

# How schools secure the progress of children from the armed forces families

## Good practice guidance

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*The children in the photographs may or may not have a parent in the armed forces.*

## A. Introduction

*'As an RAF family we feel the school is very understanding of our way of life. When my husband is deployed to Afghanistan for four months I know I have the school's support with any changes my child may go through. They understand the ups and downs of military life'. (Parent)*

This is the report of a small-scale study undertaken by a team of DfE school standards advisers. This study is intended to capture the good practice of the schools visited and to inform the Government's response to the report *The Nation's Commitment: Cross - Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans* (July 2008). Evidence has been drawn from visits to 21 schools, 11 primary and 10 secondary, each having a significant proportion of children from armed forces' families. The methodology used and a list of the schools visited is included in Annex 1.

The purpose of the school visits was to draw on the schools' experiences, to discuss the issues they were facing and to collect examples of effective practice. Therefore whilst the report includes extensive interviews with the parents of many of the children we talked to, the investigation did not incorporate formal interviews with key Armed Forces personnel with responsibility for liaison with the schools. As such the report reflects principally the views expressed by staff from the schools, the pupils and their parents.

A recent report commissioned by The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund states:

*'We have seen in the Charity's history that the 'cracks in the path' which can influence children can be psychological, emotional, educational, physical and/or social in nature.'*

*The Overlooked Casualties of Conflict* (November 2009)

This report concentrates essentially on educational influences but extends into the other related factors where the evidence indicated that these were significantly influencing the practice in the schools visited.

Section B provides some of the characteristics of the children from armed forces families and so sets the context in which the schools visited are working.

Section C illustrates the schools' effective practice in seven different aspects of their work which are seen as being particularly important in ensuring the

progress of children from armed forces families. This section also includes some further considerations which would assist schools in their work.

It is hoped that this effective practice study will not only support schools with large numbers of armed forces children but also those with very small numbers. In such schools the children from armed forces families may have a very different experience to that of many of the children they go to school with. Similarly the staff in these schools may not be sensitised to the impact this experience may have on the pupils' learning and subsequent progress.

*'The other children here understand how we feel. They know what it is like to arrive at a new school. (Year 3 pupil)*

*'This school is really aware of the needs of service children. They understand how children may be affected when the boats leave and they are ready to support.'* (Parent)



### **Note**

Currently there are no totally comprehensive statistics on children who have parents in the armed forces. The service children's flag on the school census is only two years old and may not yet be particularly reliable. In addition, it is not possible to distinguish between children with parents in the different services.

## B. Setting the context

Children from armed forces families may be distinctive from other groups of children in a number of ways. These include:

- **Mobility** The children are more likely than their peers to attend a number of different schools as they progress through the primary and secondary years<sup>1</sup>.

*'It's daunting enough when you move from one school to another without having to do it 5 times.'* (Year 6 pupil)

*'Moving schools has not helped me with literacy – I seem to miss vital parts.'* (Year 6 pupil)

*'I have done the Romans three times now and I don't mean to be rude but it is so boring. I have to work really hard to learn new things'* (Year 6 pupil)

- **Social and emotional** Children may experience stress or greater social and emotional pressures than their peers. One parent may be away from home for long periods of time and may be serving in a war zone.

*'It scares me when he goes to those dangerous places because you never know what will happen... I go into a daydream the whole time he is gone - I can't concentrate at school so don't learn anything and then when he comes back I have a big gap.'* (Year 6 pupil)

- **Attendance** The children may have lower attendance rates than their peers. Parents often request the child's compassionate leave from school before or after a posting.
- **Parental involvement** Parents may be reticent about taking on a long-term commitment to a school, such as taking a role as governor or on a Parent Teachers Association (PTA), simply because they expect to have to move.

However, the overall picture is far from gloomy. What is clear is that **many children from armed forces families do very well at school** and there is evidence that overall they perform better than average (see Annex 1). In addition, by virtue of the mobility of their experience in moving between schools, many of them **become very adaptable and integrate readily into new circumstances**. These are important attributes that will help them

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence from this study indicates that there may be differences between the armed forces in the extent of this mobility.

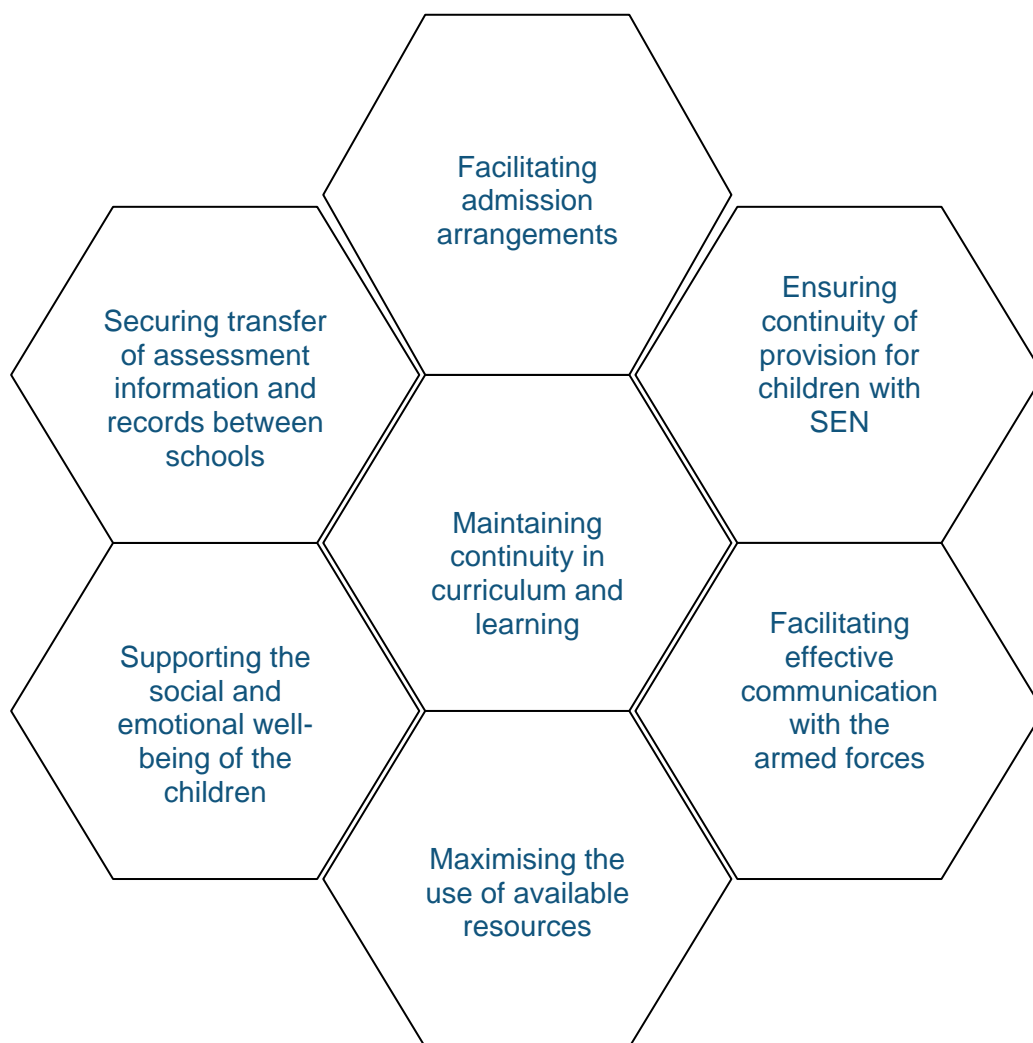
throughout their lives.

*'The pluses are that at least they have the opportunity to develop good interpersonal skills from an early age because they are constantly having to go through saying 'goodbye' and reintegrating to a new community.'* (Parent)



## C. Successful practice

The evidence obtained from the schools visits identified seven main features of successful practice in maximising the progress of children from armed forces families. These are represented below:



In describing successful practice the following structure is used:

<b>Why this is important</b>	the rationale for the action schools take
<b>What good schools do</b>	examples of effective practice
<b>Further consideration</b>	possible further support for schools

## C1 Facilitating admission arrangements

### Why this is important

Some armed forces children move from school to school relatively frequently. In addition, the change of school can occur at almost any time during the academic year. Admissions procedures often dictate that a school place cannot be offered unless the family have a residential post code. As a result of this, even where parents are aware of postings in good time, arranging the school placement can often be at the last minute, in some cases after the family have moved to the new area.

### What good schools do

To ensure that admissions arrangements go smoothly these schools:

- warmly welcome service families from the first contact they make with the school;
- build flexibility into the structure and organisation of their classes and option groups on the assumption that there will be pupil mobility during the year;
- are well versed in addressing the particular needs of children of armed forces families and so have well-defined admission systems and structures in place and well trained staff to support the administrative process;
- respond quickly on first contact even if the parents don't yet have an exact post code;
- actively liaise with armed forces personnel and the local authority to ensure that there are no breakdowns in communication.

*I was pleased with the contact I had with the school before we moved. They sent me information and rang me. The communication was good.'* (Parent of Year 4 & Year 6 children)

*'All new arrivals are automatically admitted as soon as they arrive. This happens before formal approval is received from the LA!'* (Headteacher)

*'The school were willing to allow my daughter to take part in the GCSE options process even though we didn't have an address. Otherwise she would have ended up with all the options no one else wanted.'* (Parent)

### Further consideration

Evidence from the parents interviewed indicated that the welcome extended to armed forces' families at a new school, and transfer arrangement, are unduly variable. Indeed, in schools where admission of children from armed

forces' families is a comparative rarity the process can be extremely difficult and very slow.

Schools would be further supported in this work if:

- A code of practice for school transfers and admissions as a result of armed forces deployment could be developed to inform local arrangements.

**The Wavell School** has developed a clear induction programme for new entrants and this is managed by the Assistant Headteacher who is also the Induction Manager. The programme always runs on Tuesdays and Wednesdays so all staff are familiar with it and know what to expect on those days. The programme, which includes a tour of the school, assignment of a buddy, meetings with key staff and some testing, is designed to enable the school to find out as much about the pupil as possible before they are placed in new groups. The pupil's progress is reviewed after 4 weeks and the parents are sent a letter to give them an update on how things are going. When options groups are planned each year spaces are kept to allow for the new admissions to join and the deployment of support staff is planned to include some contingency time to work with new pupils who may need additional support to help them catch up with work on a new topic or syllabus.



## **C2 Securing transfer of assessment information and records between schools**

### **Why this is important**

Without high quality information about the attainment and progress of the pupil at their previous school, it is very difficult for the receiving school to quickly meet the pupil's needs. A range of information is needed to ensure continuity: in primary schools in the main this relates to reading, writing and mathematics and in the secondary school to the full range of subjects being studied and the specifications being followed (see section C4); and any information on a child's special education need (see also section C3).

### **What good schools do**

To ensure the transfer of information and records goes smoothly good schools:

- Ensure transfer records and procedures received into the school or being sent on to a new school are up to date and of a high standard. In primary schools, for example, the class teacher typically completes a transition form, collates examples of the pupil's learning, completes a 'Moving School' book and liaises directly with the receiving school.
- Collaborate with other schools to improve information transfer and develop corporate protocols and guidance. They add detail to the Common Transfer Form (CTF) or devise a common 'e-record' for transfers which show individual progress in a form more useful to heads and class teachers. This form of collaboration is common within partnerships and federations of schools and is often facilitated by the local authority.
- Give priority to supporting children whose close friend has left.
- Relentlessly chase up information on new pupils, even though this can take a significant amount of time and resources.
- Encourage new pupils to bring work from their previous school and use this to judge early progress and to form the basis of discussions with the children and their parents. This interest in what the pupils have done previously is particularly reassuring for the pupil and also for his or her parents.
- Quickly carry out their own assessments of new pupils when information is not available to establish baselines and determine learning priorities. This early assessment is handled sensitively to ensure that the pupils don't see it as a very stressful start to the new school. So, for example, some of the assessments are undertaken in normal lessons.
- Where gaps in knowledge and understanding are identified 'catch up' or intervention programmes are organised immediately, making use of flexibility that is deliberately built into the staffing structure.
- Have high expectations and aim to accelerate progress if it looks slow.

*'Induction begins as soon as a family makes contact with the school. Liaison takes place by phone, email or face to face and where possible families are invited to visit the school for a tour to meet teachers and key staff.'*

(Headteacher)

*'We believe these children should make more progress. If they have moved a lot the data can mask what they are capable of.'* (Headteacher)

*'The information here is excellent. The website is good. They've done nothing but support me; everyone from the receptionist through to the headteacher. If your child is OK you have peace of mind and you can deal with all the other issues going on at home.'* (Parent)

*'There is a thorough 2-day induction programme for all new entrants. This includes a tour of the school, meetings with key people, some testing and the assignment of a buddy. Progress is reviewed after 4 weeks and all teachers complete a report which is collated by the Head of Year, who then sends a letter to parents to update them on their child's induction and follows it up with a phone call.'* (Headteacher)

*'They asked my son to talk about his last school. He enjoyed telling the class about the things he'd done. It helped him to make friends.'* (Parent)

*'Often these children are very outgoing and want to be involved. I have a 1:1 chat with them to find out more about their interests and then I will suggest activities and clubs that they might want to go to.'* (Director of Year 9)

### **Further consideration**

Evidence obtained on the school visits suggests that often it proves very difficult and demanding for the receiving school to obtain the pupil transfer information it requires. Processes for information transfer are variable and can be unreliable. Sometimes 'packages' are handed to parents to deliver; some information is posted; sometimes information is sent electronically – each with varying degrees of effectiveness depending upon circumstances.

The information once received can be of questionable quality and usefulness. National Curriculum test information for Key Stages 1 and 2 is only available from English schools or English Service Schools Abroad and not from Scotland or Wales for example. Diagnostic assessments resulting from AfL practice or Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) can be minimal or non-existent. Assessment information is not always accompanied by examples of pupils' work.

Schools would be further supported in this work if:

- A national framework for information transfer was developed to more closely cater for the needs of children from armed forces families.

**Wittering Primary School** has developed a comprehensive set of information and materials that is always provided when a pupil moves to a new school. A list is used as a prompt within the school, and administrative staff take responsibility for liaising with staff to collate the information, as well as acting as the front sheet of the pack sent to the receiving school. The list includes:

- The national transfer form
- School reports and termly records
- Assessment records for En, Ma, Sc
- Reading record sheets
- KS1 national test data
- Current workbooks
- The pupil's UPN
- School admission & permission forms
- Other significant assessments
- Baseline assessment & Foundation Profile
- SEN records (if appropriate)

The pack is put together quickly, with a maximum target time of two weeks. Usually it is given to the parents to give to the receiving school but any sensitive information is sent directly to the new school. This very efficient and informative process exactly models the speed and quality of the information the school likes to receive from other schools when pupils join Wittering Primary School.



## **C3 Ensuring continuity of provision for children with SEN**

### **Why this is important**

The statementing process is a long process and can take up to 2 years in some instances. Different local authorities have different processes and evidence collected in one local authority is not always usable in another. If a pupil moves school during the statementing process often the whole procedure has to be started again. As a result of the length of the process, and the fact that information on pupils with SEN may be incomplete, this group of children are especially vulnerable when they move school.

### **What good schools do**

To ensure the continuity of provision for children with special education needs good schools:

- Are particularly attuned to the vulnerability of these pupils.
- Ensure that staffing structures facilitate the ready assessment and support of pupils with SEN, such as allocate additional teaching assistant time to those classes with the new entrants.
- Are especially vigilant in 'chasing up' information about new pupils who on early assessment appear to have particular special needs.
- Very actively engage with parents to learn as much as possible about previous assessments that have been made and the outcomes of these.
- Communicate with the armed forces liaison officer, with the full knowledge of the parents, about the stage of any assessment process and make recommendations. In some cases this involves advising against a move if the assessment process is at a critical stage.
- Ensure that the parents of a child that is leaving the school are fully briefed on the information that is being passed on to the receiving school.

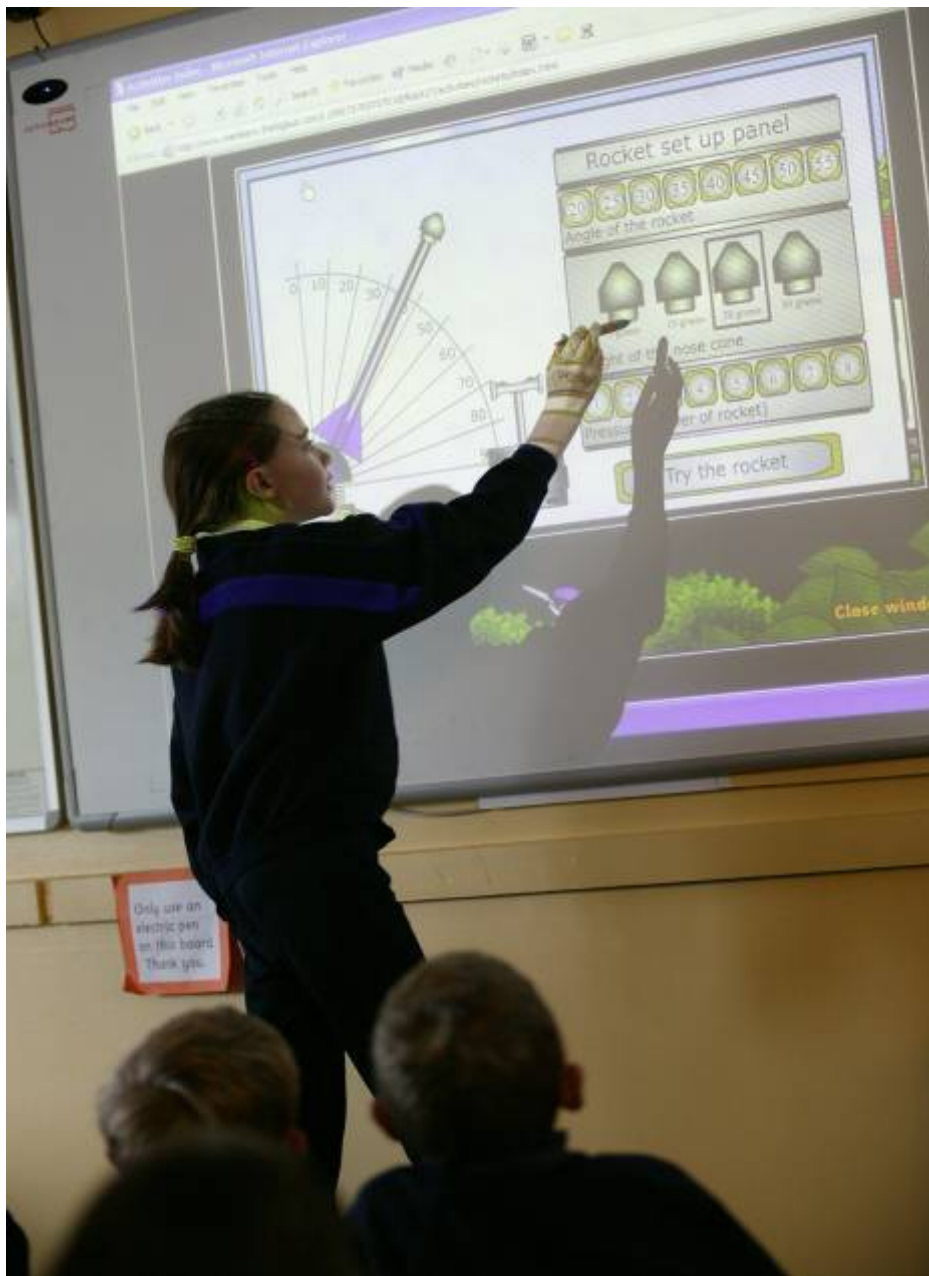
'For children with special needs support has to be in place almost immediately if the child is going to make any progress.' (Senior leader)

### **Further consideration**

Evidence obtained from the schools indicates that in some cases schools can fail to tell the receiving school that the children are in the process of being assessed. In addition, parents are sometimes reluctant to tell the new school, fearing it will be a stigma or barrier to admission.

Schools would be further supported in this work if:

- A more uniform procedure is introduced to ensure the information and intelligence on a child with SEN is shared quickly between LAs and schools, so that these vulnerable children who are affected by both SEN and mobility get the appropriate support from the first day in their new school.



## **C4 Maintaining continuity in curriculum and learning**

### **Why this is important**

Inevitably schools have varying approaches to curriculum organisation, its content and approaches to learning, the subjects taught and the courses or specifications offered. Unsurprisingly, therefore, children moving between primary schools can be re-taught the same 'topic' or unit they have already covered, or conversely miss out a topic altogether. At secondary level children who have been studying one particular foreign language find that it is not offered at the new school; even in core subjects the specifications can vary considerably and so in science, for example, approach and content in one school can be very different from that in the next. The issue is particularly acute if children move during GCSE to a school which does not use the same syllabus or exam board.

### **What good schools do**

To ensure the maximum continuity in curriculum and learning good schools:

- Build flexibility into their curriculum structure, especially in secondary schools with the options arrangements at Key Stage 4. They are adept at putting together almost personalised subject 'packages' to provide continuity of learning for the arriving pupils who may have studied a different specification, often involving a combination of whole-class lessons and small group or 1:1 support.
- Encourage the pupils to say if they have done work before, or if they find the work too easy or too hard.
- Expect teachers to identify specific aspects of new learning where a topic has already been covered, for example by choosing a particular skills focus, and how it will help the pupil to make progress.
- Ask children who have studied particular topics before, or who know a lot from their previous experience, such as having learned something of the language and customs of a different country, to be 'class experts' and share that prior learning with others.
- Expect teachers (particularly in the primary phase) to have completed their medium-term planning one term in advance so creating time for the teacher to support new pupils who arrive at the beginning of the term.
- Adopt regular assessment 'windows' and typically record pupil progress on a half-termly basis. This regular assessment and tracking is used to identify learning targets but also provides up-to-date progress information for any pupil moving to a new school.
- Have developed very comprehensive Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), particularly in the secondary phase, which enable new pupils to access information and resources even before they join the school.

*'We have identified a teaching assistant (who happens to be a service wife) who will work with groups of 'joiners' to identify gaps in their mathematics knowledge.'* (Headteacher)

*'If pupils have covered a topic before I use them as 'table experts'. They help other children.'* (Year 5 teacher)

*'Personalisation and flexibility are keys. When groups are planned spaces are kept to allow for new admissions. This is also taken in to account when planning the deployment of learning support staff as some pupils may need some 1:1 support to get them 'up to speed' with a new topic or syllabus.'* (Deputy Headteacher)

*'When my daughter came here staff took the time to find out what she had studied before. They tried to follow the same options and she quickly moved groups.'* (Parent)

### **Further consideration**

The secondary schools raised some issues relating to GCSE coursework. In some cases a pupil's coursework is not appropriate or acceptable for a different specification used by the receiving school and, even where it is, there are potential difficulties for the receiving school in verifying the controlled assessments undertaken at the previous school. This situation can result in the new pupils having to produce coursework in very short time-scales.

Schools would be further supported in this work if:

- Guidance is strengthened on the transfer between schools of teacher verification for 'controlled GCSE assessments', so that a pupil's coursework already completed can be submitted by the new school.

At **Larkhill Primary School** topic planning has a central focus on literacy and numeracy objectives. This ensures a comprehensive coverage of key aspects of literacy and numeracy, compensating for those pupils who have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This approach also addresses the issue that pupils who join may already have covered topics such as 'The Tudors'. In addition, topic titles are deliberately not directly associated with the QCA teaching units to avoid the 'I've done this before' reaction.

*'Titles such as Pirates, Space and Time Machines are more interesting for the pupils and they won't have come across them before.'* (Headteacher)

The approach to curriculum planning is underpinned by regular assessment, with reading assessed on a weekly basis and other aspects half-termly. These assessments lead to six-weekly targets for each pupil which are displayed in the classrooms. In addition the pupils do all their writing in the same book to facilitate easy transfer of information to other schools when the pupils move on.

At **Avon Valley College** teachers have become adept at dealing with students who arrive during Key Stage 4 having studied different syllabuses/specifications to those offered at the College. Even if the students bring their assignments and coursework with them they may not match the requirements of the courses the College offers. The solution is achieved through a very personalised curriculum with teachers being flexible and skilled in matching the different course requirements; small group and individual tuition is often required. Where assignments have to be redone in relatively short timescales the students are given intensive support.



## C5 Supporting the social and emotional well being of the children

### Why this is important

Children frequently have to leave friends and 'start again' socially when their parents are posted. This is a particular issue when the deployment affects individual families rather than whole regiments as children are unlikely to move with their friends.

Stress and anxiety can be caused by an absent parent or sometimes by their return when the dynamics of household relationships change. Serious anxiety can be caused by a parent's deployment to a war zone and pupils can be particularly sensitive to media coverage. There are also social and emotional issues arising from living in an enclosed community when families live in Armed Forces accommodation. Additionally, due to the regular movement of the family, the children often do not have the support of an extended family living nearby. (Very comprehensive coverage of these aspects and related aspects can be found in *The Overlooked Casualties of War* report<sup>2</sup>).

### What good schools do

To ensure high levels of support for the social and emotional well being of the children good schools:

- Have a very well-honed system for welcoming new pupils to the school and for dealing with bereavement.
- Ensure that dedicated staff are on hand to help the children settle in quickly. Frequent opportunities are provided for discussion, counselling and general support, both formal and informal. The schools invariably use 'buddy' systems and, in secondary schools, peer mentoring is often one of the support mechanisms provided for new pupils.
- Have developed particularly strong pastoral support systems with, for example in secondary schools, the year leader often having the support of non-teaching 'student support managers' who are able to respond very quickly to any issues that arise. Where schools work in partnership they have been able to employ home-school link workers.
- Use nurture groups, particularly in primary schools to support vulnerable children, typically working with these children for a half-day each week as well as providing support at lunchtimes.
- Employ a full time school counsellor, particularly in secondary schools, who works alongside the teachers to support children who need it.
- Give a very high priority to emotional literacy and Social and Emotional

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<sup>2</sup> The report includes sections on:

- Stresses and strains while a parent is away
- Impact of a temporary one-parent or no-parent family
- Adjustments to family life when a parent returns
- Impact of moving homes, schools and communities
- Dealing with a parent's death
- Dealing with a parent's illness or injury

Aspects of Learning (SEAL) both in the curriculum and ethos of the school. Parents are often invited to attend certain sessions with their children.

- Have effective communication systems which readily identify for the teachers or classmates when a parent of one of the pupils is away on deployment.
- Have established systems so that the children can communicate with absent parents electronically, using email and webcams, and by making and sending art/craft items, greetings cards, and other items.

*'I chose this school because of the pastoral care. The staff have a real interest in the emotional needs of the children. The relationship with the form tutor was paramount for my son because his father was away so often.'* (Parent)

*'My children are very different; one settles quickly the other very slowly. You need a school that will help both and understands that they are very different.'* (Parent)

*'When the class teacher found out that I was in the Falklands she made this a learning point and all the children learnt about the Falklands. This made my son feel really proud of his Dad rather than unhappy.'* (Parent)

*'Friends don't understand or they are not really interested. I can't talk to my Mum it upsets her, so without the school counsellor I would be on my own.'* (Year 10 pupil)

### **Further consideration**

Senior leaders spoke of the commitment to ensure the school offers resources and time so that armed forces children receive tailored social and emotional support. Parents spoke positively about some of the strong pastoral support their children had received, but often commented that the level of this support was very variable and depended very much on the school.

Schools would be further supported in this work if:

- Dedicated counselling support was available for the children of armed forces families.

At **Leeming Community Primary School** there is a very warm and caring whole school community created by a very committed staff, who are very aware of particular issues related to armed services life. They ensure frequent opportunities for discussion, counselling and support, both formal and informal. Emotional literacy and SEAL are high on the agenda in both the curriculum and ethos of the school and, for example, the children have ample opportunity, within a 'safe' emotional environment to discuss their own feelings and to explore empathy with the feelings of others.

An opportunity is carefully provided for either parents and/or children to let their teachers and classmates know each time their father or mother goes away on a deployment. This is not allowed to become a high profile issue, but does mean that all are aware of, and can be sensitive to, any adaptations that are having to be made, or any feelings, fears or moods that may affect them as a consequence. The school also runs a facility where children can, as a 'normal' part of school life, and using the schools facilities, communicate with absent parents electronically (email, webcam, etc.) and by making and sending art/craft items, greetings cards, and other items.

**Risedale High School** are starting a 'Seasons for Growth' emotional literacy programme for parents to participate in alongside their children, and particularly gearing this to providing opportunities to address and explore some of the emotional./social implications of being in an armed services family.



## C6 Facilitating effective communication between the Armed Forces and schools

### Why this is important

The armed forces are aware of personnel issues, including deployment, well before the schools are. In some cases operational issues may reasonably prevent the sharing of this information. Nevertheless, the departure and arrival of significant numbers of pupils can create a whole range of issues for the school. Advance planning and preparation is considered key to help the school provide armed forces children with appropriate tailored levels of support.

### What good schools do

To ensure that effective communication is maintained with key armed forces personnel good schools:

- Go out of their way to foster good relationships and develop mechanisms to assist efficient communication.
- Develop regular communication with a named person within the armed forces as a first point of contact.
- Welcome armed forces personnel into the school on a regular basis, whether for assemblies, to support curriculum activities or for more general activity days or events.
- Share resources or facilities, when appropriate.
- Support cross-county liaison with the armed forces when this is brokered by the local authority.

*'The local authority, the armed forces and the school are all pulling in the same direction – the support from the 'liaison officer' at the base is first rate.'* (Headteacher)

*'The school also works with the forces to stay in touch with parents while they are away on active service, for example, the Christmas carol concert was filmed and sent out to the regiment.'* (Headteacher)

*'The garrison radio team came into the school so that pupils could broadcast messages to their parents.'* (Year Leader)

*'The school hosts the Plymouth Service Schools' Group which meets three times each year and is attended by headteachers, teachers, Royal Navy support personnel and a lead officer from the Local Authority.'* (Headteacher)

## Further consideration

Evidence obtained from the schools suggested that the extent of productive liaison between the welfare services of the various regiments or squadrons and schools is variable. In some cases it is excellent, and regular communication takes place between the armed forces' liaison officer and the staff in the school. However, sometimes the level of communication is limited. The difficulties in some cases arise out of confidentiality concerns about passing on personal information for example, in instances where parents do not want the school to know about the problems they may be encountering.

Schools would be further supported in this work if:

- Some guidelines and protocols were developed to underpin collaboration and communication between schools and the armed forces. This is likely to be particularly important where there are smaller numbers of armed forces pupils in a school.

At **The Wellington Academy** liaison with the local army base is regular and effective and forms part of a three way partnership between the school, the army and the local authority. There is a single point of contact on the base for the school and this ensures that issues can be dealt with promptly and never 'fall between the cracks'. The liaison officer comes into the school on special occasions such as Remembrance Day and has provided active support for the academies' work on fund raising for *Support the Heroes*. In addition, support is offered to the academies' cadet force and there are plans to share some of the sports facilities on the base and on the academy site.

## **C7 Maximising the use of available resources**

### **Why this is important**

In most, if not all, local authorities the children of armed forces' families receive no additional funding as a result of their particular needs and circumstances. In addition, the school budget is determined annually making use of the PLASC data. In most cases this process does not allow for any adjustments during the financial year even though the number of pupils could change very significantly.

### **What good schools do**

To ensure that resources are used to good effect, good schools:

- Adopt flexible staffing models which can respond to large variations in school numbers during the year.
- Are extremely creative and imaginative in how they allocate resources to support children from armed forces families.
- Allocate additional time for staff to collate and check both incoming and outgoing pupil transfer information.
- Facilitate the efficient induction and assessment of new pupils
- Prioritise additional intervention provision to ensure 'catch up' and 'keep up' for children who are changing schools.
- Provide additional emotional and social support mechanisms for children whose parents are away from home and possibly at risk in a war zone.

### **Further consideration**

The evidence obtained from schools in this survey strongly suggests that the children do have very particular needs and that if schools are going to meet these effectively there are significant resource implications.

Schools would be further supported in this work if:

- Children from armed forces families were recognised as potentially vulnerable group and so receive additional funding to meet their needs;
- Funding allocations were reviewed on a termly basis to address the implications of significant increases in pupil numbers.

The **Carterton Partnership** is made up of five primary schools and one secondary school. The schools take collective responsibility for the progress of all children from armed forces families regardless of the school they attend. The partnership approach is underpinned by a senior leadership team drawing from all the schools which meets regularly to monitor and evaluate the partnership improvement plan. This includes managing the extended services provision across the six schools.

Working as a partnership benefits all schools and maximises the resources available to meet agreed priorities. For example:

- ⇒ The Extended Services Coordinator runs discrete nurture group sessions which interrelate with the SEAL curriculum;
- ⇒ The Children's Centre Manager supports parenting groups and outreach;
- ⇒ An Educational Psychologist conducts research for the partnership which enables them to better understand the factors which directly influence pupil progress.
- ⇒ The Brize Norton Community Development Officer works as an integral part of the partnership, enhancing liaison with RAF Brize Norton which runs through linking specific units to the schools;
- ⇒ Two part-time Home/ School Link Workers work across the partnership supporting families and children, for example, in adjusting to family life when a parent returns from duty or coping with the impact of moving homes, schools and communities.



## D Conclusions

The majority of the schools visited had relatively large proportions of children from armed forces families, particularly the primary schools. These schools were well versed in addressing the specific issues the children presented. More generally, though, there are pockets of small numbers of armed forces children in very many schools. Given the characteristics that many of these children share, there is a strong argument that they should be recognised as a potentially vulnerable group and so at risk of not making expected progress in the primary and secondary phases.

In common with children in other potentially vulnerable groups, children from armed forces families don't want to be seen as 'special' or, in fact, different from anyone else. They don't want to be singled out for special overt consideration or treatment even though they may experience a range of pressures that many of their peers do not. The issue becomes how they should be supported rather than whether they should be supported.

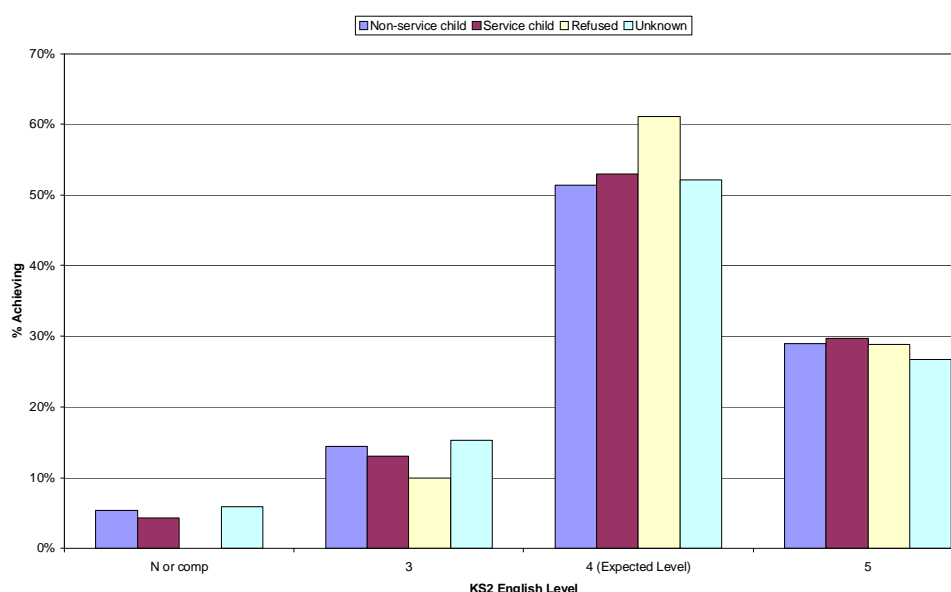
*'I don't want to be treated differently, I can't handle it. I just want to be the same as everyone else, especially when my dad is away and I am on a knife-edge the whole time'* (Year 10 pupil)

This summary of effective practice is intended to provide some answers to the question 'how can we support children from armed forces families in order to secure their progress?'

## Annex 1: The attainment and progress made by children of armed forces parents

The analysis shown in this annex is based on information gained from the 2008 Annual School Census and attainment data from 2009. The number of pupils identified as children of service personnel who completed Key Stage 4 in 2009 was approximately 2,050 (0.4% of the cohort). This was 3,150 (0.6%) for Key Stage 2 (age 11).<sup>3</sup>

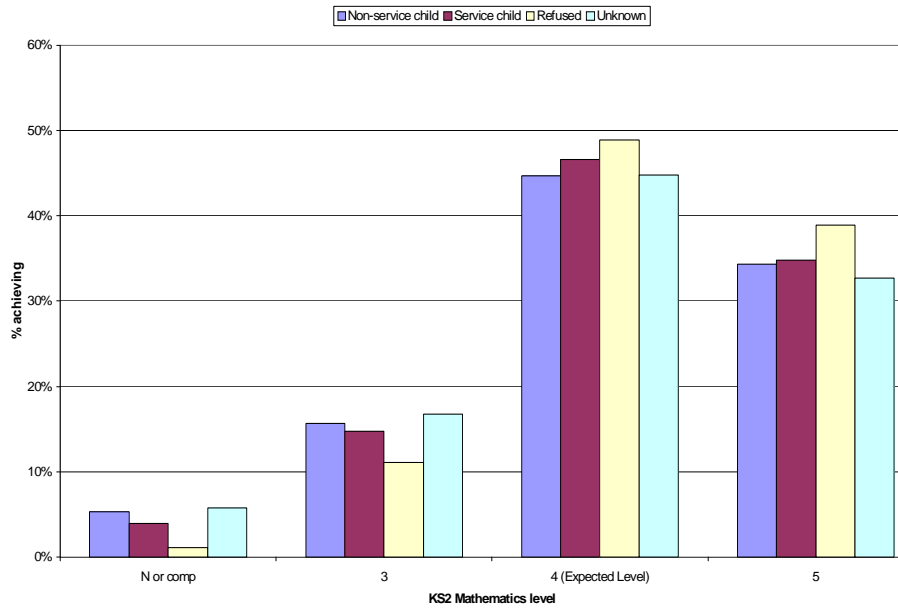
### a) Attainment in Key Stage 2 English



83% of service children achieved at least the expected level in Key Stage 2 English compared with 80% of non-service children;

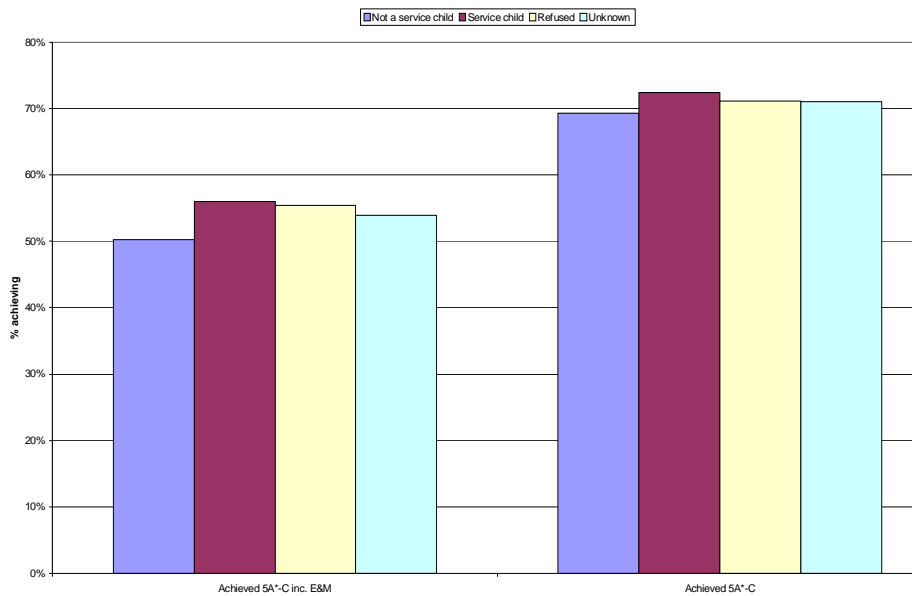
<sup>1</sup> Under-counting of service children in maintained schools may occur in the Annual School Census. In 2009, we know 256 (0.0%) responses on service children status were “Refused” for Key Stage 4. This was 90 (0.0%) for Key Stage 2. There were also a number of “unknown” recorded responses: 28,493 (4.9%) at Key Stage 4 and 9,636 at Key Stage 2 (1.7%). The level of attainment of the ‘refused’ group was mixed: it was similar to the rest at Key Stage 4, with 71% achieving 5 A\*-C GCSEs/ equivalents; higher than the rest at Key Stage 2 English, with 90% having achieved level 4+; and in Key Stage 2 mathematics, with 88% having achieved level 4+. The level of attainment of the unknown group was also higher than the non-service children group at Key Stage 4, although 77% and 79% achieved level 4+ at Key Stage 2 mathematics and English respectively.

## b) Attainment in Key Stage 2 mathematics



81% of service children achieved at least the expected level at Key Stage 2 mathematics compared with 79% of non-service children;

## c) Attainment at Key Stage 4

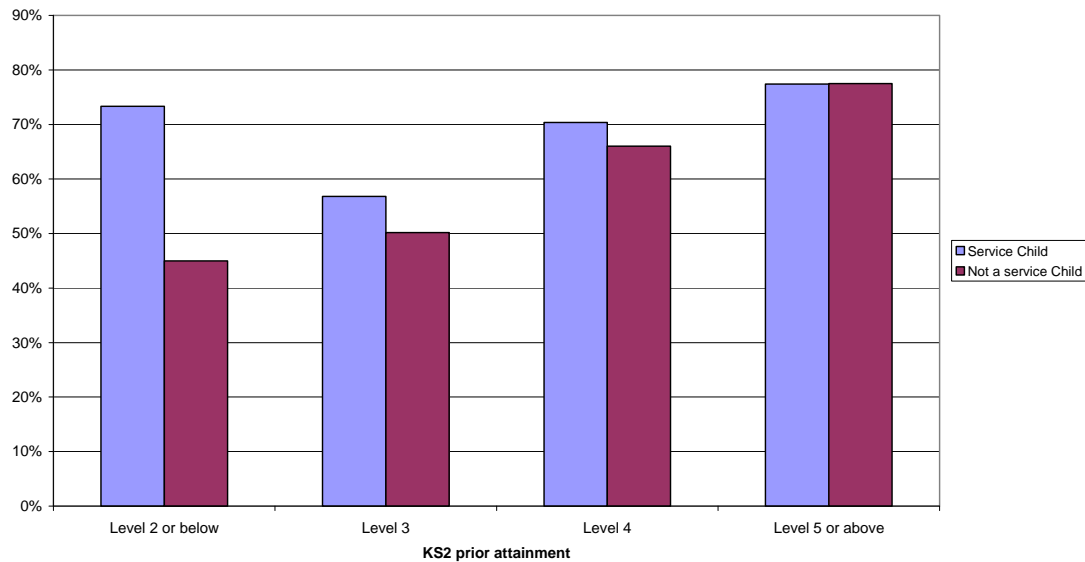


56% of service children achieved 5+ A\*-C grades at GCSE including English and maths compared with 50% of non-service children;

72% of service children achieved 5+ A\*-C grades at GCSE compared with 69% of non-service children.

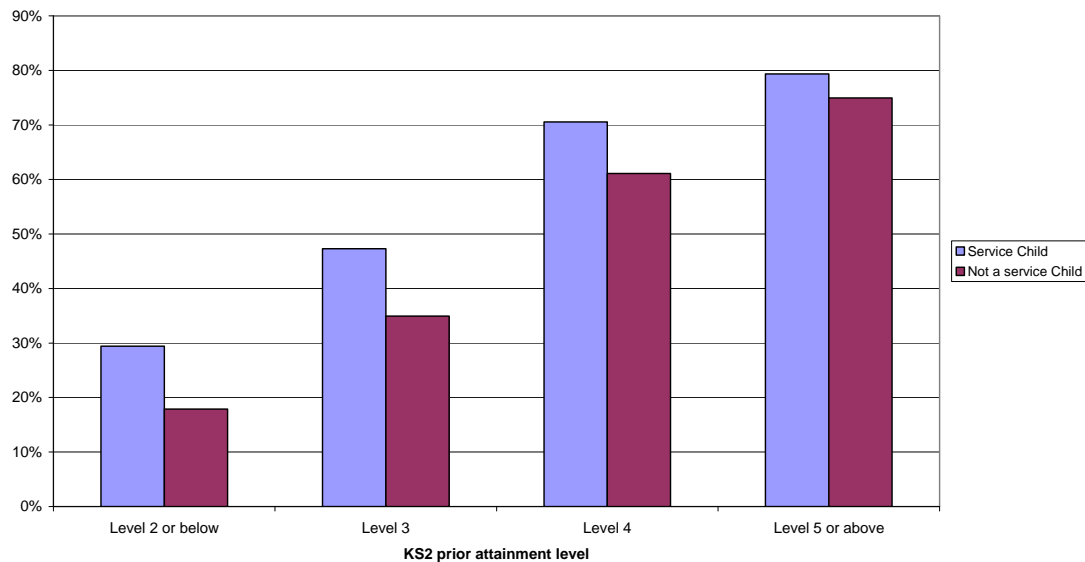
## d) Progress in English from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4

Proportions of service children and non-service children making 3 levels of progress in English between KS2 and KS4 by prior attainment: mainstream maintained schools (inc. academies)- 2009



## e) Progress in mathematics from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4

Proportions of service children and non-service children making 3 levels of progress in maths between KS2 and KS4 by prior attainment: mainstream maintained schools (inc. academies)- 2009



## ANNEX 2

### Investigation methodology

Schools were visited for half a day and the programme included the following elements:

- A discussion with the headteacher and/or member of the senior leadership team
- A discussion with a year leader or learning mentor who was very familiar with ways of supporting children from armed forces' families
- A discussion with one or more teachers of some of the pupils to be interviewed
- A discussion with 4 to 6 pupils from either Year 6 or Year 10
- A discussion with one or more parents of the Year 6 or Year 10 pupils

### The sample of schools

The DfE would like to thank the headteachers, staff and pupils of the following schools for their invaluable contribution to this study.

#### Primary Schools

LA	School Name	No. service children	Total pupils	% of school population <sup>4</sup>	Armed Force
N. Yorkshire	Le Cateau Community Primary School	257	393	65	Army
Hampshire	Talavera Junior School	236	352	67	Army
Wiltshire	Larkhill Primary School	222	236	94	Army
Peterborough	Wittering Primary School	218	302	72	RAF
Wiltshire	Zouch Primary School	202	278	73	Army
N. Yorkshire	Leeming Community Primary School	198	205	97	RAF
Oxfordshire	Gateway Primary School	188	222	85	RAF
Lincolnshire	Cranwell Primary School (Foundation)	186	303	61	RAF
Plymouth	Goosewell Primary School	167	557	30	Navy/RM
Surrey	Pirbright Village Primary School	102	408	25	Army
Surrey	Brookwood Primary School	60	178	33	Army

#### Secondary Schools

LA	School Name	No. service children	Total pupils	% of school population	Armed Force
Wiltshire	Avon Valley College	261	703	37	Army
N. Yorkshire	Risedale Sports & Community College	243	524	46	Army
Wiltshire	Wootton Bassett School	227	1507	15	RAF
Wiltshire	The Wellington Academy	210	527	40	Army
Hampshire	The Wavell School	189	864	22	Army
Oxfordshire	Carterton Community College	165	658	25	RAF
N. Yorkshire	Bedale High School	127	858	15	RAF
Plymouth	Coombe Dean School	118	1100	11	Navy/RM
Lincolnshire	Kesteven and Sleaford High School	93	841	11	RAF
Surrey	The Royal Alexandra & Albert School	157	756	21	Army

<sup>4</sup> These are approximations.

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**Education**