

Case Study: The Service Pupil Premium at RAF Leeming

Leeming RAF CP School is a smaller than average sized primary school, currently with 224 pupils on roll, organised into nine classes. The school primarily serves the RAF/ Army community and is 'behind the wire' of Leeming RAF Base. 99% of pupils are from forces families. As a result, the school has an exceptionally high mobility rate: 72% in 2015-16, caused by the postings of military personnel. The implications of this are not purely numerical in terms of numbers of pupils or amount of change. The link with the forces significantly shapes and defines the school – its ethos, work in the community, staff demographic, governance, strengths and priorities.

The school embraces the positive implications of our service links – the breadth of experience of our pupils, the participation in something larger than 'ourselves', the access to unique privileges of military life. There are, however, substantial challenges associated with having such an exceptional context.

Pupil stability, wellbeing and pastoral needs are necessarily a high priority - this is not only an issue for children who are 'coming and going' within a year, but also profoundly affects our stable pupils - those who have been in the school for a longer period. Every week, their classes change, close friends leave, parents are deployed to dangerous action zones, and their world is often in a state of flux. This particularly affects the (disproportionately high) number of our pupils with ASD and SEMH issues, who require complete stability and predictability in their environment in order to learn and thrive.

We use the Service Pupil Premium as a key funding stream to support our work in addressing these challenges. We have financed the work of a full time Pastoral Mentor this year, whose role is to provide both proactive and reactive support for our vulnerable pupils. She acts as a key worker for children who are struggling: meeting with them 1:1 throughout the week, and delivering targeted social and emotional programmes. The Pastoral Mentor also provides staff CPD and we are developing the use of Emotional First Aid throughout the school as a result of her work. She also has dedicated 'arrivals and leavers' time each week to meet, settle and transition our new children, and prepare our departing pupils for the next stage in their education.

The Service Pupil Premium is also used to fund additional Educational Psychologist support so that we can provide a higher level of care for children with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health needs than would be available through the usual 'core' provision. The funding also supports additional TA time (to address learning gaps), increased SENCO hours, military kids club, specific educational programmes and our enrichment fund - thus ensuring that children have a rich and varied experience of the curriculum, beyond that which we could fund through 'normal' resources. Without this funding, our school would simply be unable to provide the level of care and quality of education that our children require as a result of their complex context.

Having such a high percentage of service pupils is sometimes difficult, often complex, but always rewarding. They make our school a vibrant and dynamic place, and we welcome all that they bring to Leeming – we are fortunate indeed to play a part in the learning of this exceptional group of children.

Mr. Robert Campbell, Headteacher, Leeming RAF CP School

