

CASE STUDY

BALKSBURY INFANT JUNIOR FEDERATION (4-11)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Balksbury Federation of Infant and Junior Schools is maintained by Hampshire County Council and situated on the outskirts of Andover, two miles from Army HQ. There are currently 642 pupils on roll of which 30 – or just under 5% - have parents serving in the military, all at the local Army HQ base. Mobility is low with the vast majority of Service children “arriving at the school and staying” due to the nature of deployment of their serving parents. One member of staff – the Federation Deputy Headteacher and Pupil Premium Lead (DHT) - has specific strategic responsibility for Service children whilst day-to-day operational support is provided by two Community Support Leads (CSLs) as part of their wider support for identified groups of pupils. The Federation works as one school – effectively a primary – with parity of provision across both organisations.

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

MORE INFO:

<https://www.balksburyfederation.co.uk/balksbury-service-families>

The Balksbury Federation of Infant and Junior Schools has a very impressive transitional package of support in place, with dedicated pastoral and welfare support, for Service children. Senior leaders are knowledgeable about the needs of Service children and ensure that all staff in the school are understanding of their needs, recognising the importance of effective transition in and out. Highly effective processes underpin transition. This case study highlights how school leaders have used Principle 4 to develop a whole-school culture within which Service children are provided with support and reassurance throughout the transition process.



<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

4.1

To what extent does your school identify Armed Forces children?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The administrative team asks all admission enquiries who request a place/tour if a parent is a member of the Armed Forces. (See [Information for Staff](#)). If a parent is a member of the Armed Forces, the administrative team informs the DHT who arranges a tour of the two schools with parents.
- For Service children joining the Federation with a new Year R cohort, the *Additional Information* form is included in the admission pack, asking parents to indicate if they are an Armed Forces family.
- The leadership team sends School App messages signposting parents to the [Service Families](#) page on the school website and asking them to self-identify if they have not already done so.
- [Across the Playground](#), the fortnightly Federation newsletter for parents, regularly has a Forces page which also asks parents to self-identify if they have not already done so.

4.2

To what extent do you work with outgoing and incoming Armed Forces families through the long transition process?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The Leadership Team sends a welcome email to a new family, prior to transition, signposting parents to key information on the school's website such as the Service Families page and the Year Group Page.
- A full tour of the school is provided for the family by the DHT, with introductions to key staff and the new child's classmates. One of the CSLs introduces herself on the first day, ensuring that the family knows that she, the other CSL and DHT are their main points of contact. Following the tour, one of the CSLs contacts the parents to discuss their individual child's transition and to tailor support.
- Welcome sessions are offered to all Service children joining the Federation.
- The CSLs highlight support available to parents, such as the Ministry of Defence's Wraparound Childcare scheme to pay for the [Drop Off and/or Pick Up Club](#) and Coffee, Cake and Chat Mornings.
- The DHT discusses transition with the new class teacher and signposts him/her to *Successful Transition for Forces Children* within the *Information for Staff* document.
- When any Service child with additional needs joins the Federation, the SENDCo will arrange a meeting with parents to discuss needs and provision.
- When the Federation is notified that a Service child is transferring to a new school, parents complete a leavers' form indicating the school they are moving to and the confirmed start date; the Leadership Team and CSLs are informed; parents are contacted by the CSLs to discuss support for the transition process; the DHT informs the teaching team; the class teacher completes a [Forces Passport](#) to be sent to the child's new school; the teaching team organises a 'keepsake' tailored to the child, e.g. a Wordle, a card, a poem a video; the CSLs, DHT and teaching team work together to provide support for the child

4.3

To what extent do you welcome Armed Forces families, both before and after their moves, and ensure a positive experience from the first day?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- On transition, the CSLs introduce themselves to new Service children, and their families, and talk about the school-based provision available.
- A new Service child will attend their first *Forces Club* at the earliest opportunity and meet other children in the Federation's Armed Forces community.
- The Service child will complete their *PP Child Profile* page and the information shared will be used by the teaching team to tailor provision.
- The CSLs offer expert support and advice for serving parents, for example, on attendance, emotional school-based avoidance, behaviour, emotion, anxiety and bereavement.
- An example of other on-going support, particularly for military personnel who are deployed and in different time zones, is the opportunity for those parents to connect with their children via video link during the school day, at a time convenient to them.
- The Federation is able to accept childcare vouchers and therefore Service families can use the Ministry of Defence's Wraparound Childcare scheme to pay for the *Drop Off and Pick Up Club*.

4.4

To what extent do you work with Armed Forces children's previous or future schools to transfer records and find out about learning, wellbeing, achievements, interests, skills and their family context?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- Once a start date is confirmed, the administrative team emails the previous school requesting transfer of records – including details of any additional support needs, safeguarding concerns and contact details of other professionals involved with the family - and requests the class teacher to complete the school's own *Forces Passport*.
- As soon as the *Forces Passport* is completed and received – usually in timely fashion – the administrative team shares this with the new class teacher, class-based support staff, DHT and CSLs.
- The Federation uses information in the *Forces Passport* - on talents, interests, emotional and social development, friendships and voice of the child - to identify *buddies* for the child. The school's *buddy system* is well-established.
- If feasible, *buddies* write/draw a welcome letter for the administrative team to scan and email to parents in advance of the child starting or as soon as possible afterwards.

4.5

To what extent do you minimise discontinuity in additional support, for example by minimising re-assessment of needs?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- For new Service children with identified needs, e.g. SEND or EAL, the SENDCo will review the details and current provision detailed in the *Forces Passport* so that needs can be met immediately on joining. Where possible, the school ensures continuity of specialist services that a child received previously (e.g., speech and language, EAL), or makes speedy referrals when additional external support is needed.
- The Federation uses information in the *History of Education* section of the *Forces Passport* to plan for provision in non-core subjects.
- The Federation uses information in the *Emotional Response to Moving School* and *Voice of the Child* sections of the *Forces Passport* to help plan emotional support. This is discussed with the CSLs.

4.6

To what extent do you help Armed Forces children build new and maintain existing relationships?

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- In excess of 20 Service children regularly attend the weekly lunchtime *Forces Club* to meet other children in the Federation's Armed Forces community. The *Club* runs for 45-50 minutes during which the children eat their lunch with their peers, play games and undertake activities.
- Support is provided to enable Service children to access after school enrichment clubs.
- Termly Pupil Premium Pupil Progress Meetings are held between the DHT and class teachers. The academic, social and emotional development and behaviours of each Service child is discussed in depth alongside the support that is in place.
- The emotional wellbeing of Service children is monitored closely by the CSLs and teaching teams.
- Service children receive a wealth of pastoral support including but not limited to: - ELSA with a CSL or member of the SEND Team, video time with a deployed parent, 'Friendship Clubs', LSA 'catch ups' and one-to-one sessions with one of the CSLs.

SCHOOL LEADER ADVICE

"It is essential that a school has robust systems and processes for ensuring that any Service child transferring into or out is given the best possible support and that all staff understand their role in the process."