers and knowledgeable supportive staff to help if they have a parent deployed.

Staff are now more aware of the lived experience of our Service children. Additionally, the children have shared their life experiences and feelings with their friends, and this has supported our whole school community to value the influence that the skills of Service pupils have on our school community. We are so pleased to have further raised the awareness and contributions of our Service pupils and families to the whole school.

Our stakeholder and school parent survey showed a 25% increase in those who strongly agree that school staff are considerate of the lived experience and challenges of military life. The data showed a positive increase in all areas, however the most significant % increase was for parents communicating that they feel that their children are supported by our pastoral team, and that we have a stronger home-school partnership, helping Service families feel valued as part of the school community.

Next steps

- To continue to meet with our Service Pupil Advocates to help them support their peers.
- To hold a yearly celebration assembly for our Service pupils and families.
- To continue to raise the profile of our military children through staff meetings.
- To continue to run Eagles lunch club once a week for Service children to feel supported.
- To continue to build our Service pupil community links with RAF Brize Norton and the school network across Carterton.

Name and phase of school:

St. Nicolas CE Primary School



Title of project	Establishing a Service pupil 'Camo Club' and strengthening pupil voice	
School context	Number on roll	420
	Percentage of Service children	7
	Class structure	Reception – year 6
	Military base(s) served	Dalton Barracks
	Distance to military base	1.4 miles
	Military member on GB?	No
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part	To ensure our Service children are heard and to enhance their experience of school life at St. Nicolas.	

Project overview

Our project aimed to set up a Camo Club to run fortnightly for Service children in Key Stage 2. It would be run by our Service Lead to support children's pastoral needs and provide opportunities for children to build relationships across the school. Additionally, our project aimed to create a partnership with the Army Welfare Service at Dalton Barracks.

Main project objective

To improve our pastoral support for Service children.

Intended outcomes of the project

We wanted to:

- gain an understanding of our Service pupils' wider experiences and views, to inform our provision and what they need to experience to prepare them for future success.
- use the information from the children's voice to enhance our pastoral support and respond to their needs.



- promote the profile of Service children in the school, for them to share their unique experiences and celebrate their backgrounds.

Description of what you did

Camo Club set up to provide a lunchtime 'drop in' club.

This provided proactive support to address specific concerns, such as deployment and emotional support through a range of activities. It was also reactive in providing enhanced levels of conversation, care and input that children require

“Camo Club is fun. I enjoy talking to other children in the same situation as me and we do activities that are special for us”

(8-year-old boy)

when they are at their most vulnerable. The club was able to help children with friendship struggles and short-term issues. Pupils were able to make contact with others in similar circumstances across different year groups. We used the Little Troopers pack to involve children in relevant well-being activities. We purchased a range of high-quality texts that support children experiencing separation and deployment, in line with our positive reading culture.

Created a partnership with the Army Welfare Service at Dalton Barracks.

This channel of communication has become invaluable as it provides us with information about deployment and what the Barracks can offer to support our children. The Army Welfare Officer visited school and completed a pupil voice session to gather Service children’s feelings and ideas about what support they would like. The children felt valued and made a positive contribution to a St. Nicolas ‘Bucket List’! It also helped the Service Lead learn about potential interventions.

Our Service Lead accessed the Thriving Lives Toolkit and other resources available. This provided a useful framework for identifying existing knowledge and practice but more importantly, for creating an action plan moving forward to realise longer term outcomes.

Details of any funding costs

£60 on books to support Service children.

£64 on Little Troopers School Resource Pack.

£30 on consumables for Camo Club.

What has been the impact?

Pupil voice confirmed that overall, children feel settled and happy at school. Service children said

they feel valued, important and listened to. They said that they enjoyed sharing stories about the different places they have lived and were proud to have a parent in the Armed Forces.

Camo Club recognises this group of children as an important part of our school and provides a safe space for them to share their thoughts and feelings. All the children engaged well in the activities and enjoyed talking to others in the same situation. This regular pastoral support responds to issues quickly and is run by a member of staff who has experience of a Service lifestyle.

Our Service Lead has engaged with the wider community and increased their understanding of the possible links with Dalton Barracks. Now, all staff are aware of who their Service children are and report the impact of knowing that there is someone visible to support them.

Next steps

We would like our Service children to share their experiences in an assembly to promote what life is like for a Service child at St. Nicolas. We are planning on making our Service children more visible during Armed Forces week to promote their unique experiences.

We will develop our CPD offer for staff by using the Thriving Lives Toolkit to embed our whole-school approach to supporting this group of children. This will help staff to ensure children’s well-being is supported during deployment and beyond, resulting in increased engagement in class. Finally, we will continue to build on our partnership with Army Welfare at Dalton Barracks.

“I feel listened to and proud of who I am”

(9-year-old girl)



Name and phase of school:

Stephen Freeman Primary School

Title of project		Strengthening parental engagement and supporting the wellbeing of our SPP families
School context	Number on roll	439
	Percentage of Service children	4.8
	Class structure	Two form entry, nursery – year 6
	Military base(s) served	RAF Benson, RAF Brize Norton, Dalton Barracks, Vauxhall Barracks
	Distance to military base	Varied
	Military member on GB?	No
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	Many of our families live in SFA 'outside the wire' in houses leased by the MoD. These are scattered around the Great Western Park housing estate adjacent to the school. Some of our families live quite a long way away from their Station/Camp and do not get the support that comes from living 'inside the wire' alongside other members of the Service community. Access to support from the HIVE and other information / welfare services is limited.
Why the school agreed to take part		We want every member of our Service families to feel heard and supported. We want them to know that we understand, empathise and are here for the entire family.

Project overview

To empower our SPP families and the rest of the school community by increasing awareness and understanding of how to fully support them throughout the pre-deployment, separation and post deployment phases.

Main project objectives

To strengthen close relationships with Service parents which will enable our school to understand the family situation and fully support children throughout the pre-deployment, separation and post deployment phases.

To further develop our school community where

communication and collaboration create an atmosphere of caring, nurturing support where every member of the SPP community feels heard, respected and supported.

Intended outcomes of the project

- Improved engagement and communication with our Service families.
- Better staff understanding of armed forces' families contexts.
- Strengthened Service pupil voice.
- Even better provision for our armed forces families.

Description of what you did

In October, all teaching staff attended a staff meeting on the experiences of SPP families. Staff were shown

“It’s just great knowing that we can talk to other children who know what it’s like to be us”

(year 3 girl)

the different resources available – e.g. ‘Moving On’ passports, EFA materials, Talk & Draw referral paperwork, ELSA and other support and provision available on Edukey was shared. Staff were made fully aware of the need for flexibility with parent evenings and the different context in which families live. Information regarding the MOD’s CEAS (now called EAT – education advisory team) was shared.

Case studies of families who needed different kinds of support, both emotional and practical, were considered. For example, we looked at how a SPP child might have done the Tudors twice because of the frequent change of schools, but have completely missed out on fractions, etc and this is why it is important that we keep the passports up to date. We also looked at the difficulties faced when emergency childcare is needed when relatives live 200 miles away and how this can impact a family. Staff were made aware that SPP families face several challenges daily - things non-SPP families often take for granted. Staff were encouraged to open a dialogue with their SPP parents to discuss the dates of deployments and how best to support them. All children are identified through Integrus and Edukey – staff were made aware of who their SPP were and how they are identified. All presentations, training materials, passports etc were distributed to the staff for use.

Since that initial meeting, all staff have been made aware of plans for a SPP children’s library of books that are relevant to their experiences. All Service children were initially met over a hot chocolate and biscuits. At this meeting, their voices were heard and we discussed what they would like to do/see more of.

Details of any funding costs

£453

What has been the impact?

The children wanted to have more social time together so they could support one another – we decided Friday Forces Club would extend from 20 minutes to 40 minutes a week and that we would have additional opportunities for art, crafts in the comfort zone, also more outdoor activities, picnics and Forest School. We also contacted members of the RAF outreach team to arrange for some STEM opportunities.

A questionnaire was issued to parents. Next October there will be a Forest School based event for children and parents. It was decided that as of this July, Friday Forces Club would be re-established in the comfort zone room and that it would create a display of artwork for it!

The children wanted to create a section of the library that is just about their experience. In January, we chose and purchased the books for our library. The books will be on display and accessible to all in our current meeting room and as of September they will be in the comfort zone. The SPP children also have access to tech so they can maintain contact with their parents on deployment.

Next steps

- Expand the library – Little Troopers Books. <https://www.littletroopers.net/shop/little-troopers-story-books-bundle/>
- Create a ‘floorbook’ of all our activities.
- Guest adults to speak to the Children/Lead assemblies.
- ‘Leaver’ certificates/cards and a party.
- Establish ‘Pen Pals’ with children leaving.
- Engage with <https://www.neversuchinnocence.com/>
- Engage with RAF Families Federation.



Name and phase of school:

Sunningwell CE Primary

Title of project	Deployment link	
School context	Number on roll	70
	Percentage of Service children	33 (although this is changing rapidly at present due to relocation of many families)
	Class structure	Year R – year 6
	Military base(s) served	Dalton Barracks
	Distance to military base	1.5 miles
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part	To strengthen our work against the Thriving Lives Toolkit, especially Principles: 2 – Wellbeing 3 – Achievement 6 – Parental engagement	

Project overview

Providing books to children and copies to deployed Service personnel, either away due to training or active service. Following this, in the spring term we began encouraging Service families into the school to read with children each week.

We would like to develop more reading for pleasure across the school and know that sharing a book with a parent can support this. Parents who are away can miss out on this activity and we hope to enable serving parents to fully participate in this. Reading is the foundation of much learning, and we feel that this project could further foster this.

Main project objectives

A greater connection with Service families and better understanding of both the children's (beyond the school day) and Service personnel lives.

Building awareness in all staff of the challenges faced by children whose parents are deployed.

Intended outcomes of the project

- A greater love of reading for our children from Service families – enabling them to build memories around the experience of sharing a book with a parent who is away.
- A connection with Service families beyond the normal school routine.
- Greater staff awareness of the needs of Service pupils.

Description of what you did and what has been the impact?

On one level, we did not achieve our goal as only one family took books to share when a parent was deployed. We also applied for, and handed out, Reading Force free book packs www.readingforce.org.uk/ Through enquiries with the children, this again appeared to have had little impact on reading habits within our Service families.

However, through the focus of the project, which drew our attention to our Service families, other



positive outcomes came about. These included having families joining together on a Friday morning for 'DEAR' – Drop Everything And Read - and a very popular 'Reading Café' event. We know that the distractions of the family home often mean that children and parents don't always find time to sit down together to share books. At school, with everyone focussed on reading, we witnessed parents and children, indeed, whole families sitting together to read.

Another activity which came about because of the Festival of Friends meetings was a wonderfully motivational and powerful poetry workshop for our upper KS2 class, led by Clive Saunders and kindly funded by the charity Never Such Innocence.

Again, because of the project raising the profile of our Service children, we ensured we ran a Little Troopers event and carried out our own Little Dandelion activity with all our Service children. The children told us that they liked the recognition that they often faced unique family circumstances. They also said that Sunningwell was a good place to be at school as it was small so 'they could be friends with everyone'. They liked -

- Learning
- Always having someone to talk to
- Being able to fit in – even if they were shy
- Having lots of other Service children to talk to
- The opportunities that Sunningwell offers - particularly singing, sports, music, trips, visitors

(like the Bishop of Oxford) and year 6 special activities.

They said it would be even better if -

- We still had a home-school link worker (sadly ours was cut when an MOD funding grant finished)
- We had separate trips for Service children. (We were, of course, able to offer this to some of the children when we attended the Festival of Friends celebratory event!)

In conclusion, the focus of the project led to a broad range of very positive outcomes for each of our Service children. Furthermore, though this focus, the wider school community developed its understanding of the lives of our Service families.

Next steps

We will discuss with Service families which of the following options they might like to participate in

- Reading in school on a Friday morning and / or Reading Cafes.
- Book packs for families where a parent is deployed.
- Reading Force free book packs.

We will schedule Little Trooper and Little Dandelions activities each term and maintain vigilance for any projects or activities which we can offer our Service and non-Service children which raises the understanding for staff and children of life as a Service family child.

Name and phase of school:

Tiddlywinks Preschool, Bicester



Tiddlywinks Preschool
Alder Drive
Ambrosden
OX25 2RD

Title of project	Communication display table	
School context	Number on roll	55
	Percentage of Service children	20
	Class structure	Bicester Garrison, various regiments
	Military base(s) served	1.5 miles
	Distance to military base	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part	A pre-school committee member suggested to our feeder school, Five Acres, that we could participate. We provide an invaluable service to local Forces families.	

Project overview

To create a display table that is accessible to all the families in our entrance hallway, to improve our pastoral support.

Main project objective

By creating a display table that is inviting and eye-catching, we aimed to spark conversations and awareness of how important it is for families to be open and sharing with us, so we can better support their children, emotionally, socially and personally.

Intended outcomes of the project

To improve communication between families and the setting.

To provide a conversation starter.

To make parents aware of open conversation and the importance of keeping the setting fully involved and informed of homelife circumstances.

To provide and identify where support can be targeted, if needed.

Description of what you did

We created a display table in the hallway, where all the parents enter, using different shades of purple (military child's colour) and using bold statements to



catch their eye. We made it interactive (e.g. posting notes into the letterbox) and provided resources for Service families to take home.

Details of any funding costs

£10.99 for military children's book. The rest were our resources.

What has been the impact?

We hope to see the impact over time in a more open culture of sharing information on parental absence with us. This will allow for more bespoke pastoral support to be given.

Next steps

To send out questionnaires of how we can better support Forces families.



Name and phase of school:

Wallingford School – secondary (MTOAT)



Title of project	Transition Mentoring Programme	
School context	Number on roll	1,400 (29 Service children)
	Percentage of Service children	2
	Class structure	Years 7–13
	Military base(s) served	RAF Benson
	Distance to military base	1.4 miles
	Military member on GB?	Yes
	Any staff with serving spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	'Service Champion' position in post (2 years)
Why the school agreed to take part	To raise the profile of Service children both within school and for the school's champion to act as a Network Lead for the surrounding area.	

Project overview

Five year 7 Service students were taught about the qualities needed to be an effective mentor in preparation for the current year 6 arriving in September 2023. These skills were then put to the test by visiting RAF Benson Primary School and, on a 1-1 basis, listening to year 2 students read, offering feedback and support after each one.

Main project objective

To bond the Service students in year 7 and ensure there is effective transition for the 10 new Service students coming to us in September 2023 (Principle 4 Transition is Effective, TLTK)

Intended outcomes of the project

- To bond the current year 7 as a small group and make them aware of each other
- To ensure that they learnt what a good mentor looked and acted like



- To provide opportunities to go on to our local base and utilise these skills with younger students, as well as build a rapport with the RAF Benson Primary School.

Description of what you did

The Services Champion gathered five of the year 7 Service students at the school and used this opportunity to get them together as a group and bond them. Linked to doing this, the group discussed and brainstormed what a good mentor would look like and what characteristics they would have. These skills and attributes were then put in to practice once a week during Term 3 by visiting RAF Benson Primary



School and allowing year 2 students to read on a 1-1 basis to our students. The year 7s would then offer feedback on the reading but also build a rapport with the year 2s, to the extent they wanted to always read to the same person each week.

All of this was done to improve transition into our secondary school. This will be followed up by our current year 7s mentoring two new year 7 Service students in September, to allow them to have a better transition, with more effective support for their whole academic year.

Details of any funding costs

- Cost for staff cover once a week to go to the primary school
- Petrol costs

What has been the impact?

The impact has come in several ways.

Firstly, our students have improved their confidence and ability to mentor other students.

They have had the chance to meet as a group and share their similarities and differences in their Service life.

These students have had the chance to go off site both to the military base and the primary school, but also to Oxford Brookes University, which was a good experience for them.

The impact will be seen more greatly next year with ten new year 7 Service students coming to Wallingford School and being supported by our new mentors.



Next steps

To meet the new year 7 Service students in September and ensure that they have an effective and smooth transition, followed by support all year from our new mentors.

Reflections on the celebratory day at Oxford Brookes University – 22.6.23

(Written by the students)

Five of the year 7 Service students attended the celebratory Festival of Friends at Oxford Brookes University. This was a collection of over 20 schools in Oxfordshire who have engaged in a project of their choice to enhance the support for Service children within their school.

Mr Lyons (our Services Champion) was proud to be one of the 4 Network Leaders and handed out certificates to all schools that participated. He said: "It was especially pleasing to see Wallingford Students take on the challenge of being a mentor to younger students, with the aim of supporting our up-and-coming year 6 Service students from September."

The visit was split into 4 sections. Firstly, there was a juggling master class with Steve Royle (3rd in Britain's Got Talent Final 2020). This was followed by a tour of the campus, and then a chance to eat. The last part was to look at the other schools' displays and see what great work has been going on. Finally, we all gathered in the lecture theatre to have a performance from Steve and receive our certificates.

A good year capped off for these students.

