



East Anglia Festival of Friends

A Schools' Project To Support Service Children: School Case Studies

Autumn 2025 – Summer 2026

Mural cover image created by Wymondham College



Funded by the Armed Forces Education Trust, and supported by
Make Happen & NEACO Uni Connect partnerships.

Introduction

The Festival of Friends is a tried-and tested, collaborative, year-long school improvement project which has run successfully in the following geographical areas, each time with invaluable University support:

- Hampshire - in partnership with the University of Winchester (2017-18)
- North Yorkshire and York - in partnership with Inspiring Choices Uni Connect, based at York St John University (2019-2021)
- Oxfordshire - in partnership with Study Higher Uni Connect, based at Oxford Brookes University (2022-23)
- Lincolnshire - in partnership with LiNCHigher Uni Connect, based at Bishop Grosseteste University (2023-24)
- Portsmouth & Gosport - in partnership with the University of Portsmouth (2024-25)
- Wiltshire - in partnership with Wessex Inspiration Network Uni Connect and the University of Winchester (2025-26).

Since children of Armed Forces families ('Service children') are recognised as an underrepresented group in higher education, several Uni Connect / university programmes target activities to this group of potentially vulnerable young people.

The 31 project schools are indebted to the trustees of the **Armed Forces Education Trust charity**, as without its generous grant this project could not have taken place. I am also extremely grateful to:

- **Ash Poole**, Deputy Head of Make Happen Uni Connect, and
- **Clare Bradshaw**, Project Coordinator for the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach Uni Connect

both of whom have generously given their time and energy throughout the year to support the project and provide fabulous campus venues.

A contributing factor to the project's considerable success has been the excellent support from partner organisations. In particular, I am grateful to:

- Clair Martin and Steve Baker, Directors or Seekers Create
- Never Such Innocence arts practitioners and its CEO Katie Salari
- Student ambassadors and staff from Anglia Ruskin University, the University of Essex and Norwich University of the Arts
- The Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance.

I hope you enjoy reading about the project along with these school case studies which celebrate some of the ways in which the participating schools have enhanced their provision for Armed Forces families.

Matt Blyton

Independent Education Adviser

SCISS National Executive & SCiP Alliance Management Group member

Festival of Friends Project Lead

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06 26 42 50

Project
Evaluation

Debden CofE
Primary Academy

Ringshall Primary
School

St Mary's C of E
Primary School

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In addition to the case studies listed, the following schools also took part in this project:
Attleborough Academy, Norfolk; Forest Academy, Brandon, Suffolk; Great Hockham Primary and Nursery, Norfolk;
Hadleigh Community Primary, Suffolk; Rosecroft Primary, Attleborough, Norfolk.

Project Aims

The Festival of Friends' key aims are to develop, and then share, good practice in the educational and pastoral support of Service children. It also aims to promote Service children's progression to further education, thereby improving opportunities - and ultimately outcomes.

The project provides the context for participating schools to support one another, share good practice and disseminate professional development across staff teams. It has been designed to be of particular benefit to schools that have small numbers of Service children on their rolls, as is the case with many of

the schools across East Anglia which have Service children on their rolls. A key element of the project is the encouragement of all project schools to use the evidence-based Thriving Lives Toolkit self-evaluation framework, created by the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance.

Furthermore, the collaborative activity involved in the Festival of Friends celebrates the identity of Service children amongst their non-Service peers, raising their profile by acknowledging their lived experiences. To support this, the project brings together key stakeholders to support Service children's educational progression and strengthen these pupils' integration with their civilian peers by raising awareness of their distinctive needs.

Project Organisation

Initially, 33 project schools signed up to the project and were allocated to one of four networks ('Hubs'), based on geographical areas across East Anglia. Each of the Hubs was led by one or two leaders from schools with recognised good practice in their Service children provision: staff members who kindly agreed to support the project, working in partnership with the Project Lead:

- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Hub - **Claire Brant** (Deputy Head Teacher at Wittering Primary School)
- Essex Hub - **Kate Steele** (Deputy Headteacher at Paxman Academy, Colchester) & **Scott Edmonds** (Assistant Headteacher at Philip Morant School and College, Colchester)
- Suffolk Hub - **Matthew Jackson** (senior teacher at Sandlings Primary School, Woodbridge) & **Amanda Ellis** (Pastoral Support Assistant at Wymondham College)
- Norfolk Hub - **Amanda Ellis** (as above) & **Jo Hornsby** (Executive Leader at Cherry Tree Academy Marham Trust)

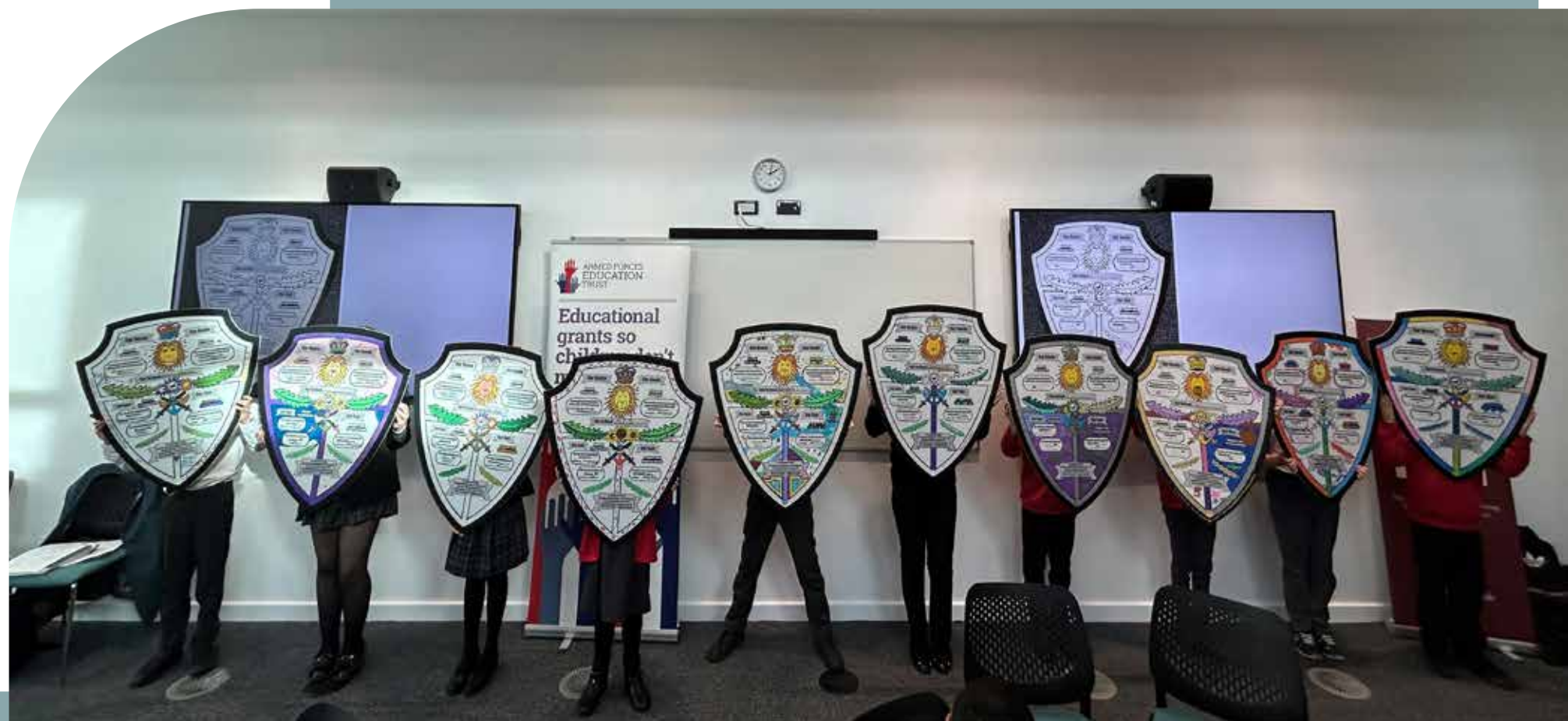
These six Hub Leaders met with the Project Lead for four half-days across the year to receive professional development (CPD) along with project supervision and support. Following these sessions, they then ran their own network meetings for their locality project schools' nominated Service Children Champions, cascading this CPD and encouraging the champions to run improvement projects to strengthen their schools' provision. These improvement projects were linked to at least one of the seven principles of effective support described in the SCiP Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit.

Mid-way through the project, three day-long Pupil Voice conferences were held at Anglia Ruskin University (Peterborough campus), the University of Essex, and Norwich University of the Arts. Almost 250 Service children (Years 2 through to Year 12) attended from 25 of the schools, providing an excellent opportunity for them and accompanying staff to meet and learn from one another.



The children explored their military-family lifestyle and shared both the opportunities and challenges that this can present. Their 'voices' were expertly drawn out through the medium of the arts, with sessions run by the charity **Never Such Innocence**, and **Seekers Create**, a Portsmouth-based creative social enterprise that brings together communities. As such, Service children's unique identity was celebrated.

The project culminated in a celebratory event in July 2026 involving almost 150 representative Service children from 22 of the project schools; 40 school staff; and almost 40 guests and presenters. Held at Anglia Ruskin's Cambridge campus, and utilising its impressive Mumford Theatre, the event showcased the schools' achievements across the year, whilst giving the pupils a chance to learn a little about university life through a campus tour. 2016 Britain's Got Talent winner Richard Jones (magician, mind reader and presenter), provided the memorable entertainment.



Project Evaluation

The project's overall impact was evaluated by Monitoring and Evaluation Officers at Make Happen (OfS Uni Connect Programme) using anonymous, online pre- and post-project staff surveys, as well as feedback from Service children aged 13+.

The project had been structured around a 'Theory of Change' designed to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Greater Staff knowledge on how to effectively engage with Service families
2. Effective communication between school networks to share best practice
3. Increased awareness by staff of Service children within their teaching environment
4. Increased integration and sense of belonging of Service children within the school community

To measure the project's success in delivering these outcomes, the evaluation team developed groups of question in the following sections in the surveys:

- Support & Engagement
- Communication & Awareness
- Integration & Belonging

It then assessed the effectiveness in each area by comparing the answers given in the pre-survey and the post-survey, to see if there has been any 'attitudinal shift' - a change in the opinions or sentiment of staff as a result of taking part in the project.

The survey results revealed a moderate or high positive impact across ALL areas of the survey, with increased scores from pre-survey to post-survey in every single question. This shows there has been a holistic and sustained positive impact across all areas of the project.

The following is a short overview of some of the statistics from each survey area.

Support & Engagement:

After engaging in this project, 89% of school staff agree that they can meet the needs of Service children. 36% of school staff felt better able to meet the needs of Service children as a direct result of this project.

After engaging in this project, 92% of school staff felt able to engage effectively with Service families and support the Service children. 39% of school staff felt better able to engage effectively with Service families and support Service children as a result of this project.

The free text comments mentioned the importance for staff to engage effectively with pastoral support teams and build relationships with these teams to smooth the transition for referring Service child cases as and when needed. They also talked about the importance of meeting the individual needs of Service children as circumstance and situations can be so different from one student to another.

Finally, there were several instances where a successful "buddy system" had been effectively implemented, to provide Service children with the beginnings of a peer-to-peer support network when they first arrive at a school.

Insightful quotes from staff on new strategies in their schools:

- "Have a buddy when they join, have a check-in with Service pupils at least ½ termly."
- "Regular checks on their well-being, encourage participation in clubs and activities and check in with pastoral care who are struggling."
- "I like that we adapt to individual needs and have the capacity to put lots in place for Service children if they require more."
- "The strategies shared by pastoral team and Principal regarding emotional support for pupils - support and liaising with pastoral team - ensuring check ins with those who may be finding deployment tricky."

Communication & Awareness:

Before taking part in this project, only 19% of school staff said they had spoken to teaching staff from other schools about their approaches to supporting Service children. As a result of this project, 42% felt they had more opportunities to speak to staff about their approaches in other schools.

Furthermore, 39% of schools staff felt they were more able to reach out to teaching staff in other schools for advice and guidance on working with Service children, as a result of this project.

As a result of this project, 36% of school staff became more aware of who the Service children were in their teaching groups. By the end of the project, only 6% did not know all of the Service children in their teaching groups.

50% of school staff felt more confident in their colleagues' awareness of Service children in their teaching groups, as a result of this project. After participating in this project, 97% of school staff felt fully aware of the unique social and education challenges that Service children face.

The free text comments included that having 'check-ins' with students was an effective communication tool, starting more conversations with students and listening to them, being led by their suggestions, input and student voice. Some staff talked about evolving beyond having students in 'deployment groups' to broader 'Service child groups' and making Service children more aware of each other within their schools. There were also mentions of a need for a robust network to communicate with other teachers and professionals, and the benefit of sharing practice and perspective as a legacy of this project. Staff put value on the connection with other schools and are keen to preserve and expand this element.

Insightful quotes from staff on new strategies in their schools:

- "I think it has just helped highlight those children within our school community who are Service children."
- "Allowing children to use their voices more when considering the support the need - moving away from "deployment" groups, to a more inclusive "Service children's group" as the struggles faced by Service children are not just limited to deployments so the support should not be limited and should be a broader approach."
- "Contact home more regularly about supporting Service children. Recommend the information about Service student be more accessible across the services the school employs."
- "Keep talking to the children to understand their worries & concerns. Listen to how we can support them."
- "A visual identification for students if they wish. This will help staff who don't always see them day to day."

Integration & Belonging:

47% of school staff had increased confidence that Service children feel that they fit in at school, as a result of taking part in this project.

97% of staff felt their Service children had a sense of belonging in their school environment, after participating in this project

In the free text comments, there were several mentions of the SCiP Alliance's 'Thriving Lives Toolkit' as a valuable tool to integrate provision for Service children within educational structures. There was also references to Service children being a resource to be consulted on the best way to steer provision and support for their peers - such as helping to design training packages for staff.

Insightful quotes from staff on new strategies in their schools:

- "I have planned to train all staff on supporting our Service children on the September INSET days. Service children in my school have worked with me to plan and create this training."
- "We will be using the Thriving Lives Toolkit to shape and refine provision"
- "It is all about relationship building. Being aware of any key information and of their changes in their home life. They also respond well when I have taught schemes of work that refer to Services lives and loosely link helping pupils to feel that sense of belonging."



Our Key Partners

Never Such Innocence (NSI)

Never Such Innocence (NSI) is a UK-based charity giving children and young people a voice on conflict through the creative arts. Founded by Lady Lucy French OBE in 2014 to mark the centenary of the First World War, NSI recognised the need to help younger generations understand the realities of war and the pursuit of peace. Since 2019, its mission has expanded to include all conflicts, past and present. Through poetry, art and song, NSI invites young people to express how conflict has shaped their lives and communities.

Its work is channelled into two programmes:

1. Conversations on Conflict fosters international dialogue through workshops, showcase events, exhibitions, special projects and an international competition. To date this has reached participants (aged 9-18) from more than 135 countries. Submissions often reflect deeply personal encounters with war, whether through direct experience, intergenerational memory or indirect exposure. These creative works serve as both testimony and advocacy, revealing the emotional, social, and psychological dimensions of conflict from a child's perspective.
2. The Voices of Armed Forces Children programme is kindly supported by the Royal British Legion. It invites Service and veteran children (aged 6-18) to reflect on both the positive aspects and challenges of having a parent in the Royal Navy, Army or RAF. As well as creative workshops, powerful platforms and an annual competition for Month of the Military Child, this programme also includes the Military Kids Choir – a group of military connected children from across the UK who sing about service life.

Across both programmes, NSI collaborates with schools, universities, NGOs, government departments, international organisations, and a diverse range of creative professionals to elevate youth voices in global peace-building. In doing so, NSI challenges adult-centred models of diplomacy and security, advocating instead for inclusive dialogue, where young people are recognised not only as victims of conflict but as agents of change.

During the Festival of Friends, NSI held poetry, art and songwriting workshops with students. In the poetry sessions, Clive Saunders invited young people to look at their experience as a military child and gave them the tools to write and present their poem. In art sessions, Katie Salari taught the young people about a coat of arms and each young person was able to make their own, capturing important parts of their life. During the songwriting sessions, Otto Aday worked with the young people to write a song, which they were able to perform at the end of the day, with the whole room joining at the end of the day.



Seekers Create

Seekers Create is a social enterprise using creative community development to bring people together and build stronger communities. It works with people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, from schools and young people to community groups, councils, charities, businesses and universities. Its approach is fully accessible and inclusive, creating spaces where everyone can take part, share their views, and help shape what happens around them. It has the following mission:

We use simple creative tools to help people connect, contribute, and feel part of their community. Our work is rooted in asset-based community development, focusing on what people can do, what they care about, and how they can shape change together. We create the conditions for conversations, ideas, and action to happen in a way that is open, inclusive, and easy to step into.

Seekers were asked to be involved in this project following successful participation last year in Portsmouth. Pupils loved the interactive nature of the thought-provoking workshops provided, and staff loved the 'pledge' shields they were able to take back to their schools to share with others.



Pupil Voice Conferences

February 2026

Song lyrics created by pupils with Otto of Never Such Innocence

Anglia Riskin University, Peterborough

COLOURS

Verse 1

I feel like we painted our friendship but now the canvas is ripping
Our relationship's tipping, these moments are slipping
The colours are fading, fading away
The colours escaping, stay the same.

Chorus

When the world gives you colours, mine are blue
When I say goodbye to you
When the world gives you colours, mine are blue
When the world gives you colours, but we can't stay
Think of the moments that we made
When the world gives you colours, but we can't stay.

Verse 2

I keep changing my colours, to blend in with others
Stomach twisting, shape shifting
I keep learning new names, while I stay the same
Stomach twisting, shape shifting.

Chorus

When the world gives you colours, mine are blue
When I say goodbye to you
When the world gives you colours, mine are blue
When the world gives you colours, but we can't stay
Think of the moments that we made
When the world gives you colours, but we can't stay.

University of Essex

NEW PEOPLE, NEW PLACES

Verse 1

I see new people, I see new places
I find new memories with you
I can share my stories, all my adventures
Maybe you can share yours too

Chorus

Cause I am proud of who I am
And I'm proud of you
Even when you're gone
I think of you
I don't want to be alone
Waiting for you to come back home
To come back home

Verse 2

And I feel empty and I feel lost
When you are not around
Our friendship blossomed when we were rooted
I was lost but now I'm found

Chorus

Cause I am proud of who I am
And I'm proud of you
Even when you're gone
I think of you
I don't want to be alone
Waiting for you to come back home
To come back home.



Norwich University of the Arts

FOREVER MY FRIEND

Verse 1

Someone to play with
Someone to make me laugh
Someone to share dreams with
We walk the same path
If the ocean separates us
I know we'll always be friends
Just look to the moon
And know we'll meet again

Chorus

Peace and friends together
We're going to love forever
Forever, forever, my friend

Verse 2

One road, clean slate
Travel long, travel late,
Old friends, just memories
Isn't fiction its our reality
Two places, same stars,
On boats, in cars
Fresh starts, same friends
Moved houses, but it's not our end

Chorus

Peace and friends together
We're going to love forever
Forever, forever, my friend

Bridge

I know we're stronger together
But you're always with me, in my mind
But you're always with me, you're in my heart all the time

Chorus

Peace and friends together
We're going to love forever
Forever, forever, my friend



Celebration Event

Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge 7th July, 2026

A message from Gabi, Y13 Wymondham College student:

'Over the years, I have met people from all walks of life. Every deployment has brought a new opportunity to make friends, experience different places, and learn about new communities. But behind every move, every new school, and every new town, there have also been challenges that many people don't see.

Growing up as a military child has shaped who I am today.

Throughout my dad's career as an armourer in the Royal Air Force, he has been deployed both overseas and here in the UK. For me and my family, every posting meant packing up our lives and starting again somewhere new.

Between 2008 and 2026, we've moved more times than I can count. My dad completed two tours of Afghanistan, worked alongside the US Marine Corps in South Carolina, was stationed at RAF Marham, RAF Brize Norton, RAF Coningsby, and RAF Halton, is currently spending time working with the US Air Force in California, served in the Falkland Islands, and deployed on HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth, as well as many other locations and deployments along the way. Each move meant a new home, a new routine, and usually, a new school.

Before joining boarding school, I attended St Hugh's Primary, St Andrews Primary, Bucknall Primary School, Charles F. Bolden Elementary and Middle School in the United States, Caston Primary School, Old Buckenham High School, and finally Wymondham College, where I stayed from Year 9 through to Year 13.

At first, changing schools was exciting. Everything was new, and there were always new people to meet. But after moving again and again, that excitement slowly disappeared. Eventually, I convinced myself that making friends was a waste of time. Why become close to someone when I would probably have to say goodbye in a year or two? I began keeping people at a distance because it felt easier than having to leave them behind.

Looking back, I realise how much that affected me. I became quite a lonely child. I struggled socially because I never expected relationships to last. Constantly starting over taught me how to adapt, but it also made it difficult to let people in.

Things began to change when I joined Wymondham College. For the first time in years, I had stability. I wasn't wondering where we'd move next or whether I'd be changing schools again. I had the chance to build lasting friendships, become part of a community, and develop confidence in myself. The support I received from teachers, staff, and especially other Service children helped me realise that I wasn't alone. Many of them understood exactly what it felt like to move frequently, miss family members, or worry about what was happening at home. That shared understanding made a huge difference.

Being a military child isn't just about moving house. It also means living with uncertainty. As both a Service child and a politics student, I often found myself following world events more closely than many people my age. Whenever conflict appeared on the news, I couldn't help but think about my dad. I worried that he might be deployed again. I worried about his safety, and, like many military children, I worried about the possibility that one day he might not come home. Those aren't thoughts that many children have to carry, but they're a reality for many Service families.

What helped me through those moments was knowing that I wasn't facing them by myself. The friendships I built with other Service children reminded me that my experiences were shared by others who truly understood. Sometimes, simply talking to someone who has been through the same thing can make all the difference.

Despite the challenges, growing up as a military child has also given me strengths that I don't think I would have developed otherwise. I've learnt how to adapt to change, how to be resilient when things are uncertain, and how to step outside my comfort zone. I've experienced different cultures, lived in places many people only dream of visiting, and met incredible people from around the world.

Although my childhood was very different from many of my friends', I wouldn't change the person it has made me. Every move, every goodbye, and every fresh start has helped shape who I am today.

People often see the military through the people who wear the uniform. But behind every uniform is a family making sacrifices too. Service children don't choose this way of life, but we learn to adapt to it. We say goodbye more often than we'd like, we start over more times than most people ever will, and we carry worries that often go unseen.

Looking back, I realise those experiences have made me more resilient, more adaptable, and more appreciative of the people around me. They've taught me that home isn't always a place, it's the people who support you along the way.

I'm proud to be a military child, and I would choose to be one in every lifetime.'



Celebration Event

Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge 7th July, 2026

A message from Carrie Traill, Service Director for Education at Peterborough Council:

I want to talk about something very important: how we support children and young people whose parents or carers serve in the Armed Forces. They are part of our school communities, our friendship groups, our classrooms and our wider community here in Peterborough. Like every child, they deserve a high-quality education, a strong sense of belonging, and every opportunity to succeed.

Peterborough is a proud and diverse city. Our schools' welcome children from many different backgrounds, cultures, faiths, languages and life experiences. That diversity is one of our great strengths. It helps our children learn from one another, understand the world more fully, and grow up with respect, curiosity and kindness. Service children are an important part of that rich and varied community.

When we think about Service life, we may think first about the adults who serve: the people who protect our country, support communities in times of need, and sometimes work far away from home for long periods. But behind many of those adults are children and families who also make sacrifices. Service children may move house more often than other children. They may change schools, leave friends behind, join new classes, and learn new routines. They may have a parent deployed away from home, sometimes to places that feel worrying or uncertain. They may carry feelings that are not always easy to explain.

That does not mean Service children are defined by difficulty. Far from it. Many Service children show remarkable resilience, adaptability and pride. They often understand responsibility, courage and change from a young age. They bring valuable experiences into our schools. But resilience should never mean that children have to manage everything on their own. It is our job, as adults and as fellow pupils, to notice, to understand and to support.

A high-quality education is not just about lessons, books, results or exams. Those things matter, of course. Every child should be taught well, challenged well and helped to achieve their very best. But education is also about feeling safe, known and valued. It is about having adults who understand your circumstances. It is about friendships, confidence, routines, encouragement and hope. In Peterborough, our ambition is that every child, whatever their starting point or family circumstances, is supported to thrive.



For Service children, this can mean making sure that when they move schools, information is shared carefully so that they do not have to start again in every sense. It can mean helping them settle quickly, understand expectations, catch up on any gaps in learning, and feel included from their very first day. It can mean recognising that a child may need extra support when a parent is away, or when a family is preparing for another move.

To the adults here today: we need to ask ourselves some simple but important questions. Do we know our Service children are? Do we listen to their voices and their families' experiences? Do we make sure they are not invisible in our policies, classrooms and pastoral systems? Do we celebrate their strengths as well as respond to their needs? And do we work together so that no child misses out because their family serves?

To the children and young people here today: you have a powerful role too. You do not need to have all the answers. You do not need to fully understand what it feels like to move schools often, or to have a parent away on deployment, to be a good friend. Small things can make a big difference. Saying hello. Inviting someone to join in. Being patient when someone is new. Asking kind questions. Standing up for someone who feels left out. These are simple actions, but they help create the kind of school where everyone belongs.

We should also remember that supporting Service children is not about treating them as different in a way that separates them. It is about understanding their lives well enough to make sure they have equal

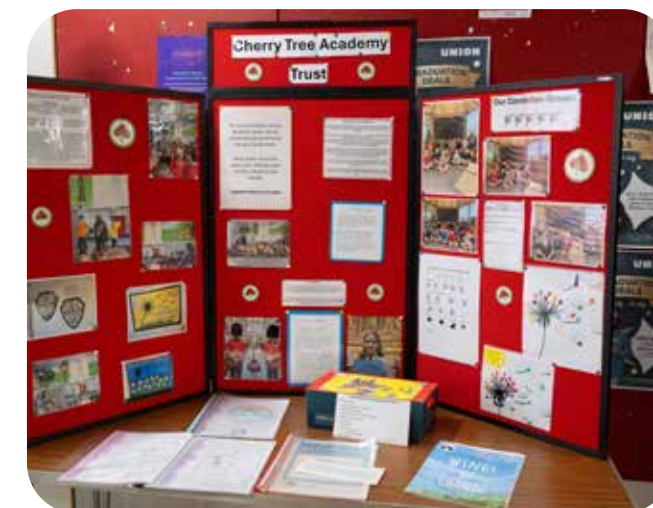
opportunities. It is about fairness. It is about removing barriers. It is about saying clearly: your education matters, your friendships matter, your wellbeing matters, and your future matters. In essence, you matter.

When Service children are supported well, the whole school benefits and the whole city benefits. We build more compassionate communities. We learn to understand lives that may be different from our own. We become better at welcoming new people, responding to change and looking after one another. These are not just school values; they are Peterborough values too.

So today, my message is simple. Let us recognise the contribution and sacrifice of Service families. Let us make sure Service children in Peterborough are seen, heard and supported. Let us provide the excellent teaching, thoughtful pastoral care and strong friendships that help every child thrive. And let us work together - schools, families, communities and Councils - so that children whose families serve our country receive the education, encouragement and opportunities they deserve.'



Pop-Up Exhibition Showcase



Pupil Logo Competition

The East Anglia Festival of Friends logo below was designed by pupils at Swanton Morley VC Primary School.



Annabelle
Y10, Stanground Academy
(Runner Up 1)



Kaitlin
Y8, Wymondham College
(Runner Up 2)



Group Design
Cherry Tree Academy
(Runner Up 3)



Elsie
Y8, Hinchbrook School



Wymondham FoF Logo 3

Alderman Jacobs Primary School



Project Name	Unpacking the Bag	
School Context	Number on Roll	680
	% of Service Children	1
	How Many Classes?	21
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Wittering (PE8 6HB) RAF Alconbury (PE28 4DA)
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	20-22 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	No
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	We agreed to take part in the project because, in a school of over 600 pupils where our Service children are settled and stable, we recognised that this distinct group can easily become invisible. Because they do not cause a fuss, it is incredibly easy for their unique cultural identity to be overlooked. As a leadership team, we realised that while these children were 'doing fine', we were not doing enough to actively acknowledge or celebrate their specific backgrounds. We saw this project as an opportunity to proactively gather insights to better support any child in our school dealing with the emotions that family separation can bring about.	

Project Overview

Using The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside, this project supported three Service children through small-group storytelling. It provided a space for this small minority to unpack unique, hidden anxieties and share their feelings and insights, ensuring they felt visible and understood.



"This project demonstrated that effective pastoral care doesn't require a big budget. By using existing resources and dedicating focused time it is possible to increase staff awareness and ensure pupils feel valued."

- Assistant Headteacher/Project Lead

"A worry feels annoying because it can stay there all the time but I like talking about my family and that can make me feel better."

- Year 3 pupil, age 8



Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

The main objective of this initiative was to deliver targeted pastoral support and improve the overall care for our small, stable population of Service pupils within a much larger school environment. The project aimed to establish a secure environment for these individuals to unpack hidden anxieties and share their unique lived experiences. By spreading awareness of Service pupils as a distinct group, we also aimed to significantly increase their visibility within the wider school community.

This project directly aligns with two core principles of the Thriving Lives Toolkit. Firstly, it embodies Principle One, which dictates that a school's approach must be informed by understanding the specific profile and needs of its Service community. Although Service children make up less than one per cent of our role and enjoy stability at home, we recognised that they still harbour distinct, often invisible stressors, making this project an intentional way to explore those unique emotional needs rather than assuming they are fine.

Secondly, the project champions Principle Five by ensuring pupil voice is heard through actively listening to Service children to inform and improve their pastoral support. This was central to our approach, as dedicating the session to their thoughts and feelings gave them a distinct voice.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

The project aims to develop emotional literacy by helping the three participating pupils identify and verbalise their hidden anxieties through the themes of The Huge Bag of Worries. By working in a small group of pupils close in age, they will recognise the shared, unique aspects of military family life. Additionally, the project will amplify pupil voice by capturing valuable insights and establish a repeatable intervention which can be readily picked up and delivered to a new group of Service pupils in the future.

What Was Achieved?

The first session began with a gentle warm-up activity to acknowledge their shared identity as Service children - a concept which I was surprised to find they did not fully understand. We then read the book together in a calm, quiet space, using the story to introduce complex emotions safely.

The second session was focused on capturing pupil voice. The children were encouraged to reflect on their own worries and were able to engage with this to varying degrees. I guided a discussion where the children drew their own 'bags of worries', which allowed me to capture their authentic thoughts and feelings. We also explored the ways in which their experiences

differed from one another, highlighting that even as Service children, their backgrounds were not identical.

Our final session focused on the benefits of worries being seen and shared. We revisited the emotions raised previously - such as fear, missing people, and uncertainty during domestic deployment - and discussed how sharing a worry can help to reduce its impact, even if it does not disappear entirely. We concluded by mapping out the children's support networks, identifying specific trusted adults at school and at home whom they could turn to if their 'bags' ever felt too heavy.

Funding Costs

There were no funding costs for resources or the intervention sessions, as the book was already owned by the school and sessions were run by an Assistant Headteacher within school hours. The only expenditure incurred was for return taxi transport to the Anglia Ruskin University Festival of Friends event.

What Has Been The Impact?

The most significant impact has been raising awareness of a student subgroup that had not previously been a specific focus for the school. In a large primary school, the project successfully raised the profile of these pupils, alerting leadership and staff to their Service status. Teachers are now consciously aware of their unique backgrounds, ensuring these students are proactively monitored rather than overlooked due to their outward stability at home.

For the children themselves, the impact was that they discovered a shared (and, in one case, new) identity with peers, realising they are not alone in navigating the subtle pressures of a military home life. The sessions gave them the vocabulary to name and unpack their hidden anxieties, lowering the emotional barrier to asking for help in the future. Being selected for a specialised project made them feel valued, and their involvement in the day at Anglia Ruskin University supported the raising of their profile and was a springboard for further discussions amongst staff and the children with their friends.

Next Steps

I will share the children's insights with the wider leadership team to ensure their Service status is recorded on transition documents, alerting future teachers immediately. We will also introduce termly, pastoral check-ins for these pupils to consistently support and celebrate them.



Brampton Village Primary School



Project Name	Operation Helping Hands: Speak, Share, Support	
School Context	Number on Roll	602
	% of Service Children	5% (33 Children)
	How Many Classes?	21
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Wyton
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	5 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Yes
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	We identified that we had a need to create a programme of support to raise the profile of our Service children in our school community and make our Service children feel heard.	

Project Overview

The project aimed to enhance support for Service pupils in our school by providing consistent emotional support and regular opportunities for them to connect and engage with one another. These opportunities have created a safe space for children to share their experiences creatively. In addition, we have sought to strengthen relationships between the school, local military bases, and Service families, ensuring improved access to relevant resources and support networks.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2 - Wellbeing is supported - tailored pastoral provision supports Service children's mental health and wellbeing.

We also wanted to improve support for Service children and raise awareness of their lived experiences within the school community.



"I like it because I know there are other children like me."

- KS2 pupil, age 8

"We didn't have anything like this in my old school; it is good to know there are other children in the same situation."

- KS2 pupil, age 10

"It is fun and I like being with my friends."

- KS1 pupil, age 6

Intended Outcomes of the Project

Our primary outcome is to gain a better understanding of the needs and experiences of Service pupils and their families. We are doing this by:

- Giving our Service children a sense of togetherness by enhancing their group identity within the school.
- Providing more targeted emotional and practical support for Service children so that their voices are heard.
- Improving communication with families and signposting relevant opportunities and services more effectively.
- Building a strong link with our nearest military base so that we can share expertise and resources to support our Service children and their families.

What Was Achieved?

The school's support for the well-being of our Service children for the past few years has been under the umbrella of whole school well-being. Whilst our Service children have had the opportunity to meet 1:1 with our pastoral HLTA whilst their parent was on deployment, we felt that the children had not had regular, open opportunities to celebrate an important part of their lives with others who have a similar understanding and similar experiences. This is something as a school we felt was important to improve.

Our initial step was to establish a fortnightly group, Helping Hands, which provides pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 with dedicated time to speak with our Service Champion HLTA about any concerns they may have. The group also offers an opportunity for children to spend time with peers from a range of year groups, all of whom share the experience of having a parent who is currently serving or has previously served in the Armed Forces.

In the first instance we created an 'All about me' profile for each child, that allowed for a starting point for discussion within the group. We were also keen to ensure that our Service children had a strong sense of ownership over the direction of future sessions. As a result, subsequent activities have been shaped by their ideas and evolving needs. This child-led approach has resulted in a number of meaningful outcomes and fantastic creative pieces of work:

- Opportunities to bring in mementos from home and to share military life experiences.
- Team games to support and widen their sense of community.
- Father's and Mother's Day handprint cards.
- Baking to share together.
- Winds of Change competition entries.

A display board has also been created within the Key Stage 2 shared area for the Helping Hands group. This provides pupils with a dedicated space to showcase work produced during sessions, as well as photographs from trips and celebrations linked to the military throughout the year. This initiative has helped to raise

the profile of Service children within the school and ensure they receive the recognition they deserve.

Additionally, pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefited from the opportunity to attend the project's Pupil Voice event in February, where they engaged in creative activities and collaborated to write and perform a song about their feelings as a Service child in school. It was extremely powerful.

Throughout the project, we have prioritised effective communication with our Service families through regular updates in the school's weekly newsletter. These updates celebrate achievements and successes within the group, while also ensuring that families are informed of upcoming opportunities to engage with events at local military bases and within the wider community.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The impact of these initiatives has extended far beyond our Service children, creating a more empathetic, inclusive, and connected school culture. By establishing our 'Helping Hands' groups and a designated staff contact, we've fostered a sense of trust and visibility for Service children and families, while modelling the importance of listening and valuing every child's background. As a result, our whole community is becoming more compassionate, more aware of each other's experiences, and more united in celebrating diversity and resilience.

Throughout this project, the children have remained central to all aspects of our work, and they have been openly enthusiastic about attending Helping Hands. The interactions developed during our sessions have fostered meaningful friendships beyond the group setting, while also providing older participants with valuable opportunities to act as positive role models for younger members.

Next Steps

Moving forward we would like to implement the following, to continue to develop the support provided for our Service children:

- Develop staff subject knowledge on strategies to support our Service children, specifically the emotional cycle of deployment.
- Continue to strengthen relationships with parents and families of Service children through continued regular contact home, coffee mornings and events as a community.
- Continue to support our Service children through our fortnightly 'Helping Hands' groups.
- Continue to strengthen the relationship with our local military base to help support our Service children and families.



Cherry Tree Academy Marham Junior



Project Name	Our Voices Matter	
School Context	Number on Roll	Infant 135 Junior 213 Overall 348
	% of Service Children	Infant 42.96% Junior 49.77% Overall 47.13%
	How Many Classes?	Infant 6 Junior 8
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Marham
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	½ mile
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Yes
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	The school has a high percentage of Service children; we wanted to take time to reflect on our practice and to improve the outcomes of the children.	



“Being included in the Festival of Friends project has been really fun, I got to experience new things, and I loved going to the University of Arts in Norwich.

When we put on a special assembly, my non-military friends were really intrigued and had lots of questions. It was good to spread the word and use our own voices to explain to others what it is really like being a military child, rather than adults doing it for us, when they don't always really understand. Some children got a bit upset during the assembly as they had parents deployed, but it ended up being really good as their non-military friends were able to support them better after seeing our assembly as they understood more, I think some of the staff did too.

Cherry Tree really supports military kids, so much better than my old school. I would like us military kids to do more stuff together as we help each other a lot.

Deployment group and pastoral really help us when we need it – I think we should do more things like Festival of Friends too as it really did help us all. I am really proud to be a part of Cherry Tree and our Festival of Friends project.”

- Year 6 Service Child

Project Overview

The children will create a display which will represent them and there will be a Dandelion Assembly to celebrate their special identity.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 5 - ‘Children Are Heard’ - Service children’s voices are heard and inform the support they receive.

- The school will obtain the views and opinions of the Service children through a creative activity.
- They will be empowered and valued by their voices being heard.
- The school can review whether we are meeting the needs or assess whether the needs of Service children have changed.
- Our Service children can raise awareness of their lived experiences. This will be displayed and shared with other children in the school. They will lead and present this in an assembly.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

- Service children to feel heard.
- To increase Service children’s self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem.
- School staff to have a better understanding of Service children’s lived experience.
- School staff to understand where improvements or extra provision is needed. This is an opportunity for the school team to reflect on how effective provision is for Service children.

What Was Achieved?

Display Board

The display will be of a large blank dandelion. The Service children and staff will put a fingerprint on the dandelion to represent themselves. Non-Service children will colour an individual paper straw for a strand of grass to represent themselves.

It will demonstrate how they are connected. The non-Service children are the foundation and stay rooted; whereas the Service children will move and land where the wind (military-life journey) will take them.



Dandelion Assembly

Junior Service children delivered an assembly for our Dandelion Day on 15th April, as part of the Month of the Military Child. This coincided with Matt Blyton, the project lead, visiting the junior site who watched the assembly along with two representatives from the RAF Marham HIVE. Nine Service children took part in the assembly. Two wrote poems, others read statements and facts. A staff member wore military clothing and carried equipment. The children removed the items and said what it represented e.g. moving home was represented by military boots. The items were placed into a bergen. Two teachers were asked to pick up the bergen and bulletproof vest. They were asked if they were heavy. This symbolised the extra weight Service children carry compared to non-Service children.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The Service children have been better represented in the school, and their voices have been heard by their peers and staff. There is better communication between the office and the pastoral team to identify new starters and leavers. Pastoral support is being implemented more smoothly.

Following feedback from the children there have been changes to our deployment group. It has been renamed to Dandelion Group and there is a pastoral preparation intervention before a child moves. There are more children joining the group as the criteria have widened e.g. for when parents are separated, weekending and solo posting. Their suggestion has been included in the session plans.

Next Steps

Continue the momentum! The Dandelion Day assembly was such a success it has been added to the school calendar for next year. The pastoral team are going to create welcome, moving and deployment packs for children. This will complement the support already in place and our groups.

Debden CofE Primary Academy



Project Name	Heroes Among Us	
School Context	Number on Roll	139
	% of Service Children	61
	How Many Classes?	6
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Carver Barracks
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	2.5/3 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	A large proportion of our children are from families serving in the Army, and we were looking for ways to further support them.	

Project Overview

This project aimed to raise the profile of Service children within the primary school community and provide meaningful opportunities for them to share their experiences. Through pupil voice activities and discussions, the school gained valuable insights into their unique challenges and strengths, enabling more informed and targeted support for their wellbeing and achievement in the future.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 5: Children are Heard.

To hear their stories, improve support for our Service Children and spread awareness of our Service Children's lived experiences.



"It brought tears to my eyes."

- Headteacher after listening to the children tell their stories in an assembly

"One time when I was in Year 1, my Dad went to Mali in Africa. That was hard and upsetting as I couldn't see him for an entire nine months. Then on the evening of the 21st December, my Dad surprised me and my brother by coming home secretly. My brother was so happy he was crying and my brother never cries!"

- Year 5 pupil describing his experience of being part of a Service family

Intended Outcomes of the Project

The intended outcome of this project is to create a school environment where Service children feel recognised, valued, and understood. By raising their profile within the school community, the project aims to increase awareness of the unique experiences and challenges associated with Service family life, such as parental deployment, relocation, and periods of separation. Through pupil voice activities, Service children will have opportunities to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, helping staff gain a deeper understanding of their needs. This insight will enable the school to provide targeted pastoral and emotional support, strengthen wellbeing provision, and ensure service children feel supported, included, and able to thrive.

What Was Achieved?

To raise the profile of Service children and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, the school undertook a series of activities designed to ensure their voices were heard and valued.

The project began with several pupil voice sessions involving Service children from across the school. These sessions provided a safe and supportive environment in which pupils could talk openly about their experiences of being part of a Service family. Through discussions, children shared both the challenges they face, such as parental deployment, time away from family members, uncertainty, and frequent changes, as well as some of the positive aspects of Service life - the joy of reuniting after a period of separation, receiving gifts from overseas and learning about far-away places. These conversations enabled staff to develop a greater understanding of the unique circumstances of Service children and identify ways in which the school could better support them.

Following the pupil voice sessions, the children played a leading role in a whole-school assembly. During the assembly, they shared their stories and experiences with their peers and staff, helping to raise awareness of what life can be like for Service children. This provided an opportunity for the wider school community to learn about the realities of Service family life directly from the children themselves, fostering empathy, understanding, and inclusion.

To ensure the project had a lasting impact, a dedicated display was created in the school hall. The display features photographs of the school's Service children alongside information about some of the challenges they may encounter and the strengths they often develop as a result of their experiences, including resilience, adaptability, independence, and confidence. Most importantly, the display includes the children's stories written in their own words, allowing their voices to remain at the heart of the project.

Together, these activities have helped to celebrate the contributions of Service children, increase awareness across the school community, and provide valuable insight into their lived experiences. The project has created opportunities for Service children to feel recognised and understood while informing future pastoral and emotional support within the school.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The project has had a significant positive impact on both the Service children involved and the wider school community. By providing dedicated opportunities for Service children to share their experiences, the project has helped them feel listened to, valued, and understood. The pupil voice sessions gave children a platform to express their thoughts and feelings, knowing that their experiences mattered and would be used to help shape support within the school. As a result, many children reported feeling proud to be recognised as part of the Service community and more confident in sharing their experiences with others.

The whole-school assembly and hall display have also increased awareness and understanding among their peers. Other children have gained valuable insight into the realities of Service family life, including the challenges of deployment, separation from family members, and frequent changes that can occur. This has encouraged greater empathy and understanding across the school, helping to create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

An important outcome of the project has been the celebration of the strengths developed by Service children. By highlighting their stories and experiences, the project has promoted recognition of their resilience, adaptability, and bravery. Service children have been able to see these positive qualities reflected in themselves, helping to build self-esteem and a sense of pride in their unique experiences and achievements.

Next Steps

Next steps will focus on sustaining and developing this work. The school will continue to gather pupil voice to ensure Service children feel heard and supported. An annual assembly will celebrate their experiences and achievements. Links with Carver Barracks will be strengthened, and communication channels with parents will be enhanced to make it easier to share information about deployments, family circumstances, and support needs, enabling timely pastoral and emotional support.



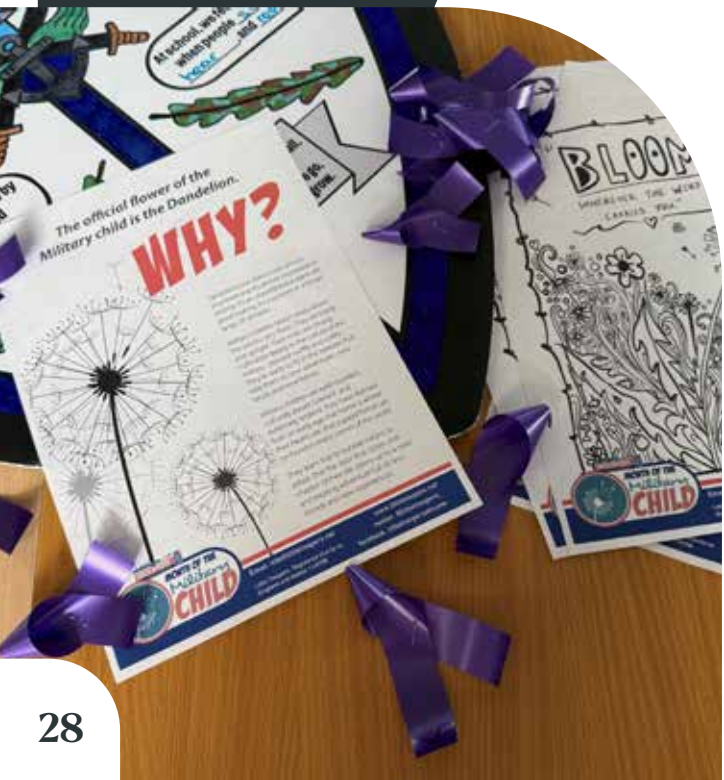
Farlingaye High School



Project Name	Forces Club	
School Context	Number on Roll	1865
	% of Service Children	About 3% (52 students).
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Rock Barracks, Woodbridge
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	5 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	In order to bring about more awareness of the challenges facing young people who are part of a military family and to give them a chance to get additional support in school	

Project Overview

Farlingaye Forces Club - to support military young people in the school setting. Sarah Mason (School Librarian) in partnership with Army Welfare Service (AWS) Community Development Worker (CDW) are offering, a lunchtime drop-in session - a space they can attend to get support within the school environment and engage in activities which allows them to have some 'me' mindfulness time during the school day.



“Being part of the project is a chance to not only engage with the school, but also to help support and bring awareness to the whole school community. Young people who are part of the military community are incredibly resilient and that is to be celebrated. There are also young people that struggle with the constant transitional nature of their serving parents commitments and so offering support to them is vital – they know we are there for that should they need it.”

- The Combined Cadet Force

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

For young people from military families to be regularly engaged in the session.

For military young people to be given a voice and to be heard within the school environment.

For military young people to feel a sense of belonging, with support being offered, through taking part in the project.

To increase awareness of their lived experience of being part of the military to the wider school community.

Thiring Lives Toolkit principles of effective support - Wellbeing is Supported (Principle 2) and Children are heard (Principle 5).

Intended Outcomes of the Project

Support to young people within school - specific military project and programme of sessions within local secondary school to support military young people.

Support to young people within school is to be offered specifically for military young people of all age groups to attend. It is important to support senior age young people whilst giving them a voice. It is also vital for them to have a social space which is safe for them to socialise with their peers, seeking support when required, whilst engaging in positive extracurricular activities.

What Was Achieved?

The local barrack's CDW and school staff set up a Forces Club to better support children and young people from military families within the school setting. Specific military project and programme of sessions within a local secondary school to support military young people - support in school is vital and this an opportunity for military young people to come together, share knowledge, learn from others, seek support from staff and their peers and be engaged in a programme which meets their needs.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

Young people from military families now have a space within school where they can access staff from both AWS and school. Staff have regular contact with young people in a comfortable, safe environment where they can consult the young people for ideas and opinions with regards to being part of the military community and staff can support them.

The project around displays and educating the rest of the school community is in its infancy and the full impact is yet to be seen but it will be a project/club that will continue. 'Festival of Friends' has been the catalyst to the setup of the club and the work around being part of the military and incorporating that into school life will be a continuation.

Next Steps

Project is very much ongoing – awareness to be increased within the school community and noticeboard to be populated and presented within school space for information sharing



Hillcrest Primary School



Project Name	School Squad Superstars	
School Context	Number on Roll	402
	% of Service Children	4%
	How Many Classes?	14
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Marham Swinton Barracks Colchester Barracks American Visiting Forces
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	12 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Yes
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	To support our Services children to achieve their best and feel part of a wider, supportive community.	

Project Overview

To continue to bring our Superstar Squad together by providing opportunities for them to meet together, share experiences and build confidence.



“My child loved the group & especially his little badge – he felt so proud.”

- Parent

“Thank you for the idea of the huggable hero. My child is going to love it.”

- Parent

“I love this group. Can I come again tomorrow?”

- Age 6 pupil

“I have a big smile on my face.”

- Age 8 pupil

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2. Wellbeing is supported.

To improve the wellbeing of our Services children by raising their profile and equipping them with a greater sense of belonging and understanding of their unique way of life.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

To bring the children together to develop a support network of other similar children so they don't feel alone.

For our Service children to share their unique experiences with the wider school community to raise all children's understanding of how their experiences are different to their peers.

What Was Achieved?

- Data gathering from all parents across the school.
- Created a Service children's group. Pupil voice within the group.
- Created a display board with artwork from the children to raise the profile of the group within school & add a sense of belonging.
- Met with pupils on an individual basis to give additional pastoral support when parents have been deployed.
- Reached out to Service parents.
- Attended Festival of Friends pupil voice event in Norwich.
- Attended hub meetings and the SCiP Alliance listening tour to further our knowledge on the unique lives of Service families.
- Gained funding to allow 'Huggable Heroes' to be made for our children with current deployed parents.
- Raised profile of Service life throughout the school with other students who made hearts and support messages for their peers.



Funding Costs

Huggable Heroes purchases.

What Has Been The Impact?

Children have enjoyed being part of the group and have been excited to see the development of the display board within school with all their names on. They have shared their experiences together and not felt alone. It has made them feel they are a part of something much bigger.

They have made friends with others not associated with their immediate classes and have supported each other during some recent deployments of parents.

Next Steps

To continue to build on the knowledge gained so far, to allow the group to continue to meet on a monthly basis.

To remain aware of when a parent might be away. To work through the Thriving Lives Toolkit self-evaluation framework to build best practice for our school.



Hinchingbrooke School

(Secondary and Sixth Form)



Project Name	The Stag in the Dandelion Field: Growing Strength in Service Children	
School Context	Number on Roll	3169
	% of Service Children	3.15%
	How Many Classes?	80
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Wyton
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	5 Miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Yes
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	It provided a good opportunity for us to gain insights into effective provision for this group of children.	

Project Overview

This project outlines a comprehensive wellbeing framework for Service children, focusing on early identification, personalised pastoral support, and inclusive practices. It addresses mobility and deployment challenges through targeted emotional support, strong family communication, and continuous monitoring, ensuring students feel secure, resilient, and able to thrive academically and socially.



“My child has enjoyed being able to be part of the Service children’s community, who understand him.”

- Age 12 pupils parent

“Many thanks for yet another wonderful opportunity for her.”

- Age 12 pupils parent

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

We have focussed on the wellbeing element of the **Toolkit - Principle 2: Wellbeing is Supported.**

Intended Outcomes of the Project

The intended outcomes are improved emotional wellbeing, growing resilience, and a sense of belonging for all our Service children. Students will feel recognised, supported, and confident during transitions and parental deployments.

Enhanced pastoral care, staff awareness, and family communication will reduce anxiety and isolation, while personalised academic support will improve continuity and attainment.

Consistent monitoring will ensure timely interventions, enabling all pupils to engage fully in school life, develop strong relationships, and achieve positive educational and personal outcomes despite the challenges of Service life.

What Was Achieved?

The project involved a structured review and enhancement of wellbeing provision for Service children. Initially, the school identified students from Service families through admissions, regular communication, and ongoing updates, ensuring staff awareness of their unique circumstances. A one-to-one meeting with a dedicated Services Champion staff member was introduced for new and transitioning students to assess individual wellbeing needs.

To strengthen emotional support, the school implemented regular check-ins, particularly during parental deployment, and provided access to trained pastoral staff, a safe space for discussion, and targeted interventions such as mentoring and counselling. Initiatives such as “handle with care” postcards and the use of a visible ribbon system enabled staff to respond sensitively to students’ emotional states.

The project also focused on building a supportive community. Social integration was encouraged through clubs, structured group work, and dedicated events for Service families, including welcome gatherings and ongoing community activities. This helped foster belonging and reduce isolation. Plans were developed to strengthen this further through a formal buddy system and improved transition and farewell processes.

Academic stability was addressed alongside wellbeing, with prompt baseline assessments, targeted support for learning gaps, and differentiated teaching to ensure continuity. Additional support was provided for students with English as an additional language or those experiencing curriculum disruption due to mobility.

Strong communication with families formed a core component of the project, with flexible approaches to engagement and opportunities for relationship-building through school events. Finally, the school embedded monitoring systems to track attendance, attainment, behaviour, and pupil voice, allowing for ongoing evaluation and responsive adjustments to provision.

Overall, the project delivered a coordinated, proactive approach to supporting the wellbeing of Service children across all aspects of school life.

Funding Costs

Funding costs remained relatively low but included provision for refreshments at Service community lunch meet-ups and social events, alongside the purchase of Service identification ribbons. Additional minor costs relate to wellbeing resources, with potential future spending on staff training, expanded activities, and scaling provision in response to increasing Service pupil numbers.

What Has Been The Impact?

The impact of the project has been a noticeable improvement in the emotional wellbeing, confidence, and resilience of our Service children. Students feel more recognised and supported through tailored pastoral care, regular check-ins, and increased staff awareness. Stronger relationships with peers and staff have reduced feelings of isolation, particularly during periods of mobility or parental deployment.

Improved transition support and community-building activities have enhanced students’ sense of belonging, while targeted academic interventions have helped maintain continuity in learning. Increased family engagement has strengthened trust and communication between home and school.

Overall, the project has created a more inclusive, responsive environment where Service children feel heard, valued, and better able to thrive both socially and academically.

Next Steps

Next steps include enhancing staff training on Service children’s needs, formalising the buddy programme, and improving communication through accessible tools such as website-based resources. The school will also expand provision to meet anticipated growth in Service pupil numbers linked to the development of RAF Wyton as a super garrison.



Joyce Frankland Academy



Project Name	Nurturing Dandelions Project	
School Context	Number on Roll	865 students
	% of Service Children	5%
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Calver Barracks
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	5 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	The academy recognises that students from military families can experience unique challenges, including mobility, parental deployment, and periods of family separation. The Nurturing Dandelions Project was designed to address these challenges by creating an inclusive environment that celebrates military service, promotes belonging, and ensures that appropriate support structures are in place.	

Project Overview

The project focused on developing policies, strengthening partnerships with military organisations, creating meaningful experiences for students, and enhancing family engagement.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Our project addressed the foundations of all 7 principles of the Thriving Lives Toolkit:

1. Create a clear strategy, published policy and named staff contact
2. Develop better links with the welfare team at the Barracks, including a families' event for Armed Forces Day in June
3. Design, plan and deliver a STEM day alongside the barracks to deliver to a year group, which also supports employability skills
4. Identify students at point of transition and deliver a supportive plan aligned with policy
5. Develop an opportunity for students to share their views and feelings of belonging
6. Engage parents in an end of year Armed Forces Day event
7. Update BROMCOM systems to identify Service Children easily.

"The Nurturing Dandelions Project has delivered tangible outcomes that support Service children, strengthen community partnerships, and improve students' sense of belonging. The foundations established through policy development, meaningful military engagement, welfare collaboration and student voice activities position the academy well to sustain and further develop this important work in the future."

- Assistant Headteacher.



Intended Outcomes of the Project

To use effective systems and processes to strengthen the sense of belonging for Service children, their families and the wider barracks community.

Measurable aims;

The project aims to establish a formal policy, provide every student with an annual meaningful encounter with barracks personnel, improve Service children's sense of belonging and ensure military personnel are included in relevant academy events.

What Was Achieved?

The project began at policy and strategy level before moving into student, family and barracks-focused activities, enabling staff and students to build towards the main event at the end of June.

1. Establishing Sustainable Systems and Processes

Formal policies and admission processes were introduced to provide consistent support for Service children and military families.

2. Promoting Pride, Identity and Belonging

The project strengthened students' pride in their academy and military connections, with increased numbers wearing their uniforms during Remembrance Day commemorations.

3. Strengthening Military Engagement

Opportunities for direct military engagement increased through meaningful encounters, Armed Forces Assembly Week and the introduction of an academy Armed Forces Day.

4. Enhancing Student Enrichment and Career

Further aspirational opportunities have been planned for September, including a Year 8 STEM Day and Year 10 Elite Skills Academy Day, supporting employability and career development.

5. Increasing Family and Community Participation

The academy's Armed Forces Day brought together students, parents, carers and welfare officers, strengthening connections between the academy, families and the wider military community.

6. Capturing Student Voice

The Postcard Project enables students to share reflections on belonging, identity, community and their academy experience, providing valuable insight into student perspectives.

7. Building Strategic Partnerships

Ongoing participation in military community meetings has strengthened relationships and opportunities for collaboration with the wider military community.

8. Strengthening Welfare Support

Regular engagement with welfare officers has strengthened communication and support, with termly review opportunities now established.

Funding Costs

Minimal funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

Formal policies and admission processes now support Service children and military families, providing clearer identification and support, smoother transitions, greater staff awareness and sustainable practice beyond the project.

The project has increased recognition of students' military connections, encouraging greater respect for military service, increased Remembrance participation and a stronger sense of visibility and belonging.

Students have gained more opportunities to engage with military personnel, increasing awareness of military careers, widening exposure to career pathways and providing positive role models.

STEM and employability activities will support student engagement while developing teamwork, resilience and problem-solving skills, alongside greater awareness of future career opportunities.

The project has strengthened links with families and support networks, improving academy-family relationships, recognising military service and increasing awareness of available support.

The Postcard Project allows students to share their experiences of belonging, providing useful evaluation evidence while encouraging reflection and supporting ongoing project review.

Military community engagement has strengthened links with organisations and support services, improved awareness of available resources and created further opportunities for collaboration.

Closer links with welfare officers have supported earlier identification of needs, improved support during change or deployment and strengthened coordination with external services.

Overall Impact

The project has moved from 'emerging' to 'embedded' practice, strengthening support for Service children and military families while helping students feel recognised, valued and supported.

Next Steps

Building on progress to date, the academy will deliver the planned Year 8 STEM Day and Year 10 Elite Skills Academy Day, complete and evaluate the Postcard Project, continue welfare reviews and expand engagement with military personnel and parents. It will also monitor admissions and support processes while continuing military community meetings to strengthen partnerships and share best practice.



Melton Primary School



Project Name	Base Buddies	
School Context	Number on Roll	Approx 174
	% of Service Children	2% (4 pupils)
	How Many Classes?	8
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Woodbridge (Rock Barracks)
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	4 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	No
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	We wanted to ensure that the small number of Service children within our school receive appropriate support and recognition. Although they represent a tiny minority of our school community, we acknowledge the unique challenges they may face and are committed to ensuring they feel valued, supported, and reassured that they are not alone.	

“I didn’t think there were that many of us. It’s nice to see others who understand.”

- Age 9 pupil following the end of Project Celebration Event



Project Overview

Providing each Service child with a regular opportunity to meet with the school’s link staff member, in a safe space, in order to keep their emotional needs under review.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Wellbeing is Supported (Principle 2).

Our aim is to provide meaningful support to our Service children while reassuring them that they are not alone in their experiences. We create opportunities for them to connect with peers who understand the unique aspects of Service life, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support. We also seek to celebrate their resilience, adaptability, and strength, recognising the valuable qualities they develop through the experiences associated with being part of a Service family.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

Our aim is for every Service child to feel that they are not alone and to know that a strong network of support is available to them whenever they need it.

What Was Achieved?

I held regular check-ins with our Service children to monitor their wellbeing and provide opportunities for them to talk about how they are feeling. We openly discuss our shared experiences, as I was also a Service child. This personal connection helps to build trust and enables the children to feel understood.

These conversations allow them to share their experiences of Service life, including the challenges of frequent relocations and having parents deployed or away from home for extended periods. Through these discussions, we provide reassurance, understanding, and ongoing support.

The children enjoy hearing about my own childhood experiences, as well as my parents’ current involvement with the Chelsea Pensioners. We often share stories about the different homes we have lived in, discussing our favourite places, the challenges of frequent moves, and the memories we have made along the way. These conversations help to foster a sense of belonging and reassure the children that their experiences are shared and understood.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The children thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Cambridge and valued the opportunity to meet other Service children. Overall pupil feedback demonstrates the positive impact of providing opportunities for Service children to connect with peers who share similar experiences, helping them to reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen their sense of belonging.

Next Steps

We plan to increase the frequency of our meetings by establishing regular sessions where Service children can take part in activities together and continue to build supportive relationships.

We also intend to introduce a dedicated worry box, providing children with a confidential way to share any concerns they may have.

In addition, a display board is currently being created to celebrate our Service children, raise awareness of the support available, and promote a sense of belonging within the school community.



Paxman Academy, Colchester



Project Name	Service Student Week	
School Context	Number on Roll	900
	% of Service Children	17%
	How Many Classes?	6 form entry, 11-16
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Colchester Garrison
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	Less than a mile
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any Other Relevant Information	We have a number of current staff who are ex-Service
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	We opened as a new school 7 years ago, and from year 1 had a significant proportion of Service students. We wanted to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by these children, take action to improve our provision, and network with other schools.	

Project Overview

To run our first ever ‘Service Student Week’ with assemblies, visiting speakers, school-wide competitions, Service Student Buddy events and an afternoon tea for Service Student Parents and Carers.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Project Objective: to raise the awareness and knowledge of the lived experience of Service students across the school community.

- Principle 5: Children are Heard.
- Principle 6: Parents are Engaged.
- Principle 7: Staff are Well-Informed.

“I think the school does an amazing job for the Service children. This is the first school that my children have attended that puts on all of these events and celebrates the uniqueness of Service children.”

- Service Student parent

Intended Outcomes of the Project

The intended outcome of the project was to hold a series of school events that would raise awareness of the lives and experiences of Service children beyond them and their families.

We have an established Service Student Committee who steer events and fundraising, but this has previously been targeted only at Service Children, with limited explanation about why these extra provisions were in place. Student Service Week intended to address that.

What Was Achieved?

After signing up to the project, we held a special Service Student Committee meeting where we identified what the gaps might be in our current provision. Feedback from the students was that while they felt well represented and provided for through bespoke events for Service Children, they felt that the wider school community - and especially non-Service students - had little understanding of why these additional provision were being made. Alongside this, a survey was sent out to Service student parents, asking them for feedback on what they felt about our current provision and how we could improve further. While feedback was very positive, this similar thread of raising awareness came through from parents and carers, and a keen interest from a small number to have more involvement and opportunities to get involved in the life of the school.

From this feedback, the committee developed the idea of a week linked to the Month of the Military Child in April, where a range of events would create opportunities for all students, staff and parents to get involved. This developed into a programme for the week which involved:

- Assembly for each year group with presentations from Service students, an in-house vox-pop video, from a current serving parent and a member of staff who is a military spouse
- Sales of Month of the Military Child ribbons - proceeds going to our nominated Service charities
- A form-time quiz - with prizes testing students’ knowledge of the lives of military children
- A Service Student Week Bunting Competition - each form group had the opportunity to add to our bunting that went up around the school
- Service Student + Buddy Creative Workshops to produce work to submit to the Never Such Innocence competition
- The creation of a legacy piece of artwork, with each military child having the opportunity to create their own clay tile which has formed a dandelion themed piece
- A Service parent/carers afternoon tea, where parents came in to join their children for tea, cake and to share school work they were proud of

Funding Costs

In terms of modest costs: the clay and resources for the artwork, materials to make the ribbons for sale, art materials for the creative workshop and catering costs for the afternoon tea.

What Has Been The Impact?

By having assemblies with every year group, and running events across form times, this ensured that a huge cross-section of staff as well as students were engaged in the activities and the key messages from the week. The conversation around provision for Service students has opened up further, including better links with individual parents and carers, and a greater awareness of students and parent/carers voice.

Next Steps

Service Student Week will now become an annual event, with the vision to build and develop each time. We want to create a piece of legacy artwork each year to be placed in different public areas of the building to ensure that our Service children feel and see their place at school within the fabric of our building. We are also looking to build in more parent/carers events throughout the year as the afternoon tea with parents and students was a real highlight of the week.



Philip Morant School & College



Project Name	Identifying and Supporting Service Pupil Premium (SPP) Disadvantage	
School Context	Number on Roll	1894
	% of Service Children	4.5% (85 students)
	How Many Classes?	57 tutor groups in Yr7-11 12 tutorial groups in Yr12-13
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Melville Barracks, Colchester
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	2 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Yes - 1
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	To improve our understanding of our SPP students and the challenges our students, and their Service families, face day-to-day and year-to-year.	

Project Overview

The project is designed to track students' progress across five clearly defined areas - attendance, behaviour, progress, learning attitudes and values, and participation in extra-curricular clubs and trips - and to then provide the necessary support when students are not achieving their very best academically or pastorally.



Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

To understand better the areas of disadvantage for our SPP students and to ensure students are given the appropriate pastoral and academic support to ensure well-being is supported (Principle 2) and achievement is maximised (Principle 3).

Intended Outcomes of the Project

The project is designed to identify students who may not be making progress in one or more of the identified areas and monitor this over time.

If a student is not progressing well in one or more of these areas, support will then be provided depending on both the area of need and the seriousness of the need. The intended outcome is that all Service students are supported to attend well, behave well, make **at least** expected progress, adopt the school's values, and participate in extra-curricular clubs and trips.

What Was Achieved?

First, the five areas of focus were decided upon: attendance, behaviour, progress, learning attitudes and values, and participation in extra-curricular clubs and trips. It was then decided we could tier students in each of the categories to ascertain both need and severity of need.

Next, we decided on the parameters for the tiers. These are:

- Attendance: Tier 1: 95%+; Tier 2: 3-6 days missed in a term; Tier 3: Persistent Absence (less than 90% attendance); and Tier 4: Severe Absence (less than 50%).
- Behaviour: Tier 1: achieving a standards score of 98%; Tier 2: achieving a standards score between 80%-98%; Tier 3: achieving a standards score of 60%-80%; Tier 4: achieving a standards score of below 60%.
- Progress: Tier 1: P8 >0; Tier 2: >-0.5; Tier 3: <-0.5 but <-1.0; Tier 4: <-1.0.
- Learning Attitudes and Values (score out of 12): Tier 1: 10-12; Tier 2: 8-9; Tier 3: 6-7; Tier 4: <5.
- Participation: Tier 1: attends a weekly club and has attended a trip this term; Tier 2: occasional attendance of a club and has attended a trip this term; Tier 3: does not attend a club but has attended a trip this term; Tier 4: does not attend a club and has not attended a trip this term.

After this, we created a tracking spreadsheet, which is updated every half-term. For each of the criteria above, a student is colour-coded to determine their tier:

- Tier 1: Green
- Tier 2: Yellow
- Tier 3: Orange
- Tier 4: Red

Once this is identified, support is provided to the student in the following ways:

- Tier 1: no action necessary
- Tier 2: support through form tutor/pastoral team or academic leads
- Tier 3: discussed at year panel for additional support (which occur fortnightly) to ascertain the best intervention
- Tier 4: discussed at senior panel for intensive support (which occur weekly) to ascertain the best intervention

As we now track all of these areas every half-term, we review this data regularly and are able to notice patterns in students within the different focus areas. We are now able to correlate this with home circumstances and provide support in the immediate, while being able to provide proactive support for future changes in circumstances.

Funding Costs

None as a starting point, although money is used to fund a wide range of specific interventions as and when they are required.

What Has Been The Impact?

Following this project, there has been a greater awareness from staff surrounding how and why SPP students may be under-achieving in the different focus areas.

Shifts and patterns are noticed and addressed promptly and the most appropriate intervention is undertaken at the earliest opportunity. This means that students' well-being is supported with a greater appreciation as to what students need while their achievement is closely monitored and supported too.

For example, it was noted that many of our SPP students had not attended a school trip, so we ran two additional trips to local universities to expose students to Higher Education (an area we know is under-represented by SPP students).

Although it is early in the project's journey, the holistic overview of SPP students has improved considerably. Over time, we hope to be able to evidence this using whole-cohort data to show improvement in these focus areas over time.

Next Steps

To develop the range of interventions and support measures we have in place to support our SPP students to feel well-supported and to fulfil their academic potentials. At the moment, we have a wide range, but we are continually evaluating these and improving and changing these as appropriate.

Ringshall Primary School



Project Name	Ringshall Squadron	
School Context	Number on Roll	116
	% of Service Children	59%
	How Many Classes?	5
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Wattisham Flying Station
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	2 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Yes
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	To develop our understanding of how we can support our military children as best as we can.	

Project Overview

To develop our understanding of the impact being a military child has on wellbeing and mental health with a view to provide greater support and targeted interventions to support our military children.

“I love it that we now have a military club, we can go and talk about our lives.”

- Year 4 pupil

“I love it that we now have a military club, we can go and talk about our lives.”

- Year 6 pupil after the project’s University of Essex Pupil Voice Event.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2. Wellbeing is supported.

Wellbeing and mental health to be better supported.
Skills to foster resilience to be developed.

Training to understand the impact of military life on children.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

A robust nurture system in place for military children when they are struggling with their wellbeing.
Ongoing wellbeing activities to build resilience and good mental health practices.

A focus on belonging to the school community.

What Was Achieved?

With our focus area being ‘Wellbeing is Supported’, we wanted to develop our Service children’s wellbeing, mental health and resilience through a combination of:

- CPD for staff, additional pastoral support (through group nurture sessions, wellbeing check ins and one-to-one support)
- In-school explicit teaching of wellbeing skills through MyHappyMind, zones of regulation and Therapeutic Thinking practices, and
- Ad-hoc initiatives such as the launch of a military club and the purchase of leavers’ teddy bears.



Funding Costs

Additional LSA time for nurture sessions and check ins.

Staff time for CPD.

Cost of teddy bears.

What Has Been The Impact?

A greater understanding of the impact of military life on children.

More opportunities for children to take part in wellbeing and mental health supporting nurture sessions.

Wellbeing check-ins now monitor more children.
Children have a military club to go to, to talk and share their experiences.

Leavers have a teddy bear keepsake to remember their time at the school.

A greater sense of belonging for our military children.

Next Steps

Continue to develop our wellbeing curriculum.

Ensure CPD on ‘the life of a military child’ continues.

Develop wellbeing and nurture provision further.

Expand military-themed events and opportunities for military children to share their experiences.



Royal Hospital School



Project Name	Thanksgiving Celebration	
School Context	Number on Roll	500
	% of Service Children	10% (50 children)
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Across the UK due to the boarding section and strong links to the Royal Navy.
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	24 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	Founded in 1712 in Greenwich, London, our school has deep roots in a proud naval tradition. In 1933, we moved to our beautiful campus overlooking the River Stour. Our heritage continues to shape our values of courage, resilience, and community.
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	As a school, we value the contribution of our military families and our heritage means that our connections with military families is at the heart of our school.	

Project Overview

The aim of the project was to strengthen relationships between the school and our Armed Forces families by creating regular opportunities for connection, communication and shared understanding. The project aimed to help Service families feel more valued, informed and supported, and will allow the school to respond with sensitivity to mobility, deployment and separation.



“It was great to connect with other students from military families because it made me feel like I’m part of a smaller community within our school. Other opportunities like this would be very welcome.”

- Boy in Year 10

“I enjoyed meeting all the other military families at my school because it made me feel connected to people who understand my experiences. Spending time together helped me build new friendships and feel more supported as I felt as I could relate to other’s experiences. I left the event feeling proud, and grateful for the strong community around me.”

- Boy in Year 10

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2: Wellbeing is Supported.

We introduced a termly Service pupil gatherings - a safe, supportive space for military connected pupils to:

- Meet others with shared experiences
- Voice concerns or highlight strengths
- Access pastoral guidance
- Celebrate the contribution Service children make in our school community.

Hosted in one of the School Houses, this gathering was relaxed, student centred and shaped by pupil voice. It was hosted by a Housemaster and Matron along with other pastoral staff including the Chaplain. The event took place during April, the Month of the Military Child.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

To help those students who are part of a Forces family within our school community to be aware of each other, to allow young people to gather together informally to share their lived experience of being a Service child and to thank them for the unique role they play within our community.

What Was Achieved?

A special celebration event was organised to bring together all the military children within the school community. The aim of the gathering was to create a space where pupils with shared experiences could connect, relax, and feel recognised for the unique role they play as part of military families. Invitations were extended across year groups, and the event took place in one of the boarding houses following supper, providing a warm and informal setting.

The evening was shaped around conversation, connection, and community. As pupils arrived, they were welcomed into a comfortable environment where they could spend time chatting with one another and enjoying a selection of food. The relaxed atmosphere encouraged open discussion, and many pupils shared stories about where they had lived, often highlighting the wide range of places and cultures they had experienced because of military life. These conversations helped to build a sense of shared identity and mutual understanding.

In addition to informal conversation, there were opportunities to discuss some of the challenges that can affect military children. Pupils spoke about experiences such as frequent relocations, time spent apart from family members, and the uncertainty that can accompany global events such as the ones that we are currently facing. A key moment in the evening came when the Housemaster addressed the group. He expressed his appreciation for the resilience,

adaptability, and strength shown by military children, acknowledging the distinctive contribution they make to the school community. He also recognised that it is a particularly challenging time to be part of a military family, given the wider global context, and he encouraged pupils to take pride in the qualities they develop through their experiences but to also note that there were adults here to help and support them.

The Housemaster reminded pupils that support is always available. He emphasised that there are trusted adults within the school who are ready to listen and offer guidance whenever needed and named the places within school that they can go to access support should the need arise. He also highlighted the importance of peer support, noting that everyone present in the room shared an understanding of what it means to be part of a military family.

Overall, the event was a meaningful and positive occasion. It strengthened connections between pupils, fostered a sense of belonging, and reaffirmed the school’s commitment to supporting military children within its community. A similar event is planned for next term.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The sense of belonging within the school community and not feeling alone when facing the uncertainty of Forces life.

Next Steps

In the Autumn term, we will run a “Coffee & Connect” at a ‘Divisions Parade’.

This will be a new initiative to invite Service family members to gather informally for coffee before or after a division parade, with a member of staff to host them, aimed to:

- Create a natural, low pressure forum for families to meet one another
- Strengthen the link between home and school
- Give staff a chance to listen and understand any unique concerns
- Build a visible, welcoming culture around Service families.

By anchoring the gathering to a familiar school event, families can:

- Drop in casually
- Connect around a shared identity
- Begin building a supportive mini community.

This should enable school staff to identify concerns early by having regular light touch opportunities to connect with families.

Sandlings Primary School



Project Name	Forces Thrive Club	
School Context	Number on Roll	85
	% of Service Children	72%
	How Many Classes?	Currently 3 increasing to 4 in September
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Rock Barracks near Woodbridge, Suffolk
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	500m
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Yes
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	We serve a diverse community made up of both military and civilian families, living in housing located on or near the former base and in surrounding villages. Our school, the local housing, and the current military base were once part of a large American air base.
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	Our school decided to take part in the Festival of Friends because we are committed to supporting the wellbeing, belonging and success of our Service children and could see how the project could enhance our offering to Service families. We felt being part of the project would provide valuable opportunities for pupils to build friendships with other children who share similar experiences, such as parental deployment, moving schools or time spent away from loved ones.	

Project Overview

To set up a weekly lunch time club, initially aimed at Year 5 and 6 Service children so they can relax and talk about their experiences. In the future, to form links with a similar club at the local high school to support transition.



“It’s great to see the children relaxing in a calm environment and discussing their experiences of being a Service child and how it makes them feel and supporting one another.”

- Teacher (Supporting Club)

“I enjoyed talking with other people who understand.”

- Year 6 Pupil

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Children are Heard (Principle 5).

To give Service children a safe place they can talk about the unique experiences they face. Through the club, develop a welcome pack or guide for new Service children designed by the children.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

Children feel comfortable talking about their experiences. Build confidence of new starters and help them develop relationships with their peers.

From talking to the children, we will develop what we can offer them and help them feel more supported.

Improve transition for our Year 6 pupils to High School. Sometimes we have small cohorts going to high school, or children joining just before then moving on to high school, so this would help them to get to know other Service children who are already there.

Offer earlier support for any children who are struggling by discussing their feelings in a comfortable environment with trusted adults.

What Was Achieved?

We identified that although children share their voice through school council and whole school meetings, we didn’t have a space where just Service children could meet and discuss things.

We talked to other schools in the Suffolk Hub who already had a club running to understand the activities they offer and how they felt it supported their pupils.

We then arranged meeting with the local Army Welfare team to discuss setting up a lunch club.

We agreed to focus on Year 5 and 6 in the summer term, with a view to opening up to Year 4 in the Autumn Term. We agreed on a relaxed environment, starting with games and discussions with children to prompt on where to go next.

We discussed with the Service children in Year 5/6 that the club was going to start and there was a very positive response. The majority of Service children have attended the first few sessions so far.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

Children have enjoyed the first few sessions where they have played games. We discussed with them where parents are currently deployed and found the locations on a map, and other children who had been to the country previously spoke about their experience there.

One child who doesn’t often engage with others played Lego with another.

There were discussions around when parents have missed birthdays and Christmas, and the Service children’s feelings associated with this.

Our Y5/6 Service children are looking forward to future sessions and were disappointed when it couldn’t take place one week due to a prior commitment.

Year 6 were pleased and excited to hear there was a similar club run by the same person at the local high school. They have reported that they feel more comfortable to talk about how they are feeling when parents are away.

Next Steps

Open the club to Year 4 next year and investigate possibility of Year 6 joining in a few sessions with the club at the high school next year (Summer term 2027). Introduce an online form for parents to inform us (through QR coded linked form) when a family member is deployed.



St Martin at Shouldham C of E Primary Academy



Project Name	Enriching St Martin	
School Context	Number on Roll	151
	% of Service Children	17%
	How Many Classes?	6
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Marham
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	3 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Not at the moment, but there have been.
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Not at the moment. There often are. One spouse is ex RAF.
	Any Other Relevant Information?	The military padre is a frequent visitor to Worship.
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	Loss of an existing member of staff meant a new beginning was needed.	

Project Overview

An experienced ELSA, who had supported Service children and their families at the school, was unfortunately lost to us when two classes merged into one. We didn't want to lose this valuable support but didn't have any money to replace her.

We wanted to hear more from the Service children themselves about all that they enjoyed and what would support them better. We wanted to hear more from the parents of our Service children about how we could work together to support their children.



“The school made me feel welcome when I started here, the teachers and staff check in on me and that makes me feel like they care about me.”

- Pupil

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2: Wellbeing is supported.

Tailored pastoral provision supports Service children's mental health and wellbeing.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

New ELSA in place.

Continued excellent support for Service children and their families informed by Service family voice.

What Was Achieved?

We worked with the Educational Psychology and specialist teacher service to secure ELSA training.

We worked with the Armed Forces Education Trust charity to be awarded a grant for ELSA training.

We delivered CPD to staff members to raise the profile of Service children, issues that they may encounter and how we can support them.

Service children in KS2 had the chance to talk on a one-to-one basis with a member of staff and to create their own one-page profiles. An amazing untapped well of delightfulness!

Funding Costs

None beyond the grant we received. The only other costs were to attend the Festival of Friends whole project days.

What Has Been The Impact?

We have funding and places for four new ELSAs to be trained across the partnership of our two schools. We have people who want to do this.

The support staff that have talked to Service children have been really moved while compiling their one-page profiles, leading to wider staff 'buy in'. This has been supported by the CPD provided from our hub.

We are inspired for next year!

Next Steps

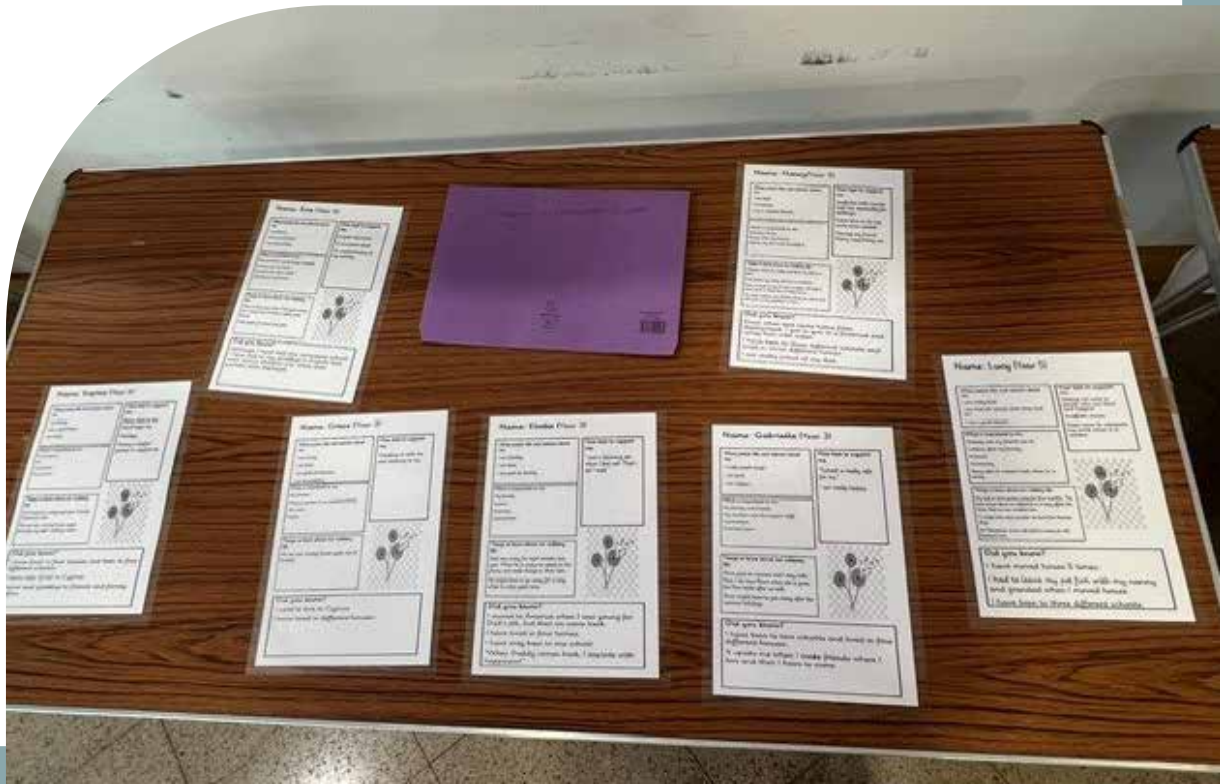
We now need to ensure our ELSA candidates attend training, then equip them to run a military club and to make connections with the base.

One-page profiles to be completed for KS1 Service children. Next big step - listen to parental voices.

We will continue attending the Hub.

“Miss James would chat with me when I was upset [Dad was deployed for a long time] – there was a time I was really upset and she let me call my Mum.”

- Pupil



St Mary's C of E Primary School, Hadleigh



Project Name	Mrs Mills' Military Champions!	
School Context	Number on Roll	127
	% of Service Children	20%
	How Many Classes?	5
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Wattisham Flying Station
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	5 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Unsure
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes x 2
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	St Mary's understands the unique lifestyle children from Forces Families live, but we wanted to raise their profile within school and focus on engagement with Wattisham Flying Station to support our understanding.	

"We have loved taking part in the Festival of Friends, and it has been amazing for the children to meet other Service children from other schools! It is so important for all schools to understand the life of Service children and how they can better support them. Thank you for supporting this initiative!"

- School's Service Children's Champion



Project Overview

We created a schedule of celebratory events through the year to raise the profile of our Service children, using these to strengthen our links with the nearby Airfield.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2 – Wellbeing is Supported.

We wanted:

- To continue to improve the pastoral support for Service children within our care, including continuing to raise awareness of Service children's lived experience amongst staff and peers.
- To improve support for these children's transitions when they leave or arrive at our school.
- To improve communication between Service parents and school staff.
- To create community engagement opportunities with Wattisham Flying Station.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

- Service children feeling that they can share their unique lifestyle, proudly and freely.
- Creation of a supportive base for the children to share their emotions and common interests.
- Service children - whose emotional well-being may be affected through deployments/relocation - feeling better supported through staff awareness.
- Creation of opportunities for community engagement with Wattisham Flying Station.

What Was Achieved?

We have had an established Service children's group at St Mary's for 5 years, with Mrs Mills' Military Champions group having pastoral time once a week to take part in various activities such as crafts, jewellery-making, creating cards for parents who are serving away, etc.

Our project started with us holding a special assembly for Remembrance Day, inviting visitors from Wattisham Flying Station. The children created their own poppy wreaths and spoke about why it's important to remember all soldiers who have died, and to support soldiers who are currently serving and learning about what they do for our country.

During the Month of the Military Child in April we celebrated our Service children by holding a whole school assembly, again with visitors from Wattisham Flying Station. The whole school wore purple to celebrate the month and raised money for the SSAFA team at Wattisham.

When children's serving parents deployed, the school's Service Champion undertook extra check-ins, and provided resources to support them through that time. For example, activities like "What to tell Dad when he comes home" and pastoral stories to support children's understanding.

When Service children moved to different schools because of serving parents being posted to other areas, children have been supported to look and talk about their new schools. The children were supported to create a "getting to know me" poster to take to their new school, and received a leaving card from Mrs Mills' Military Champions group with personal messages from the children in the group.

To celebrate Armed Forces Day in June, we then invited a team from Wattisham Flying Station to St Mary's with some military vehicles for the whole school to see and ask questions about.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

Our Service children have enjoyed being a part of Mrs Mills' Military Champions Club.

All children at St Mary's are better aware of the often exciting, but at times challenging, lifestyles of the Service children we have attending our school.

Staff are aware of any deployments, whether that be for several weeks or months. Families and Service children feel supported with any relocations.

Service families know they can get support for their child when needed, and have a dedicated Service Champion staff member to speak to.

Service children know their voices are important and valued. They know there is someone who is there to support them whenever they need it.

Next Steps

To develop and improve the school website page regarding our Service Pupil Premium children.

To create a dedicated lunch time club for our Service children one day a week.

To look at opportunities for a dedicated trip for Service children.

To continue to create opportunities for engagement with Wattisham Flying Station.

Stanground Academy



Project Name	Service Student Week	
School Context	Number on Roll	900
	% of Service Children	17%
	How Many Classes?	6 form entry, 11-16
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Wittering
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	5 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	Unknown
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	The school recognises the unique challenges faced by Service Children, including mobility and parental deployment, along with their emotional impact. We wanted to strengthen our identification, raise staff awareness and ensure high-quality pastoral care and academic support is in place to support all our Service children.	

Project Overview

Focused on identification, awareness and support for Service children through staff training and Service children meetings to ensure they feel understood and supported.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Staff are Well Informed (Principle 7).

Raising the profile and spreading awareness of Service children's lived experiences for both students and staff at the Academy.



“At school this year, we have had meetings and been able to talk about our experiences, staff have shown us that they care.”

- Year 10 Male Student

“Having catch-ups and talk about our week, to go eat some food and work on what we're going to do for the school to show people we are Service children.”

- Year 8 Female Student

Intended Outcomes of the Project

The project aimed to improve outcomes for Service children by increasing staff understanding of their needs and ensuring consistent support across the school. It aimed to ensure that Service children feel recognised and valued within the school community.

A further intended outcome is to ensure Service children have a safe space and a trusted adult they can turn to.

What Was Achieved?

Several interventions have been put into place this year to support our Service children:

- Students now have a key contact they can go to if they would like to talk to someone.
- We have organised a 'pizza working party' where students have started to design a display for school (this will be completed in September).
- Students have been increasingly involved in programmes across the school
- Staff CPD has taken place to ensure staff are aware of our Service children and they have been given an overview of the part this plays in our school.

The school's Combined Cadet Force has played an integral role in our school's improvement plan for Service children. The Combined Cadet Force was launched by the Combined Cadet Force Coordinator in November 2025: currently we have 25 students enrolled but after recent assemblies we have around 50 students due to join in September 2026. This is a huge increase from previously.

Students meet weekly 3-4:30pm on a Tuesday - students interact with external army volunteers and staff and get first-hand experience of people who have served in the military. Cadets wear their uniform every Tuesday for the whole school day which helps increase awareness of the Armed Forces and creates a community for our students.

Cadets have been working through the Combined Cadet Force syllabus, which covers field craft, marksmanship and navigation skills. A select group of cadets have managed to attain their rifle license. Some of these students are looking to go on their first weekend with two local secondary schools to increase their community with another army contingency.

In January 2026, the Royal Navy visited the Academy to do a hands-on workshop with the cadets and Service children. This focused on team building and communication.

The recruitment of staff on the cadet programme has helped with increasing awareness of our Service children.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The interventions and support implemented has had a positive impact on both the visibility and support of Service children within the Academy. Establishing a key contact has provided students with a trusted adult to approach for guidance and support, helping strengthen student wellbeing and belonging. Opportunities such as the Pizza working party have encouraged students to contribute to the school community and have given them a voice in raising awareness. Whilst we are still working on the dedicated display, this has given them a voice in raising awareness for Service children.

Staff training has increased awareness across the Academy, ensuring colleagues better understand the unique experiences and challenges faced by our students.

The introduction and growth of the Combined Cadet Force has had a significant impact, showing increased engagement and interest. Weekly sessions have provided students the opportunity to develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills whilst allowing them to build relationships with military personnel.

The visible presence of cadets in uniform has helped raise awareness of the Armed Forces and a sense of pride and community among our Service children. Enrichment opportunities, including the Royal Navy workshop and joint activities with local schools, broadens their experiences and connections.

Additionally, the recruitment of staff into the cadet programme has further embedded understanding and advocacy for Service children across the school, contributing to a more supportive environment.

Next Steps

- To continue to have half termly meetings with our Service children where students can catch up with each other and continue to work on the display board in school.
- To continue to raise awareness of the lived experience by Service children through staff training using the Thriving Lives Toolkit.
- To update our website later in 2026 to address Service children.
- To develop further the Combined Cadet Force programme.

Stanton Primary School



Swanton Morley VC Primary School



Project Name	Start Small, Think Big!	
School Context	Number on Roll	175 (total) 33 children eligible for Service Pupil Premium (SPP) 5 children with Service-related connection NOT eligible for SPP
	% of Service Children	Approximately 22%
	How Many Classes?	6
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Robertson Barracks, Swanton Morley, Norfolk
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	1.2 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any Other Relevant Information?	Some staff who are ex-Service dependants and/or have or had a military connection to someone serving or someone who has served (i.e. a veteran).
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	We wanted to strengthen and deepen our support for military children and their families to develop a stronger mutual understanding across the whole school community	

Project Overview

The project aim was to give structured opportunities for Service children to engage in peer and community activities, share experiences and receive tailored support to ensure wellbeing and learning needs are met.



"I had such a fun time, and I made friends with a girl from another school who loves animals like me! I hope we meet again as I sometimes find it hard to make friends."

- Year 4 Girl

"The FOF event will be something I will remember for an exceptionally long time. In a position of authority, I do not always get to engage so closely with our military children in that type of capacity, immersing myself in the creative arts and it was such a wonderful experience to be part of, and really highlighted the importance of recognising the military child."

- Headteacher

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2 - Wellbeing is supported.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

To improve wellbeing and emotional support further, particularly during periods of deployment, weekending, separation, and transition. This would mean that provision is proactive, supportive and child-centred, helping children feel secure, valued, understood and be able to thrive both academically and emotionally.

What Was Achieved?

Plans were shaped through a combination of methods including feedback from Service children, families and staff.

Age-appropriate questionnaires were used to capture pupil voice and experiences to allow us to find areas where we were performing well, areas for improvement and to listen to what children wanted from the school to better meet their needs and make positive change. A common request was asking for more opportunities to have engagement activities aimed solely at Service children, since they have a mutual understanding of the unique and unpredictable challenges military life can bring. This included events involving children from other local schools.

However, Service children noted 'more time to talk' to a trusted adult in school was the most important thing for them. They felt that although they were happy with the current level of support in place, they would like even more of this protected time.



Funding Costs

Our school's charitable trust – 'The Friends of Swanton Morley' - funded a collection of 'Dande-Lion Diaries' which is a series of books aimed at younger military children which explain deployment in an understandable and accessible way, and in a relatable format.

What Has Been The Impact?

The questionnaire was an extremely helpful tool for both staff and some children.

The responses identified that although some children were presenting in class as confident and happy children, they felt on a personal level they were struggling socially and/or emotionally and had low self-esteem. This highlighted masking behaviours and feelings, meaning that some children needed more support than initially predicted. We were able to offer this through early identification (during a key deployment period) which meant they were supported both pastorally and academically which helped them to thrive.

Next Steps

To continue with ongoing school development and self-analysis processes.

We would like to see our Thriving Lives Toolkit self-evaluation ratings change from 'emerging' to 'developing', improving and changing our practices to adapt to the current needs of our Service children.



Thetford Academy

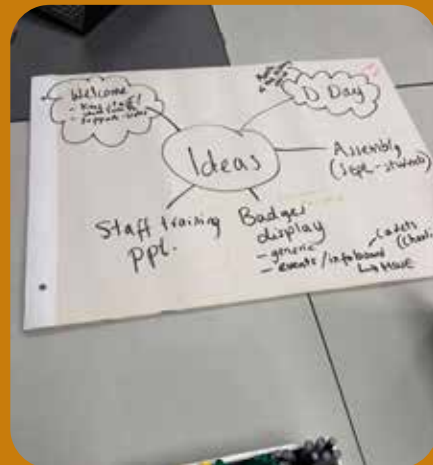
(Secondary School and Sixth Form)



Project Name	Joining Forces	
School Context	Number on Roll	1377 (years 7-13)
	% of Service Children	1% (21 students)
	How Many Classes?	N/A
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Honington and RAF Marham
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	7 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	A new Assistant Principal role looking at supporting vulnerable groups of pupils and overseeing the Pupil Premium budget made clear that we were lacking in specific support and a plan for spending our Service Pupil Premium (SPP).	

Project Overview

Through this project, Thetford Academy has joined a network of local schools to share ideas and resources. The Assistant Principal has taken this information and joined forces with a focus group of Service children in school to plan how to raise awareness and improve support for them going forward.



“It’s really interesting to find out the backgrounds of everyone else – I had no idea!”

- Year 7 Student

“The display board with all the badges is incredible, I didn’t even know these students had a parent in the Forces.”

- Assistant Principal

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Joining forces with local schools to share ideas and resources to improve support for our Service children (Principle 1: Our Approach is Clear).

Joining forces with local and national organisations that offer support and opportunities to Service children (Principle 2: Wellbeing is Supported).

Joining forces with the Service children in school to learn how we can better support them and their families, to give them a voice and a sense of belonging (Principle 5: Children are Heard).

Joining forces with staff and students in school to raise awareness of the unique challenges Service children face so we can support them effectively through this (Principle 7: Staff are Well-Informed).

Intended Outcomes of the Project

To improve staff knowledge about challenges Service children face and how to support them and their families.

To improve identification of Service children in school and create a focus group of Service children to shape a plan for how to support them in future.

To use ideas from the focus group to create resources, training and displays to be raise awareness amongst staff and students, increasing Service children’s sense of belonging and creating opportunities to celebrate them that become an integral part of school life.

To create opportunities for Service children in school to network and support each other.

What Was Achieved?

In attending the local network meetings, the Assistant Principal gained a wealth of knowledge and ideas for how to support Service children in our school. She then set about contacting all parents to make sure we had identified all our Service children.

A focus group was set up of 8 pupils who spent time together planning what provision for Service children could look like in our school and which elements of this we needed to prioritise. This day resulted in some fantastic ideas and resources being created:

- A presentation for the Assistant Principal to deliver to all staff during the September training days to explain the challenges they face and the support staff could give them;
- An awareness-raising assembly for our Service students to deliver to all year groups when we return in the Autumn term;

- Displays around the school to increase awareness of Service children, improving their sense of identity and belonging, and to share events and information that may be useful for them; &
- A plan to set up a half-termly club for them to attend, a member of staff to be their “champion”, with celebration events for occasions such as D-Day and the Month of the Military Child next year.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The project has enabled our focus group of Service children to create a mini-support network and to share their unique challenges with each other. It was quite something to see their friendships develop as they compared life stories proudly. They have also made some incredible resources which will have a huge impact on the school community next academic year when they are delivered to staff and students.

The project has also enabled the Assistant Principal to join a network of other schools, providing access to ideas and resources to support not only our Service children, but also other vulnerable groups within the school.

Participating in the project has developed our understanding of Service children, and as a knock-on, other vulnerable groups such as Young Carers within the Senior Leadership Team.

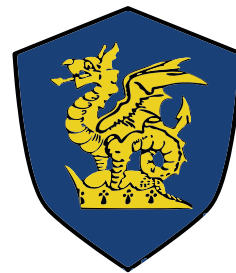
This has led to a renewed focus on these groups which will improve every aspect of our school – support for students, knowledge of staff, better planning for spending the PP budget, and hopefully a resulting positive impact on attendance, behaviour, attainment and student experience in our school.

Next Steps

We are looking forward to delivering and refining our resources for staff training and assemblies in the Autumn, and then setting up a Service children’s group.

We plan to celebrate key events as a whole school, and continue to update display boards with information and local opportunities for Service children.

The Thomas Lord Audley School



Project Name	Fortified Futures	
School Context	Number on Roll	957
	% of Service Children	3%
	How Many Classes?	Across all phases
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Colchester Garrison
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	1 mile
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any Other Relevant Information?	Service Child Strategic Lead - Mrs Katie Dunne Service Child Project Co-Ordinator - Mr Jordan Pooley
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	At the Thomas Lord Audley School our vision is "To develop our young people, regardless of their background, to be the best that they can be - academically, socially and emotionally - so that they go on to the next stages of their lives as well-prepared as possible." All members of our community are given the space to listen and be heard. At TLA our differences are not hidden, but highlighted and celebrated.	

Project Overview

Mentoring tailored to emotional, social, and academic targets, ensuring every pupil feels securely supported and empowered to thrive. To streamline communication, this project established an open dialogue with parents and carers, providing a dedicated line of support to ensure home and school are united in championing their child's needs.



"I really enjoyed the CPD - it was completely new information to me. I feel I have a better understanding of the needs of the Service children in my classes now."

- Teacher

"Life as a Service child has been great for me. I think it is the amazing support I have received from my family, friends and my school. Everyone's experience is different but mine has been good."

- Year 8 Pupil

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2: Wellbeing is supported.

We secure pupil wellbeing through tailored mentoring that empowers students to set, track, and achieve personal targets.

Principle 6: Parents are Engaged.

We ensure parents are fully aware of school support and can easily update us on changing family situations.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

To increase pupils' emotional resilience and create a sense of belonging, confidence and stability within the school environment.

To promote student-driven progress, where pupils actively co-create, review and create actionable plans to support them to achieve their personal targets.

To strengthen home-school partnership, establishing a unified approach to the child's development.

Rapid response to family changes that allows parents to instantly notify the school of deployments, relocations, or emotional shifts at home.

Ensuring pathways to support are clear and parents are aware of the wellbeing resources available to their children.

What Was Achieved?

For Principle 2, we have created a mentoring programme to ensure that **every** Service child in our school has access to a dedicated member of staff for the duration of their time at the school. The mentors will be using the GROW model to encourage the students to create actionable goals that are meaningful to them. We chose to focus on this aspect as we identified through discussion with the Hub group of schools that Service children, particularly with high mobility, struggle to create meaningful targets for themselves as they do not know when they may have to move again. This model ensures every Service child has half termly mentoring sessions to develop mutually respectful relationships that support pupils to challenge themselves and continually reflect on their progress, setting new goals as required. This will not only give the opportunity for pupils to develop a range of skills and achieve their targets but also act as a pastoral check in therefore ensuring the Service child's wellbeing is regularly monitored and supported.

For Principle 6, our aim was to improve engagement with families, and we created a "deployment form" to support this. This form was designed to open a line of communication specific for Service children's families that allows them to inform the school when a parent/

carer is being deployed. The aim of this is to then put support in place for that child and pre-empt any barriers or challenges they may face. The form will be on our school website and optional for families to complete - the information will be sent directly to our school's Service child advocate who can then put things in place for support.

We also attended the SCiP Alliance listening tour and met with a range of professionals who work with Service children. This gave us the opportunity to share the work we have been doing and receive constructive supportive feedback, along with the opportunity to share best practice and develop ideas with a range of Service focused organisations, which developed connections to enable us to think about our next steps through a range of lenses.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

The impact for the mentoring programme will be continually reviewed using a combination of pupil voice, informal observations and discussions throughout the year to ensure pupils' needs are met and adaptations can be made. Current feedback has been extremely positive. We have a number of volunteers with a wide range of experiences and roles within the school who are carefully matched to support our Service children. All colleagues and mentors have received additional training to better understand the unique challenges Service children face, the impact of this has increased colleague confidence in supporting our Service children.

The feedback received from the deployment form has also been extremely positive. Service spouses who work at the school have complimented it and have said it is something they would use. Also, a Service child parent at the school has given positive feedback, as shown in the stakeholder quote. The form is set to officially launch on the school website before the end of the 2025/26 academic year.

Next Steps

- Further increase colleagues' confidence and awareness through robust CPD
- Arbor, the management information system we use, has been contacted to see if we can add 'Service children' as a demographic to seating plans
- Maintain our mentoring programme
- Monitor our deployment form responses
- Begin working on the Thriving Lives Toolkit's Principle 4 (Transition is Effective).

The Trinity School, Colchester



Project Name	Operation Belonging: Connecting and Supporting Service Children at Trinity	
School Context	Number on Roll	773
	% of Service Children	1.43%
	Main Military Base(s) Served	Colchester Garrison and other bases, as some students are "settled" in Colchester.
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	5 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any Other Relevant Information?	Trinity School serves a community with strong links to Colchester Garrison and welcomes students from Service families who may experience mobility, deployment-related separation and transition between schools.
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	The Trinity School was keen to strengthen its understanding of the lived experiences of Service children and to ensure that support for military-connected students was visible, effective and sustainable. Participation in the Festival of Friends project provided an opportunity to collaborate with other schools, learn from best practice and to use the Thriving Lives Toolkit to evaluate and enhance our provision.	

Project Overview

Through the Festival of Friends project, Trinity School used the Thriving Lives Toolkit to review support for Service children, raise staff awareness and give military-connected students a stronger voice. Activities focused on improving belonging, recognising Service children's experiences and strengthening school-family communication.



"We went to Essex University together back in February, and we learned lots of things together – that everyone goes through similar experiences as a military child. When I was growing up, my Dad was in and out and sometimes I wouldn't see him for weeks. The Festival of Friends Project has made me realise that there is support when I need it".

- Year 9 Student

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

All Principles covered in our project to improve the educational and pastoral experience of Service children by:

- Raising awareness of Service children's unique experiences.
- Strengthening identification and monitoring of Service pupils.
- Increasing student voice and participation.
- Developing a more consistent whole-school approach to supporting Service families.
- Aligning practice with the Thriving Lives Toolkit principles, particularly understanding Service children's needs, effective communication, student voice and leadership commitment.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

The project aimed to ensure that Service children felt recognised, understood and valued within the school community. We wanted staff to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges associated with deployment, mobility and family separation. Through improved communication and increased student voice, we hoped to strengthen connections between Service families and the school. We also aimed to establish sustainable systems for identifying and monitoring Service children so that support could be targeted where needed and embedded into everyday school practice.

What Was Achieved?

Initially, we completed a self-evaluation using the Thriving Lives Toolkit to assess our current provision for Service children and identify areas for development. The review highlighted the importance of improving awareness of Service children across the school and creating more opportunities for students to share their experiences.

As designated Service Children Champion, I attended network meetings throughout the year and shared key learning with colleagues. Staff were provided with information about the unique experiences of military-connected young people, including the impact of parental deployment, mobility and transitions between schools. I ran part of an assembly informing all staff of this. The school reviewed how Service children were identified within existing systems to ensure that appropriate support could be offered when needed. We also strengthened communication with families to ensure they were aware of available support and felt confident approaching the school with any concerns. I also ran weekly mentoring sessions on a Tuesday lunchtime for Service students to "drop in", if needed.

To increase student voice, Service children were invited to share their experiences and ideas about how the school could support them more effectively. Their feedback informed discussions about wellbeing, belonging and transition experiences.

The project also enabled us to celebrate the strengths and resilience of Service children. Through the participation in the Festival of Friends programme, we raised the profile of Service children within the wider school community. This helped promote understanding among peers and staff while reinforcing a culture of inclusion. The project concluded with identification of priorities for future development to ensure that improvements become embedded and sustainable.

Funding Costs

There were no direct costs to the school for participation. Project activities were supported through Festival of Friends funding provided by the Armed Forces Education Trust. Staff time was allocated for attendance at network meetings and implementation of improvement actions.

What Has Been The Impact?

The project has significantly raised awareness of Service children across the school. Staff now have a better understanding of the challenges and strengths associated with military life and are more confident in recognising when additional support may be needed.

Service children reported feeling more visible and acknowledged within the school community. The project created opportunities for student voice and helped strengthen relationships between Service families and the school. Improved identification processes have enabled us to monitor and support military-connected students more effectively.

Using the Thriving Lives Toolkit self-evaluation framework provided a valuable framework for reflection and helped us identify both strengths and areas for development. As a result, the school has established a stronger foundation for supporting Service children and has embedded greater consideration of their needs into pastoral and wellbeing practices. Most importantly, the project has reinforced our commitment to ensuring that Service children feel a sense of belonging, inclusion and pride in their unique experiences.

Next Steps

Continue using the Thriving Lives Toolkit to review provision annually, maintain a named Service Children Champion, strengthen student voice opportunities and further develop support during periods of deployment, transition and family change. I also want to ensure that all staff know who Service children are within school and offer this data to be readily available on our schools in-house data system, as currently students come under "PP" on this.

We will continue to celebrate and promote the experiences of Service children across the school.

Wayland Academy



Project Name	Ajutores Multorum - “In support of so many”	
School Context	Number on Roll	556
	% of Service Children	2%
	How Many Classes?	20
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Honington and RAF Marham
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	45 min
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	No
	Due to our proximity to RAF Honington and RAF Marham, we wanted to understand how many more of our students were undeclared Service students and better support those who we know are.	

Project Overview

To increase our offer for wellbeing and bonding time for Service students, allowing them to get together and share experiences with those who know and understand their worries and struggles.

Increase open communication with the Service community and improvd visibly of how diverse the school is.

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 2: Wellbeing is supported.

“It has been great to be part of the project!”

- Assistant Head of Key Stage

Intended Outcomes of the Project

To raise awareness among staff and students about the challenges of life as a Service student/family.

To understand and educate staff and students on how these things can impact education, wellbeing emotional development and relationships.

For students, to feel confident to identify themselves as Service students and feel that staff and peers understand their worries and struggles and know there is support if and when needed.

What Was Achieved?

We developed our monthly lunchtime club, changing the locations to make students feel more comfortable to attend, and moving it from the crowded library to one of our classrooms.

We’ve trialled a Service Student Support Club after school once a month on a Thursday with support from the Young Engagement Team from RAF Honington. This hasn’t gone as well as we would have liked, however are looking at running something ourselves next year.

We started doing termly “intervention” sessions to get the students together outside of lessons to engage in an activity.

We had our second annual Armed Forces Day lunch inviting families in to spend the afternoon with their young people and other Services families, to help all to build connections and friendship.

Funding Costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.

What Has Been The Impact?

Students are more willing to identify themselves and are working toward a badge they can wear to be able to do this at a glance.

Relationships with Service families have improved and more are willing to inform us of service-related trips, postings and deployments.

Next Steps

To continue to grow our understanding and support of these students. We hope to have a push at the start of the new academic year to identify more of our Service students so we can tailor the support we offer to students and wider families.



Wittering Primary School



Project Name	An improved website for Wittering	
School Context	Number on Roll	233
	% of Service Children	39%
	How Many Classes?	8
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Wittering
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	0.5 miles
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any Other Relevant Information?	Our school is committed to providing the best care for our Service children to ensure they thrive both academically and emotionally and that their families feel settled and supported.
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	At Wittering Primary, we know that we provide a breadth of support for our military families but wanted to consider how we could add to this offer and provide improved, valuable and relevant communication to parents.	

Project Overview

Our project has allowed us to vastly improve our website alongside further strengthening our offer within school, through conversations with other professionals and evaluations via the SCiP Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit.



"As a family new to the area, we have found an abundance of information of services and support available for our family on the website, and we have already started accessing support which will benefit our children. The signposting has made the move much easier for us!"

- New parent

"Before I even arrived at Wittering, I could see what help there would be when I started – I like the 'Buddy booklet'!"

- 9 Year Old Boy

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 6: Parents are Engaged.

To improve support for our service families.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

For our Wittering Primary School offer and local provisions to be better communicated and signposted to our families, which will ensure greater support. We want to see successful outcomes for our families, whether that be during times of deployment, for mental wellbeing and emotional needs, or to ease their settling in period within the local community.

What Was Achieved?

To start, we reviewed our current offer for both our Service children and military families as a whole. Analysis of parent surveys and discussions with our Family Support Workers provided a good starting point for how the website should be developed.

Further conversations with other schools serving military communities, and research of other schools' websites, along with CPD as part of the Festival of Friends project, meant we had a comprehensive list of what our website should contain in order for it to be as valuable as possible. This would ensure our website offer was detailed, relevant and, as a result, beneficial to new and existing families.

We have updated and collated new links and resources to signpost our families across a variety of areas so that all key information can be found in one place. This includes information on childcare, SSAFA support and SEND support both within school and regarding external professionals.

During this time, and from conversations with children and our Family Support Workers, we have also opened up a second lunchtime club, in addition to our longstanding 'Wellbeing Club'. This new 'Nurture Club' has been a great addition to our existing provision and has provided further emotional support where needed. We have also updated our 'Buddy Booklet' which supports the transition for new children and provides a focus for their first few days in school.

Staff have been consulted as part of the process too, as we have many spouses of serving and former military personnel, including some with children, within our school community. Their input has been invaluable, allowing us to gain an additional insight into the various needs of our military families. CPD has been shared as part of our staff meetings to enhance their understanding and support of our military children but also those 'left behind'. It is important that these children are not forgotten and given the necessary time

and focus when friendship groups are broken due to a posting.

The project has been very much a Wittering 'team' effort which aligns with our school ethos and why we are certain this will be of great benefit to our families.

Funding Costs

There was no cost to our project. We spoke with parents, other local schools and various professionals with military connections to ensure our website provision would be informative, clear and provide necessary support.

What Has Been The Impact?

The completion of the project is very recent but after analysing the results from our annual parent survey, we know that the improvements to our website will provide much needed support to both newly arrived military families and those who are more settled members of our local community. The updated information provides a more complete offer for a range of areas including education, emotional support and information linked to the wider community.

Next Steps

To implement regular updates to the website, as additional resources are discovered, and to carry out pupil and parent voice activities towards the end of the Autumn term to assess the effect of the existing signposting and support. Pupil voice will allow us to continue to reflect upon the existing provision within school.



Wymondham College Prep School



Project Name	Operation United Vision - a Collaborative Mission for Wymondham College & Wymondham College Prep School	
School Context	Number on Roll	423
	% of Service Children	2%
	How Many Classes?	15
	Main Military Base(s) Served	RAF Coltishall
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	39km
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	To drive progress at Wymondham College Prep School and Wymondham College by creating a unified approach to providing all Service pupils a provision that is defined and scaffolded, with a purposeful intent, so that every Service pupil achieves, thrives and belongs.	

Project Overview

The project was an opportunity for both schools to create one rationale and vision at a strategic level for all stakeholders, outlining what should be in place to support all Service pupils fulfilling their potential, no matter which cohort they are in across the two schools.



Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 1: Our Approach is Clear.

Leaders' understanding and approach ensure resources and policies improve Service children's outcomes.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

1. To create a collective vision and joint rationale outlining what both schools aim to achieve for their Service pupils.
2. To have an agreed approach as to what the offer is of both schools for their Service pupils.
3. To publish and communicate the outcomes of our collaborative work to our Service pupil parents and wider community.
4. To plan and deliver training to staff on our 'story' for Service pupils and what we expect.

What Was Achieved?

A collaborative team, involving the Headteachers, Senior Leaders responsible for Service Pupil Premium and each school's Service Pupil Pastoral Support Assistant, was formed where we unanimously agreed that Principle 1 was needed if we were going to strengthen multiple aspects of our Service pupil provision.

Using multiple sources of Service pupil support material, including the Armed Forces Covenant as a guide, we established what we felt we needed to define and establish for both schools. Rather than creating a policy, we crafted an agreed approach outlining our joint rationale of the offer we wanted to provide for our Service pupils. Once we had clarity on what core headings we wanted to define for our Service pupils' learning journey across both schools, we worked together to ensure we were creating an age-appropriate offer whilst not losing a core coherence.

The idea of a joint school mural as a focal point for pupils from Reception-Year 13, to stand as a symbol of the significance of this part of our pupil community, is just one example of the positive outcomes of the collaboration.

We then worked on creating a vision that defined our aspiration and ambition for our Service pupils. As we worked on our agreed approach, we developed further ideas on what we could do to further enhance our school offer, providing each other with inspiration and ideas of things we could both do to provide coherence and a stronger through journey of Service pupil experience. We have decided to do more as part of Service pupil induction into our school, creating a Service pupil 'Welcome Pack'.

Learning that the College had designed and produced a Wymondham Service Pupil Badge that students wear on their blazers, we sought permission to use the same badge in the Prep School, providing our pupils with a recognised symbol thereby helping them feel like they belong when they join older Service pupils in transition projects across both schools.

Funding Costs

This project has just cost people's time.

We also secured some funding to produce the joint Service Pupil Mural.

What Has Been The Impact?

We have established the following:

1. Our approach to ensuring our Service Pupils achieve, thrive & belong - a shared guide outlining the through journey experience of Service pupils, providing a coherent and sustainable model for future Service pupils entering either school at any point in time.
2. A new Vision for Service Pupils: At Wymondham College and Wymondham College Prep School, through our committed collaboration, we aim to provide continuity and stability, striving to ensure every child flourishes academically, socially and emotionally, and feels valued, understood and empowered to succeed.
3. A webpage for both schools focused on our joint vision for Service Pupils
4. A WCPS Service Buddy Badge
5. Welcome Pack – Service Pupil Badge, Service Pupil Teddy, Journal
6. Service Pupil Memory Mural.

Next Steps

Now that we have an agreed approach across both schools, we can begin to work more closely on everything we collectively do under a shared vision and approach. With a strong, sustainable future established, there is now the opportunity for both schools to continue collaborating on providing coherent and purposeful action that will further enhance our Service pupils lived school experience.

“The Thriving Lives Toolkit and our participation in the East Anglia Festival of Friends project has guided and supported us to create a joint vision and approach that's helped shape and secure a purposeful and sustainable future for all Service Pupils across two schools from Reception – Year 13.”

- Simon Underhill, Headteacher of Wymondham College Prep School

Wymondham College



Project Name	Operation United Vision	
School Context	Number on Roll	1429
	% of Service Children	3.8%
	How Many Classes?	Year groups 7–13 56 tutor groups
	Main Military Base(s) Served	State boarding bases all over the world served
	Approx Distance to Nearest Base	31 miles (RAF Marham)
	Are Any Military Member on GB?	No
	Are There Any Staff Service Spouses?	Yes
	Any Other Relevant Information?	43 service students are boarders and 11 are day students. We have 35 military families with students at the college.
Why the School Agreed to Take Part in the Project?	Wymondham College Prep School and Wymondham College share a single population of Service pupils across one continuous educational journey, from Reception through to Year 13. Despite this, each school had developed its own approach to supporting these pupils independently. Both schools wanted to align their thinking, agree a shared vision and make sure the experience of being a Service pupil felt consistent and joined up at every transition point, rather than resetting each time a pupil moved from the prep school into the senior school.	

Project Overview

Wymondham College and Wymondham College Prep School joined forces to create a single, joined-up vision for supporting Service children across both schools, from Reception to Year 13. Two school teams collaborated to agree shared policies, training and communication, ensuring consistent support as pupils transition between the prep and senior school.



“K has been in 6 schools during her educational journey so far due to the military way of life. This has had a profound effect on her educational journey and ability to make friends. This is only the second school that has embraced Service children and actively sought to include and recognise their unique situation which is refreshing. I believe it is very important for Service children to be recognised for who they are and be given the support required to enable them to achieve the very best they can.”

- Dad of Year 8 Girl

Main Project Objective & Thriving Lives Toolkit Principles

Principle 1: Our ‘Joined Up’ Approach is Clear.

The project’s main objective is for both schools to develop a shared, strategic understanding of their Service pupil population, agreeing clear policies and intended outcomes so that leaders, staff and governors understand the impact of Armed Forces life on pupils and can target support and resources effectively.

Intended Outcomes of the Project

By the end of the project, both schools will have:

- A shared vision, mission and aim for Service pupils across the full Reception to Year 13 journey;
- Agreed policy and guidance on the offer for Service pupils, including how dedicated funding is deployed;
- Published, accessible information for Service pupil families and the wider community;
- Staff training delivered on the realities of Armed Forces family life and its impact on pupils; and
- A clear plan for measuring the impact of this combined work on Service pupils’ education, wellbeing and sense of belonging.

What Was Achieved?

Wymondham College and Wymondham College Prep School brought together two dedicated project teams, one from each school, to build a single joined-up offer for Service pupils spanning the entire Reception to Year 13 journey.

Both schools already identified Service pupils at the point of admission, flagging them on each school’s Management Information System and asking whether a family has served in the last six years, so pupils benefit from Service Pupil Premium funding. Families joining either school are written to directly, welcoming them and explaining the support available, while boarding families are given a bespoke tour by the schools’ International and MOD Boarding Liaison Officer, covering Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) funding and each family’s individual circumstances.

Every Service pupil is given a dedicated ‘Service buddy’ on arrival, and a tailored Welcome Pack, including the schools’ Service pupil badge, a teddy and an age-appropriate journal. At the Year 6 to Year 7 transition point, Service pupils from the Prep school spend time at the College meeting other Service pupils and learning how they will continue to be supported, while pupils joining Year 7 from elsewhere receive a special welcome from the College’s Service lead. Leavers in Year 11 and Year 13 are presented with a Leavers Pack to mark their journey.

The project teams have agreed a shared vision statement and brochure, built around the Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Duty, and a formalised policy on how dedicated funding is deployed across the Prep, Senior and Sixth Form years. All staff are receiving training on the realities of Service family life, including deployment, relocation and ‘weekending’, and the impact this can have on pupils’ curriculum access and wellbeing. Day-to-day, pupils are supported through initiatives including the College’s Service Pupil Mural, termly Service pupil dinners, weekly drop-in sessions and the Prep school’s Bluey Club, run by a dedicated Emotional Literacy Support Assistant. The two schools are also developing shared, robust tracking of Service pupils’ academic progress, attendance and wellbeing, so the impact of this work can be measured consistently as pupils move between schools.

Funding Costs

Each Service pupil is currently allocated £360 of Service Pupil Premium funding. Wymondham College has invested this in MyTutor, an online tutoring platform for Year 10 and 11 pupils, alongside termly dinners, trips and drop-ins. Wymondham College Prep School funds a dedicated ELSA practitioner for its Service pupils.

What Has Been The Impact?

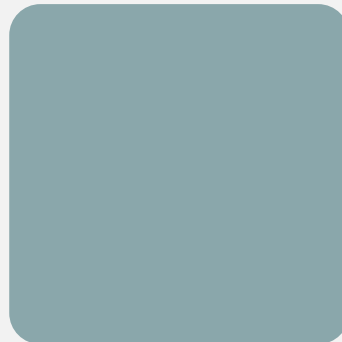
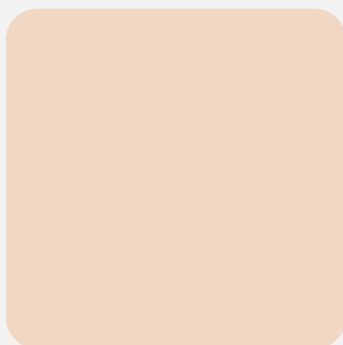
The schools’ existing Service Pupil Premium investment is already delivering strong results. In 2024/25, 83% of Wymondham College’s twelve Year 11 Service Pupils achieved grade 4 or above in both English and Mathematics, against a Progress Report 1 prediction of just 42%. 75% met, or exceeded, their Progress Report baseline predictions, with 42% outperforming them.

Pupils report a strong sense of belonging through initiatives such as the Service Pupil Memory Mural, the pupil designed Service Pupil Badge, and the Prep school’s Bluey Club, which gives younger Service pupils a forum to share feelings and support each other. Operation United Vision itself, the joint visioning project between the two schools, completes at the end of the Summer Term 2026. Its impact so far has been bringing leaders from both schools together to agree a shared strategic approach for the first time, with policy, training and tracking systems now being put in place that did not exist in this joined up form previously. The full impact of this shared approach, particularly on continuity of support at the Year 6 to Year 7 transition, will become measurable over the coming academic year.

Next Steps

- Publish the shared vision statement and a ‘WCPS Guide to Supporting Service Pupils’ covering Year 6 to Year 7 and Year 11 to Year 12 transitions.
- Deliver October staff training.
- Launch Bromcom-based tracking of attendance and academic outcomes.
- Use the Thriving Lives Toolkit’s Service pupil survey to gather pupil voice and measure impact





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