

CASE STUDY

LEEMING RAF COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL (4-11)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

Leeming RAF Community Primary School is Local Authority maintained and located 'behind the wire' at an RAF station in North Yorkshire. The Station trains, delivers and supports UK and overseas Expeditionary Air Operations. At the time of writing, the school had approximately 160 children on roll, but this typically ranges between 150 to 250 depending on the number of personnel on the station. The proportion of pupils with Special Education Needs and / or Disabilities is high (24%), and pupil mobility rates are exceptionally high. Staff place high priority on the pastoral, personal, social and emotional development of pupils, alongside providing essential academic challenge and support tailored to a highly mobile population.

<http://www.leeming-raf.n-yorks.sch.uk/>

This case study outlines the successful approaches the staff team take to ensure wellbeing is supported. 'Pastoral care is paramount to all. Thoughtful induction procedures are firmly established to support pupils and their families, particularly during times of transition or in periods of separation caused by parents' deployment in other parts of the country or overseas. This contributes enormously to the very settled atmosphere in the school and the friendly and welcoming pupils.' (Ofsted inspection report 2019)



<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 <i>To what extent do you create opportunities for Armed Forces children to meet, and explore experiences together?</i> - As virtually all pupils are members of military families, they can explore and discuss their lived experiences with others who understand whenever they want. In addition, a dedicated pastoral support team provides regular opportunities to access one-to-one and group support. For example, pastoral staff and senior leaders run an hour-long lunchtime drop-in club twice a week in a dedicated room called The Haven. At this, children can have staff support, play games, do therapeutic activities or just 'chill'. - There are other tried-and-tested peer support systems that are embedded in the school's work, such as buddies for new arrivals, pupil Playground Leaders and CHIPs (Children Helping in Problem Solving). - The school is a committed supporter of any cross-school military-linked activities that might become available, such as an annual Remembrance Service held at Ripon Cathedral each November and an Armed Forces Day event run by Catterick Garrison staff each June. This gives RAF pupils the opportunity to meet with Service children from other schools.	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
2.2 <i>To what extent is your pastoral support informed by Armed Forces children's voices?</i> - Recent changes have been made to monitoring processes to determine what proportion of staff pastoral time is spent on military-lifestyle specific issues, such as work-related parental separation, compared to non-military specific, e.g., linked to special educational needs. This informs staff deployment. - Part of the school's staff recruitment process includes exploring prospective employees' Armed Forces awareness. For example, Armed Forces related questions are included during interviews, having drop-fed key pieces of information to support the answering of these pre-interview. This helps recruit staff at all levels who have strong emotional intelligence, since this is deemed important if staff are to provide empathetic pastoral support. At induction, bespoke professional development is provided. - A variety of systems are in place to hear Service children's voices. These influence and inform school practices and procedures. For example, all those who have a parent working away from home have their names added to a display board outside each classroom. This allows others, staff and pupils, to be aware. However, following feedback from children, inclusion of names is now up to the individual child.	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING

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?

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DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The school has recently moved away from having a single dedicated 'named' Service Children's Champion staff member, as this was presenting difficulties in succession planning. Instead, a distributed model is now in place with strong evidence of impact: four support staff members have dedicated time for supporting the welfare needs of the pupils, between them working across all the school's phases. Three are Service spouses and one is ex-military - all have excellent understanding of the parents' lived experiences, and have accessed enhanced mental health training (Compass). This team approach allows immediate, responsive and tailored support in a discrete way. For example, no pupil now needs to go to another area of school to receive support from a less familiar face, as was the case before.
- These four support staff act as points of contact for families in each phase of the school at drop-off time and undertake emotional 'check-ins' with their allocated classes for the first 30 minutes or so of each morning. Children are also encouraged to request time with them if they feel they need it.
- As well as operating an open-door offer for pupils to access the lunchtime [Haven club](#), teachers may also discreetly issue Haven Passes for occasional attendance for those who might benefit at times.

2.4

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

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- School leaders have created a bespoke reporting system embedded within its electronic CPOMs safeguarding system for Service-related issues, with auto alerts set up for pastoral staff whenever an entry is made in this area. This ensures immediate dissemination of information from a variety of sources and a quick response.
- Specific and indirect intelligence is gathered about military postings and forthcoming deployments. Parents typically notify school of these, but even where they do not, staff use other sources of data to find out this information and then put support in place (e.g., reviewing social media posts and regular contact with commanding officers).
- Any child who is new to the school, and any who is about to leave at a non-standard time, is offered a 1:1 session from the pastoral team to support them. When needed, some access more than one. Booklets for pupils to complete, and a range of support resources, are used to ensure that these sessions are valuable.
- Character education is prioritised at the school through building RESPECT skills (Resilience, Empathy, Self-Awareness, Positivity, Excellence, Communication and Teamwork). These are core to work across the curriculum and develop coping skills.

2.5

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

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- Regular opportunities are taken to build positive narratives of the Armed Forces. For example, RAF 100 was celebrated by the whole school in 2018, and themed weeks are organised to mark special events (such as station's anniversaries and a recent visit from the Duchess of Cornwall).
- In recent years, pupils have attended station parades and receptions for dignitaries. The Year 6 leavers' event is run as a Passing Out Parade, inclusive of parental Service headdress, accompanied by a flyover.
- Leaders ensure that there is good engagement with station activities and close partnership working, often facilitated by the many military-connected governors on the Board. For example, pupils designed all the welfare signage currently used on the station.
- The geography curriculum includes specific units and selections of localities relating to RAF Bases, whilst the history curriculum includes studies of RAF history to nurture children's sense of belonging.

SCHOOL LEADER ADVICE

We have found that our most impactful work supporting wellbeing has come from a careful balance of proactive and responsive pastoral work. There is no specific ratio for this; at times we need to shift the bias towards responding to the immediate needs of pupils, at others it's about getting ahead of issues before they present. Of course, high quality, trusting relationships underpin this work. If children do not feel at ease with an individual, they simply won't be emotionally available to receive support for their wellbeing – so ensuring that the pastoral team takes time to build those relationships in advance of delivering this input is vital.