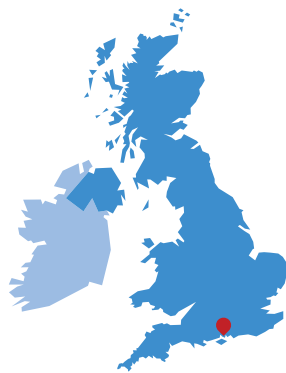


CASE STUDY

ELSON JUNIOR SCHOOL (7-11)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

Elson Junior School is a Local Authority maintained school, situated in Gosport, Hampshire, close to the naval bases at HMS Collingwood and HMS Sultan. There are 306 children on roll, of which 36 (12%) have at least one parent serving in the military, predominantly the Royal Navy, with a few serving in the Army. Mobility is low with most military families settled in the area - the vast majority of Service children "arrive at the school and stay" - with some serving parents travelling long distances to their places of work, for example, in Scotland and Plymouth. Service children at the school are described as "a resilient cohort with a strong work ethic". One member of staff - the Family Link Worker (FLW), who is also an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA), the deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and Mental Health Lead - is responsible for the welfare and pastoral support for Service children.

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

MORE INFO:

<https://elsonjunior.co.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing/elson-heroes-service-club>

This case study describes how school leaders, and in particular the FLW, provide timely and effective pastoral support and guidance for Service children, as well as children of Service veterans and personnel serving in the Merchant Navy, so they are happy and settled in school and have their welfare maximised. The case study highlights how secure and reassuring relationships with Service children, an excellent knowledge of their needs and strong links with their families underpins a whole-school culture within which they thrive and succeed.



<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 runs a regular, weekly Service club – <i>Elson Heroes</i> – that meets every Tuesday lunchtime, "without fail". The club is run by the FLW and provides a forum for Service children to share their experiences and feelings, face to face, build a strong relationship with a trusted adult and build a powerful peer support network. Each week, the children play Circle-Time games and undertake a craft activity linked to their well-being, e.g. courage badges and worry dolls. 80%+ of Service children attend each session. Vitally, the support network is embedded when times of distress arise. - The school is a member of the local Service Pupils Network Cluster. The FLW attends meetings, in part to keep up to date with Service family opportunities within the community, for example, the Coronation Scarecrows and Coronation Celebration held in the summer of 2023. Service children and parents from schools across Gosport have come together for family picnics. - The school signposts Service children, and their families, to opportunities outside normal school hours and events in the community, for example, at the Gosport Community Hub, Aggies.	
2.2 To what extent is your pastoral support informed by Armed Forces children's voices?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
- School staff are trained to recognise and respond to the needs of Service children. The Pupil Premium Manager ensures Service children are identified clearly to staff. Staff training helps staff to identify the potential needs of Service children as a group. The FLW is available to Service children at all times and will often provide daily emotional check-ins with children and follow up with staff, when appropriate. She also attends all transition meetings to handover any information about individual Service children. - By meeting with Service children every week, the FLW gets to know them well and recognise any change in their presentation. When appropriate, she is able to follow-up with individual children and meet with class staff to discuss concerns/worries. - Service children's views are regularly gathered, for example through a <i>Pastoral Passport</i> – used during transition – and as opportunities arise at the weekly <i>Elson Heroes Club</i>. In addition, the FLW gathers the views of Service children through one-to-one mental-health and wellbeing conferencing during weekly whole school Wellbeing Wednesdays and as part of termly wellbeing days.	

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

- All Service children, as part of the whole school approach, take part in Wellbeing Wednesdays and have the potential to be selected for ELSA/wellbeing interventions, if necessary.
- Service children are clear who the Service Lead in school is through assemblies, promotion of the Elson Heroes Club, contact with families, displays and the school website.
- Older Elson Heroes take on ambassador/leadership roles, welcoming new Service children and helping with games and activities.
- Strong relationships with Service parents help lines of communication remain open so that school staff can respond to parental concerns when they arise.

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

- Service children whose parents are deployed or commuting/weekending are given opportunities to share their experiences with each other and in one-to-ones with trusted adults.
- Service children read books together and with trusted adults, such as [The Time Rabbit](#) and [The Time Penguin](#), which help to build understanding and resilience around separation. The school keeps a supply of these books and accompanying soft toys to give to children, when needed, who can share them with their parents and keep the small toy with them in school if they wish.
- The school actively encourages parents to share the work patterns of the serving parent.
- The school works with parents to develop helpful strategies such as giving their child a transitional object or each making a photo book, when they're away.
- The school signposts parents to access support from organisations such as the Naval Families Federation (NFF) and charities.
- The school holds regular coffee-mornings for Service parents. New families are welcomed into the school community on these occasions.
- In an out-going school move, Elson Heroes hold a celebration for a Service child and gives them a card and memento of their time at the school. The FLW makes contact with a child's new school to pass on information and receive information about Service Club offers to pass on to the child and family. After a few weeks, Elson Heroes send a [postcard](#) to the child hoping that they're enjoying their new school and new Service Club.
- The FLW meets with a new Service child on their pre-visit. An Elson Heroes ambassador tells them about the Service Club and collects them for their first session.
- Elson Heroes send postcards each summer to children joining from the linked infant school and new children join the Club for a transition session before joining the school.

2.5

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

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The school has an embedded collaboration with [FirstLight Trust](#) veterans. This intergenerational project has benefited the wellbeing of veterans and children alike. Service children take part in joint activities such as Bingo and Biscuits, make Christmas decorations and visit each other's allotments.
- The school has nurtured a partnership with HMS Collingwood. Base personnel come in and run [STEM activities](#) for a mix of Service and non-Service children.
- The school celebrates Month of the Military Child in April as a whole school. Wellbeing Wednesdays and assemblies during the month have a Service theme, which is agreed with the Elson Heroes.
- The school celebrates Armed Forces Day with an [Armed Forces Parade](#) around the school grounds. All children who belong to a club/organisation with a uniform - such as cadets, cubs and brownies - are allowed to wear their uniform to school. The FirstLight veterans are invited in for afternoon tea and watch the parade. The children then have an opportunity to meet the veterans.
- Elson Heroes lead the annual [Remembrance Assembly](#). Every child in the school makes a poppy and these are displayed in the school entrance/hall. Elson Heroes invite their parents, and the FirstLight veterans, to join them for the assembly.
- Elson Heroes have a display in reception to reflect and celebrate the school's Forces connections.

SCHOOL LEADER ADVICE

We're there all the time. We know all Service children extremely well. We know their families, and their circumstances, well. We've established a climate in school within which Service children know they can approach trusted adults at any time, and in any context, and be heard. This is crucial, particularly in times of need. All schools must create this kind of climate.