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Case Study: Thriving Lives Toolkit Embedded Practice

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Raigmore Primary School, Inverness.

A primary school in Scotland, situated in the capital of Scotland's Highlands. Inverness has an Army Barracks close by and so the school typically has many Armed Forces families on roll. Approximately 50% of the 200 students in Raigmore Primary are Armed Forces children. This primary school identified a need to better support their Armed Forces children through deployment cycles and improve mental wellbeing so that engagement and behaviour in the classroom could be improved.

THE NEED

Raigmore's Armed Forces children have parents serving in the British Army and they can experience multiple transitions (in and out of Scotland and England) as well as repeated periods of separation. The school did not have dedicated staff or time to develop and deliver provision which would help Armed Forces children understand their emotions, share them with others and learn how to manage them. The location of the school (in Scotland) meant that pupil premium funding was not available.

SOLUTION TAKEN

Applied for funding which was secured and used to fund a member of staff two days a week for dedicated work with the Armed Forces children so that they became a key school priority. The actions which have been taken include:

- The school handbook explains the school's approach to supporting Armed Forces children and their families.

- An identified member of staff is responsible and accountable for Armed Forces children as a targeted group.
- Staff are trained to raise awareness of Armed Forces children.
- The school develops resources, works with external partners and shares best practice.
- Armed forces days are celebrated in school.
- Group sessions every week for Armed Forces children on a variety of topics including managing emotions
- 1-1 additional support if needed
- There is a buddy system for incoming children and celebrations and goodbye parties for outgoing children
- The school communicates openly with service families to support them through transition and deployment.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The lead for Armed Forces children has ring fenced time to support them and draws on internal and external resources to continually develop practice. Staff know who the Armed Forces children in their class and know when parent(s) are on deployment. Staff are more confident in working with Armed Forces children to support them. Armed Forces children know they are an important part of the school; they feel valued, important and are heard. They have a SAFE SPACE to share their thoughts and feelings and are more able to deal with the emotions involved in transitioning and those experienced throughout the cycle of deployment. Armed Forces children know who they can talk to at school when they need help or support because their parent(s) are deployed. Parents contact the school to tell staff about deployment and other issues.

- Armed Forces children are happy, more emotionally stable and have improved well-being.
- They have increased resilience and confidence.
- Armed Forces children's behaviour in class is more attentive and less disruptive, even during periods of deployment or transition.

"They feel included, they feel happy, they feel they can talk to us, strategies to control emotions are used in class all the time. Children show us that they things we have learned work. The parents see that this is benefitting. We are offering this help at home as well and the parents are telling us that they see it helping at home. The class teachers notice these things are working. We are seeing this in all the right places." (Teacher).

PRACTITIONER ADVICE

- Securing funding to create dedicated time for a member of staff allowed the school to embed policy and practice for supporting Armed Forces children and their families into daily school life.
- This member of staff was able to work with the senior leaders to develop awareness, develop resources and embed a programme of activities and events which can be

maintained going forward. The combination of group and one-to-one activities ensured each Service Child received the right amount and type of support.

- Engaging parents from when the child begins at the school is as important as maintaining good communication with them.

<https://raigmore.edublogs.org/>