

CASE STUDY

SANDLINGS PRIMARY (4-12)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

Sandlings Primary is situated in the heart of the parish of Sutton Heath in Suffolk in an area of outstanding natural beauty, close to forests, beaches and historical monuments, including the world-famous Sutton Hoo. The school is located on Rock Barracks, a Military of Defence Base home to the 23 and 28 Engineer Regiments. Most of the school's Armed Forces parents work at the Base and 70% of the school's children come from these families. The school has very strong relationships with its local military personnel.

<https://www.sandlingsprimary.co.uk/suffolk/primary/sandlings>

This case study describes how Sandlings Primary School offers support through processes such as regular communication, welcoming rituals and integration activities throughout the transition process. It also details how the school uses Service Pupil Premium to offer THRIVE sessions and Life Skills activities to foster a sense of belonging.



<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? - When prospective families first contact the school, and when new families visit, they are asked if they are linked to the Armed Forces. This information is then confirmed in a dedicated Armed Forces section on the school's admissions form. - Families are regularly reminded, via school newsletters and informal events, how important it is to self-identify. - Unit and rank information is also collected, as this helps contact parents quickly on camp in emergency situations.	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING
4.2 To what extent do you work with outgoing and incoming Armed Forces families through the long transition process? - From the first point of contact with the school's office manager, the transition process begins, whether it be in or out; examples of support include providing information on local wrap-around childcare, ordering school uniforms and signposting links on the school's website (e.g. for the local authority admissions pages). - Regular contact is maintained to check moving schedules and arrival dates as these can often change and start dates are amended accordingly. - Parents are enrolled onto <i>Class Dojo</i>, the school's online messaging platform, before they start, so that parents and children can keep up to date with information, engage with the new class teacher and get a good "sense" of the school even before they officially start. - Leavers are also kept on <i>Class Dojo</i> for a couple of weeks so parents can tell the school (and post pictures) how well departed children have settled into their new schools. - The school has a well-developed set of welcoming and farewell rituals (see below). - Families are aware of who their named point of contact is and how to communicate with her.	EMERGING DEVELOPING EMBEDDING

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

- The whole school ethos was carefully considered with Service children in mind, "We are unique and nurturing where everyone belongs and thrives". Establishing a sense of belonging is core to the school's practice in ensuring children settle well into the school community.
- The school has devised a transition checklist to ensure that everything possible is done to support children and families joining the school - its "new child protocol". This checklist includes ensuring a buddy is in place, that a locker is allocated and books provided. Packs are made up and are always ready for what children will need at the start of every term, ready for in-year admissions.
- Meetings with parents are arranged, as are 1:1 meetings between teachers and children to get to know them and to discuss previous learning, hobbies, skills, talents and worries.
- A welcoming email is sent to all new parents with useful information and links. They will have already joined the school's communication platform Class Dojo before admission.
- The school has a checklist of items to be discussed with parents in the first week after admission e.g. the school day, curriculum, homework, PTA, leave of absence forms, uniform and clubs.
- On arrival, every child makes a feather to add to the school's Welcoming Wings display and their photo with the wings is added to the display.
- In assembly, children are welcomed with the school song and are given the school teddy bear which wears the school motto and other children explain what it all means.

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

- After admission, the class teacher contacts the previous school to gather more information about the child and family.
- After leaving, contact is made with the new school to ensure the child has been admitted and then arrangements are made for transferring records and other important information.
- Phone calls are made to previous or new schools for **every** child with a safeguarding folder.
- Where appropriate, contact is made with other professionals previously involved with the family.
- Where possible, contact is maintained with previous and receiving schools throughout the whole transition process.

4.5

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

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- Admission arrangements ensure the school knows in advance about children on the SEND register and there is direct communication with SENCOs in the new or previous schools for information.
- School staff are familiar with children's previous learning experiences and assessments to ensure continuity of provision whenever possible.

4.6

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

EMERGING
DEVELOPING
EMBEDDING

- The school has a buddy system for new children to help guide them through the first week.
- The buddies know their role is to help newcomers appreciate that all children are unique and nurturing and that developing a sense of belonging is important.
- In time, the new children become well-integrated and then they become buddies for the next new children.
- The school's Service Pupil Premium is used to offer THRIVE sessions to support friendship and transition groups and for lunchtime sports clubs to facilitate team games.
- Brothers and sisters are always put in the same house team.
- The Premium is also used to run half-termly Life Skills activities to foster a sense of belonging. The sessions mix the whole school into mixed-age groups so that everyone gets to know everyone else. Activities include forest schools, cooking, gardening and team building.
- On occasion, due to the timing of moves, children attend their previous schools' residential so as not to miss out.

SCHOOL LEADER ADVICE

1. Devise a checklist of everything that needs to be done to help the child and family settle in.
2. Meet with the new family in the first week.
3. Create some welcoming and farewell rituals.
4. Find time to talk to children's previous schools to glean as much information as possible and call new schools to share information with them.