

CASE STUDY

ST NICHOLAS PRIMARY SCHOOL (4-11)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Nicholas CE Primary is situated in the village of Cottesmore in Rutland, England's smallest county. Nearby Kendrew Barracks is home to both the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Royal Anglians, two large infantry regiments, one of which relocated from Cyprus over the summer of 2023. The school belongs to the Rutland Learning Trust, a small Multi Academy Trust of 12 local schools. At the time of writing, there were 128 pupils on roll, with about 30% registered as Armed Forces children. The school was last inspected in January 2023, with the report stating that, 'Service children are well supported. Staff at the school help pupils prepare for a parent's deployment as they know this can cause some unrest at times.'

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

MORE INFO:

<https://www.stnicholasprimary.co.uk/hms-heroes/>

This case study describes some of the ways this small primary school ensures its Armed Forces achieve well, with rigour and robust practices at the heart of leaders' approach. Achievement is considered in its widest sense, with the school achieving particularly impressive outcomes in children's attendance rates.



<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

3.1 To what extent do you assess on entry and monitor Armed Forces children's achievement, learning gaps and preferences, support needs and interests and skills?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
- Shortly after joining the school, one-to-one sessions are held with pupils, to find out about their interests, skills, and recent learning, along with any curriculum discontinuity or duplication. There are plans to extend this by developing a 'passport' to record the information gleaned in discussions with incoming pupils and their parents. - Once they have settled in, children are assessed using standardised tests. This enables staff to quickly identify gaps in learning. National Test Style Standardised Assessments (NTS), published by Rising Stars, are used for reading, mathematics and grammar. For writing, the school uses a Trust-wide process using an assessment framework to identify gaps. - Any incoming child's progress in key learning is carefully monitored during the first term after joining, with speedy interventions put in place where necessary. These include TT Rockstars for mathematical recall skills, Precision Spelling, NESSY for literacy support and Read Write Inc for phonics. Parents / carers are always kept fully informed.	
3.2 To what extent do you address gaps and mitigate curriculum and qualification discontinuity?	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
- Teachers use ongoing assessments in all curriculum subjects, putting in place bespoke interventions to plug any identified learning gaps. Interventions and support are part of a rigorous and systematic process. It is class teachers who usually deliver the interventions during 20-minute slots each day. Innovative timetabling allows this to be done, and the SENCO oversees it, ensuring that there are pre- and post-intervention assessments undertaken to review impact. Progress is tracked carefully. - Typically, Service children perform better than non-service children at St Nicholas CE Primary.	

3.3 To what extent do you track and regularly review Armed Forces children's outcomes and progress, and tailor support in response?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The school uses a Trust-wide, bespoke tracking system linked to Integris, its management information system. Summative assessments are added twice a year for reading, writing and mathematics, with the data interrogated during Pupil Progress Meetings with the headteacher. Teachers also add some of their ongoing formative assessment to the system to help inform lesson planning.
- Where children are not on track to achieve personal ambitious targets, leaders ensure that intervention and additional support is put in place **swiftly**, which is rigorously evaluated.
- At a cohort level, the school's Armed Forces children's performance is compared to both national averages and to the outcomes achieved by the school's civilian, **non-disadvantaged** cohorts. Service children's attainment usually compares favourably, although small cohorts with a high proportion of children with additional needs can skew figures. For example, at the end of 2023, 80% of the school's Armed forces early years children reached a 'good level of development' (compared to the National Average of 67%); 83% of its Year 1 Service children passed the phonics screening check (compared to 80% nationally); and 66% of the military Year 6 cohort reached age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics combined (compared to the National Average of 59%).
- The school's Armed Forces cohort is also tracked for performance in a range of wider outcomes, including attendance, behaviour, and mental health and wellbeing. Attendance is a particular strength (see table on page 4) with swift intervention in place and an investment in whole staff training on supporting anxiety-related non-attendance. For example, a recently arrived Service child was out of school for just a couple of days in his first few weeks before school staff contacted the parents and arranged for a bespoke package of support to be provided. His attendance improved quickly. School staff draw on the Local Authority's School Support Partnership, the NHS mental health nurse as well as their in-house systems. Last year, the attendance of the school's 39 Armed Forces children was just over 98%.

3.4 To what extent do you address Armed Forces children's additional learning support needs?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The school has a strong relationship with Rutland County Council and leaders apply for Higher Needs Funding swiftly if children arrive with SEN that are not being met. Quality First Teaching is prioritised through training so that most children's needs are met with the school's universal offer.
- To strengthen this offer, and following a successful pilot, staff are redesigning their classrooms to be more therapeutic to support children with ADHD and sensory processing challenges, as these barriers are being seen increasingly within the school's Armed Forces children.
- For incoming Armed Forces children with additional learning needs, every endeavour is made to establish contact with the sending school to discuss the needs and levels of support the child had been receiving. Where possible, staff then provide the same level of support, continuing any individualised learning plans. Additional needs assessments are used speedily where there are concerns and referrals are made to external agencies as required.
- When an Armed Forces child with additional learning needs leaves St Nicholas, detailed records are passed on to the receiving school in **advance** of the child's departure, whenever the receiving school is known. This information is also shared with parents / carers.

3.6

To what extent do you provide tailored careers and decision-making support for Armed Forces children?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The school's long-term curriculum plans include some focus on raising pupils' aspirations. For example, a unit of work in Year 5 involves a visit from a doctor who works in England leading a team of conservationists in Sumatra. Through such units, aspirations are raised and pupils gain a better understanding of potential careers that they may wish to pursue

SCHOOL LEADER ADVICE

As soon as children arrive at St Nicholas, they feel part of our team. We quickly find out what motivates them, and we encourage them to further pursue their passions and interests, as well as identifying, what support they require to achieve their potential in all aspects of school life. Without delay, we liaise with our local offer to make sure our children's needs are met. Our pastoral support offer has a tiered approach with in-house systems and close links with Rutland County Council and the NHS school nurse team. This ensures that our children's wellbeing is prioritised and everyone feels well supported and cared for. This allows our children to then focus on their learning and show resilience when faced with challenges in the classroom.

SERVICE CHILDREN AT ST NICHOLAS HAVE EXTREMELY HIGH ATTENDANCE RATES.

ATTENDANCE 2021/22	TOTAL ATTENDANCE %
Service pupils	94.69
Non-Service pupils	94.56

ATTENDANCE 2022/23	TOTAL ATTENDANCE %
Service pupils	98.02
Non-Service pupils	97.24

ATTENDANCE 2023/24 (Aut)	TOTAL ATTENDANCE %
Service pupils	98.02
Non-Service pupils	97.68