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Case Study: Thriving Lives Toolkit Developing Practice

February 2022

Cawdor Primary, Nairn, Scotland

Cawdor Primary is a small primary school in Scotland, situated in Nairn on the Moray Firth. Moray is home to an RAF base in Lossiemouth and an Army base in Kinloss as well as being close to bases in and around Inverness. There are 160 students on roll from nursery to primary 7, but only a very small number of these are Service children. The school headteacher has worked in several schools with greater numbers of Service children and acknowledges that whilst the Service children on roll will need support, the schools' approach needed to be different to the approaches taken by larger schools with greater numbers of Service children.

THE NEED

The headteacher was cognisant of the possible impacts of increased mobility, particularly moving between English and Scottish education systems and the impact of deployment cycles but recognised the need for highly personalised support when there are very small numbers of Service children on roll – sending out communications about possible supports and services to all parents would mean that these communications could become perceived as irrelevant and then ignored.

SOLUTION TAKEN

Children are identified as armed forces families as part of the enrolment process, with this status being flagged on SEEMiS (Education Management Information System (MIS) provider). The school's additional support needs provision encompasses Service children. The school uses its "Change, loss and bereavement" materials within its mental health and wellbeing development and these are particularly valuable for Service children who face the challenges of deployment cycles. Transition work includes a focus on Service families with the school handbook containing a section for Armed Forces families that describes the school's approach and provides links to Local Authority support resources. Further to this, additional support is deployed when families move in from England to help them understand the Scottish education system. In particular, parents can benefit from discussion around the early years curriculum and the formality of the English system compared to the different philosophy in the Scottish system. The headteacher makes use of his solid working

relationship with the Royal Caledonian Education Trust and accesses additional resources when necessary, rather than on a regular basis.

The key approach in this small school is to focus on knowing the children (and their families) and understanding their needs. If a child has a need identified by their teacher, this is raised and discussed within the team. At this point additional training or support specific to the needs of that child may be sought. This approach does of course rely on good relationships and communication between staff and families.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Increased awareness across the school of the experiences that Service children and their families may have and how this can impact on them, as well as increased knowledge of different resources and how to deploy them. School staff work collaboratively. Children make smoother transitions and their wellbeing is supported during deployment and beyond resulting in increased engagement in class.

PRACTITIONER ADVICE

- Practice in a small school with a low number of Service children might look very different to that in a large school with more Service children on roll. It is likely to be highly individualised and utilised when necessary, rather than uniformly across the year or with all students.
- Opening up clear lines of communication with parents is essential to this approach being effective.
- Making use of existing approaches to supporting wellbeing as well as knowing who to ask for help when it is needed can be effective.