

Creative Forces April 2017: Top Tips

Two Creative Forces events for young people from armed forces families were held at the University of Winchester in April 2017. The secondary day for students in years 7-10 was attended by 57 students from 9 Hampshire secondary schools and the primary day for pupils in years 4-6 was attended by 63 pupils from 14 primary schools. The events were supported by Hampshire County Council, North Yorkshire County Council and staff and students from Bath Spa University. This document contains a summary of the tips reported by groups of children to their teachers at the end of a workshop with student ambassadors followed by the verbatim list from each group's poster and a list of the schools involved.

Summary

Raise awareness among the school's civilian population of what it's like to be a service child:

- Speak about service life in assemblies
- Run or take part in charity/fun day events for both military and civilian families
- Explain to civilians why service children are sometimes granted term time absence
- Invite civilian friends to clubs or activities for service children to raise awareness

Keep in contact with mobile children and settle them in when they arrive:

- Transfer records about attainment, needs, experience and topics covered
- Help service and civilian pupils keep in touch with friends who have left
- Stay in touch and check on their progress
- Some children wanted to be overtly welcomed and their background explained, others would rather fit in quietly with unobtrusive support
- Organise buddies and mentors
- Give them memory boxes/journals/cards when they leave

Support their emotional needs and help them keep in contact when a parent is deployed:

- Give them a safe space to talk if they need it but keep it understated
- Help them write to deployed parents
- Know where and when parents are deployed and celebrate it in school
- Give the deployed parent a structure for keeping their children involved in their life when they're away. Several groups talked about their school sending a soft toy with the deployed parent and celebrating photos of the toy on its travels
- Make sure all staff are aware of and recognise the impact of deployment on wellbeing and behaviour and make sure the young people know this
- Talk to parents

Help them build bonds with other service children:

- Provide opportunities to meet other service children
- Organise trips, treats and opportunities, particularly with a military theme
- Create a dedicated space
- Run lunchtime/after school clubs
- Help them organise and take part in charity events

And build an app for service children to communicate with each other.

Detail from group posters

Primary

More awareness when Mum/Dad is away
More family activities at school
Make other students aware of the reason – absence when a parent goes on deployment or returns is not holiday
Keep in contact after we move away – find out about our progress
Get non-service children involved in the charity work the service children do
More activities and trips as part of a service children club
Help us keep in touch – email, facetime, phone
Meerkat teddies (this was explained as an initiative in one school where the child and the deployed parent took photos of their meerkat doing things with them and sent them to each other so they could follow each others lives through the meerkat's activities)
Let us talk about our military connection to teachers and friends
Special visitors for service children
Be supportive to children who are new
Send details of our work when we move schools

When you start a new school you could stand at the front and introduce yourself or your teacher could
Charity work
Passport for a friend to come to the service children's club to see what it's like
Support with behaviour
PSHE – every year new people come
Peer mentor
A special bag to take if you change school

Military buddies
Clubs and meetings
Use military money
Someone to talk to
Fundraising
Military council
Treat us the same as everyone else
Somewhere to talk to someone when you are upset
Contact new school by social media

One or two lessons each term about what the military is doing and where
A map with pins showing where parents are deployed and information about those places
More days like Creative Forces day
Discounts on school trips incorporated in pupil premium
A teddy for the parent to take on deployment and send back photos of its adventures
More opportunities to speak to ex-service personnel and serving personnel
More military assemblies
Opportunities to talk to other military children and see how they feel

Talk privately to the child
Talk to our parents
Area to talk to teachers privately
Make sure the parent knows that their child is getting support
Forces group
Talk to the child at the beginning of each month and discuss more

A teacher comes and helps and takes your mind off things
Box of supplies and school work when we move
Make sure the class knows
We like to talk about connection but depends on the situation
Guest speakers
Ask how we are daily
More communication between parents and teachers
Help us send Blueys
Remembrance Day
Journals
Don't mention unless we bring it up
A teacher to talk to
Plan trips to meet other military children
Treat us respectfully and empathise
Goodbye cards and presents
Interaction

Secondary

We're so used to parents leaving we fix our own issues as the school doesn't help
Weekly/monthly checkins on how we are coping when parents are deployed
Trips for service children (motivate)
More trips across the whole school at a reasonable price
Trip to the University of Winchester
Exceptions (eg for coming back parade)
Discounts
Help in school (homework)
Service children common room
Allowed to leave the room if you're having issues with coping
As soon as parent is deployed student could get a corridor pass

Information assemblies
Club – lots of fun, talk, draw what you feel
An app for service children to communicate with other service children
One to one meetings
Badge to talk when you need to
More flexibility for homework
More events
Links to university students
Feelings diary
More information about charities
Communication

Someone to welcome us
Having someone there who understands what it's like to be new
Don't single us out
Treat us as individuals
Assemblies
Free food
Counselling if needed
They don't do anything different but they will support us if needed

Other students don't understand – make them aware of what we go through

GCSE year

Transport links – footpath from our homes to school

Social space

Settling in by people who understand

Go through what you don't know when you start a new school

Staff awareness

Role models

More opportunities to have conversations

General life skills

Email/progress checks once a month or so

Student-teacher talks and support one to one

Family bonding with school

Paperwork when we move around

Keeping in touch with previous schools

Army ambassadors

More trips – bonding with other students

Objects to help with stress

Fundraising and charity events

Skype calls

A way to communicate with family efficiently

Emotional and academic support, make sure you have everything

More information on military families

Depends on the situation – if you want to talk about it

Make a club, talk to people with a similar childhood

Get a buddy

A teacher to go to if you have any concerns

Assemblies – raise awareness

Share reports and history from previous school

Check we're not behind or repeating topics

Aware of situation if needed

Knowing who else is in similar situation

Not overdone – keep it casual relaxed informal

Not going out of way to mention it but can help if any issues – rare

Maybe good to be aware/know people with similar experiences if you need help

Share records/reports with previous schools

What topics already covered – find alternatives

Be aware of situation if needed in the future

Assembly or something different – awareness

Schools attending

Alverstoke Junior School
Bedenham Primary School
Elson Junior School
Fair Oak Junior School
Grange Junior School
Kimpton, Thruxton & Fyfield CofE Primary School
Lee-on-the-Solent Junior School
Mayhill Junior School
Park Gate Primary School
Ranvilles Junior School
Red Barn Primary School
Roman Way Primary School
South Wonston Primary School
St. Mark's Primary School

Applemore College
Bay House School and Sixth Form
Brune Park Community School
Crestwood College
Henry Cort Community College
Lakeside School
Robert May's School
Test Valley School
The Westgate School