

CASE STUDY

CONINGSBY ST. MICHAEL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL (4-11)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

Coningsby St. Michael's Church of England Primary School in Lincolnshire is a member of the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust (LAAT). About 90 of its 300 or so children (approximately 30%) are registered as Service children, with their military parents predominantly working at the nearby RAF Coningsby Station, a ten-minutes' walk away. St Michael's shares an Executive Headteacher with a smaller, rural school at Tattershall. Located about 20 miles south-east of Lincoln, RAF Coningsby is one of two Quick Reaction Alert Stations which protect UK airspace. It is home to two frontline, combat-ready squadrons, is the training station for Typhoon pilots and hosts the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Almost 3000 Service Personnel, Civil Servants, and contractors work there.

<https://www.coningsbyprimary.co.uk/>

MORE INFO:

[Children of the Armed Forces | Coningsby St Michael's Church of England Primary School \(coningsbyprimary.co.uk\)](https://www.coningsbyprimary.co.uk/)

This case study details the strong work of the pastoral team, including the school goats that are a highly regarded feature of the school's Forest School provision! 'The support the school provides for service children is a strength. Leaders ensure that they regularly check on these pupils. They communicate with parents and carers who might be abroad, including emailing photographs of their children. Pupils benefit from sharing school experiences, such as sports day, with parents who cannot be there in person. Workshops for 'little troopers' and a 'military kids club' also help support and celebrate these pupils.' (Ofsted report 2022)



<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

2.1 To what extent do you create opportunities for Armed Forces children to meet, and explore experiences together?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
- The school's experienced Learning Mentor, an ex-military wife and mother, runs the school's weekly MKC Heroes after-school club targeted at Service children. The club's staff provide a range of activities the children enjoy from cooking, sports to movie nights. Alongside these, children can talk about their loved ones going away or being away. Children also have access to the RAF 'build a bear' that were donated by the RAF to support with their mental wellbeing. - Literature, such as library books, are available with positive informed stories about Armed Forces lifestyle. These are located in the Burrow, the school's dedicated pastoral room, which is accessible to all children. - Occasionally, shared activities such as 'film nights', Station visits and hosting RAF visitors are held with Service children from the nearby partner school at Tattershall. This provides opportunities for St Michael's Service children to share their experiences with others from elsewhere.	
2.2 To what extent is your pastoral support informed by Armed Forces children's voices?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
- Experienced support staff, mostly with military backgrounds themselves, have a good understanding of the school's Service children's lived experiences. Good links are maintained with the local RAF Community Liaison Officer, who provides updates about postings and developments on the Base. - Regular opportunities to share, capture and act on Service child voice occurs at the weekly MKC Heroes Club sessions. Attendance at the club is high. Children who access the Burrow, also have this opportunity. - Parents know who to contact if they have any concerns. For example, an Armed Forces parent was struggling at home but felt she could contact the Executive Headteacher for support and a recent email from that Serving parent was received to say thank you.	

2.3

To what extent do you have mechanisms to provide tailored support when Armed Forces children need it while ensuring that they are not singled out unnecessarily?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The Burrow is staffed by the school's Pastoral Manager and Learning Mentor. It is a welcoming environment where children can go to have weekly identified interventions including Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) group work, Drawing and Talking therapies and sensory circuits. It is also a safe space for any Service children to have tailored support with 'check ins' when their loved ones are on deployment. Children can also take part in a brain break activities, cosmic yoga, or sensory calming time. The impact of the Burrow is that the children who access it are then able to return to class knowing that they have been able to talk and that they feel settled, so are able to progress in class.
- A visible worry box is situated outside the entrance and is used regularly by children who want some discreet additional support. All children have also created 'a helping hand' so that they know who they can go to in school if they have any concerns. These are displayed in every classroom and around school.
- Additionally, all Service children are aware of, and meet with, the nominated Armed Forces Children's link staff member, the Learning Mentor, when children first arrive in our school, as well as when a need arises. There is a checklist staff complete and contact details are shared with parents too. Parents are reminded about support from school through pastoral drop ins and information sheets.

2.4

To what extent does pastoral support take account of points of stress including deployment / weekending, school moves and caring responsibilities?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- All pastoral and support staff at the school are well informed about Armed Forces families' postings, parental deployments and weekending. Parents are asked to inform the school when they become aware that a parent is to be deployed. The vast majority do.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the potential negative impact of these aspects of Armed Forces lifestyle and are well trained in how best to provide appropriate support. For example, emails are sent to deployed parents whenever possible to keep them up-to-date and a Deployment display is maintained in the Burrow with supporting resources. Parents have a special email and link that they can communicate directly with their children 'live.'
- When pupils arrive at the school, action plans are put in place, including school buddies, introduction to the pastoral team and parents are invited in for a meeting after a couple of weeks to see how the family has settled and to discuss any concerns. Academically children are given time to settle in with regular checks ins from the pastoral team. Early assessments and reference to previous school documentation ensures that there is minimal disruption to pupil learning.
- For departing families, support continues until the school is notified that the children have started at a new school. Transitions visits take place if possible, or virtual visits.

2.5

To what extent do you nurture Armed Forces children's identities, and help them feel understood?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- Opportunities are created for members of the Armed Forces to visit the school to raise awareness of the positive role they play, as well as opportunities for the school to get involved in positive activities linked to the Armed Forces. For example, pupils have visited the Station's Fire Section and Prayer Room; the RAF has donated craft activities; pupils have attended a Remembrance Service on Camp; and the RAF Padre leads Collective Worship once a term.
- In 2023, a Village of the Future STEM Day was led by Squadron Leaders from the RAF Station. Children from EYFS to Year 6 were tasked with designing and costing their own carbon zero villages. Feedback from the STEM co-ordinator at RAF Coningsby was glowing: 'It was a privilege to get to hear all the amazing ideas from all the classes from EYFS through to year 6! I really can't say which was the best because they were all so different, imaginative and well thought out, just a brilliant day of science. I wish we could have more!'
- At St Michael's, there are tangible signs that the school is both proud, and welcoming, of its military connections. As well as some 'military' themed communal displays, visitors to the school website can see information on the school's website. There is also an information sheet available for parents, detailing the role of the learning mentor.

SCHOOL LEADER ADVICE

Good communication is key, especially important during periods of deployment. It is one of the reasons feedback from our RAF parents is so positive.