

CASE STUDY

ST MARY & ST JOHN C.E. (3-11)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mary & St John C.E. Voluntary Aided is a one-form entry primary school of about 190 pupils, situated in the village of North Luffenham in rural Rutland, just south of Rutland Water. The school has an on-site nursery provision, called Little Saints, taking in children from the age of three. At the time of writing, there were 25 Service children at the school, making up 14% of the roll. St George's Barracks is close by, a British Army base home to the 1st Military Working Dog Regiment. This is set to close in 2026. However, some of the Services Family Accommodation in the area is also used by Army personnel based at Kendrew Barracks, about eight miles away. Kendrew Barracks is home to the two regular infantry battalions of the Royal Anglian Regiment.

This case study demonstrates how a school with a relatively small Service children cohort can nevertheless have a clear strategy for using dedicated funding to support them pastorally so that they achieve well. It also evidences how the use of the Thriving Lives Toolkit to review school provision can lead to greater understanding of the evidence base and good practice, leading to the identification of next steps for further enhancement.



MORE INFO:

<https://www.northluffenham.org/>

<https://www.scipalliance.org/thriving-lives-toolkit>



SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

Emerging practice	Developing practice	Embedding practice
Schools with emerging practice will be actively reflecting on their activity and may be implementing actions to enhance their support, but to a small extent. School leaders will be beginning to raise awareness of what is needed to support Armed Forces children and young people more effectively and will be reflecting on the impact of their existing support strategies to strengthen these.	Schools with developing practice will be addressing this principle's question to a good extent, but this may be partial or yet to be enhanced through regular monitoring and evaluation. School leaders will have considered how they are addressing this principle's question and are taking steps to embark on a regular programme of reflection, monitoring and evaluation. Practice at this level is likely to be either not fully embedded or consistently applied by all staff, or both.	Schools with embedding practice will fully address this principle's question with well-established work that is routinely monitored and evaluated and showing evidence of impact. School leaders will have fully addressed this principle's question and regularly monitor, review and evaluate their strategies to demonstrate the impact. Practice at this level will be both embedded and consistently applied by all staff.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

1.1 To what extent are all those involved in leadership, governance and Armed Forces support aware of funding and other resources available to support Armed Forces children?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
- The school's current Service Pupil Premium (SPP) strategy and spending plans are available from the school's website. The strategy, shaped through discussions between senior leaders and governors, is aimed at providing emotional and social support for the school's Service children. - Currently, funding is spent on Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) hours, with the postholder a member of a military family who therefore understands first-hand the needs of Service children and the demands placed on working parents in the Forces. This HLTA helpfully has an MA in psychology and leads on pupil pastoral support, overseeing and holding 1:1 mental health and well-being sessions with pupils across the school, including Service children. She also supports other support staff. - The Headteacher acts as the named staff contact for military families, maintaining good links with the local council's Armed Forces Liaison Officer.	
1.2 To what extent do you monitor how dedicated funding is spent?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
- There are some strategies in place for the governing body and senior leadership team to monitor the effectiveness of SPP funding. Whilst not easy to quantify, there is evidence that Service children's access to targeted pastoral support from the HLTA, and from the school's three Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA), supports their social skills, self-esteem and sense of belonging effectively. - One such strategy is the presence of a bear called Medals who is available to offer emotional support for Service children, helping them tell their stories. Medals, and two of his friends in the past, have been taken on exercise or deployment by parents, who then are invited to write a blog or send photos. - Outcomes for the school's Service children cohort are strong. (Also see section 1.5.)	
1.3 To what extent is support informed by evidence and monitored for effectiveness?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
As a result of reviewing the school's provision for Service children using the Thriving Lives Toolkit, the Headteacher has identified a need to monitor the effectiveness of its offer to Armed Forces families more rigorously, basing it on the growing research informed evidence base.	

1.4

To what extent do Armed Forces family voices and Armed Forces representation inform those responsible for leadership, governance and Armed Forces support?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- From time to time, Armed Forces families are invited to share their views on support for their children. Gathering pupil voice feedback, including that of Service children, is routine practice at the school.
- A relatively new member of the governing body is a serving Army officer. It is hoped that this addition to the Board will increase the level of supportive challenge for this group of the school's population.

1.5

To what extent do those responsible for school governance ensure Armed Forces children's outcomes are monitored and appropriate support is delivered?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- There are rigorous procedures in place to monitor Armed Forces children's outcomes as a distinct group and relevant data is collected / collated on their attainment, attendance and wider participation. Most of the school's Service children reach at least age-related expectations at the end of each key stage.
- Furthermore, their attendance compared to that of the school's civilian peers is similar or better. In the past two years, there have been no exclusions of any pupils at the school.

1.6

To what extent do your admissions arrangements take account of Armed Forces families' frequent, mid-term and short notice moves?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- Administrative staff and class teachers have a good awareness of the necessary arrangements for supporting Service children's transitions. They liaise with any incoming pupil's previous school, as well as contacting a departing pupil's new school to provide relevant information to support.
- The 2024-25 school's [Admissions Policy](#) offers some advice specifically for military parents, stating that in allocating places, the Governing Body (as the admissions authority) will 'give priority to children of UK Service Personnel being relocated to the area in advance of their arrival, providing their application is accompanied by an official letter stating a relocation date'.
- Clear systems are in place to make school-to-school transitions as smooth as possible for mobile families. This includes chasing any missing records from an incoming child's previous school and informal contact being made with new children's parents shortly after starting at the school to check all is going well. The headteacher leads on this. All SEND and safeguarding issues are picked up quickly and acted on. When a child leaves St Mary and St John, they remain on the school's roll until confirmation is received that he / she has started at a new school, with Children Missing in Education protocols followed robustly, as required.

SCHOOL LEADER ADVICE

Our intent for our Service pupils matches the aspirations and aims of all pupils in our school. However, many Service pupils face the additional challenge of high levels of family mobility or parental deployment. We provide our Service pupils with pastoral ELSA support, particularly during challenging times, to help mitigate the negative impact that this may have on their learning and personal development.