

THRIVING THROUGH TRANSITION

*Supporting Service Pupils at
The Wellington Academy*

FEBRUARY 2026



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The
Wellington
Academy



INTRODUCTION

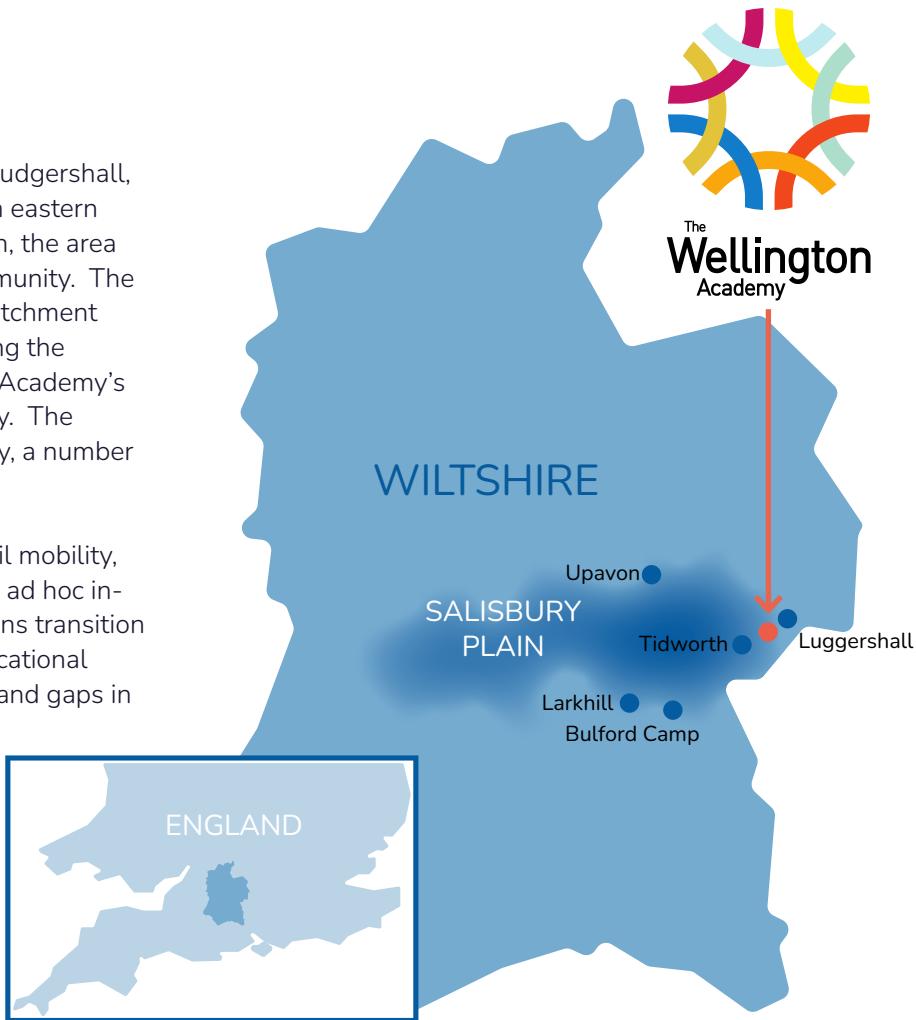
This briefing outlines a three-year research project evaluating the support provided to Service children during transition to The Wellington Academy (TWA), focusing on pupils in Years 8–10. Conducted in collaboration with academics from the University of Winchester, the study assessed current provision against the seven principles of the [SCiP Alliance Thriving Lives Toolkit](#). The research focused on student outcomes, wellbeing, and transition experiences, to inform recommendations to enhance TWA's approach to supporting Service children. The project has supported the academy to embed stronger systems, clearer processes, and a more consistent, evidence-based approach to transition.

Funding for the project was generously provided by Wellington College.

CONTEXT:

The Wellington Academy (TWA) serves Ludgershall, Tidworth, and surrounding communities in eastern Wiltshire. Located close to Salisbury Plain, the area is home to a significant armed forces community. The number of Armed Forces families in the catchment area has increased in recent years following the rebasing programme from Germany. The Academy's mobility is in the highest quintile nationally. The school has 1146 students on role currently, a number that has risen in recent years.

The school experiences high levels of pupil mobility, including large-scale unit movements and ad hoc in-year relocations. For pupils, this often means transition and upheaval at critical points in their educational journey, leading to potential discontinuity and gaps in curriculum learning. For staff, it requires preparing for arrivals and departures mid-year, often with little notice. Many students have experienced multiple moves across both primary and secondary phases. Ensuring that students and their families quickly build a sense of belonging is a key priority, alongside closing academic gaps.



TRANSITION PROCESS

PRE-ARRIVAL

- Parent enquiry/application received; pupil added to school systems
- Previous school contacted for academic, pastoral, and safeguarding information
- SEN/EHCP/safeguarding needs reviewed by relevant teams
- Establishing relationships with parents/carers to explore educational and support needs
- Offering school visits and contacting previous schools for key information
- Start date and tutor group confirmed
 - Key information shared with families (letters, first-week details)
 - Admissions questionnaire issued



FIRST WEEK

- Pupil equipped with essentials (lanyard, conduct card, phone pouch, ID request)
- ParentPay, Arbor access, and FSM transfers completed
- Early wellbeing check-ins with pupil and parents

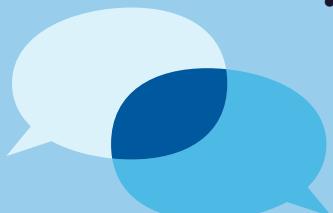


DAY ONE

- Pupil welcomed at reception and introduced to tutor group
- School tour including key pastoral and support points
- GL assessments completed in the morning
- English/Maths set placements confirmed
- Timetable finalised; pupil joins lessons in the afternoon

WEEK THREE

- Settling-in conversation with pupil and student managers
- Parent feedback gathered on transition experience



ONGOING SUPPORT

- Induction Coordinator available for informal guidance
- Continued liaison with pastoral teams to support learning and wellbeing



THE PROJECT

Working with a researcher from the University of Winchester the team set out to find out how the TWA transition process supports Service pupils, through the following methods:

PUPIL & STAFF FOCUS GROUPS (SUMMER 2023):

Pupils in Years 8–10 who joined mid-year shared their experiences before, during, and after transitioning to TWA. Staff—including teachers and subject leads—discussed the challenges of welcoming new pupils, internal communication, and the programme's impact on their roles.

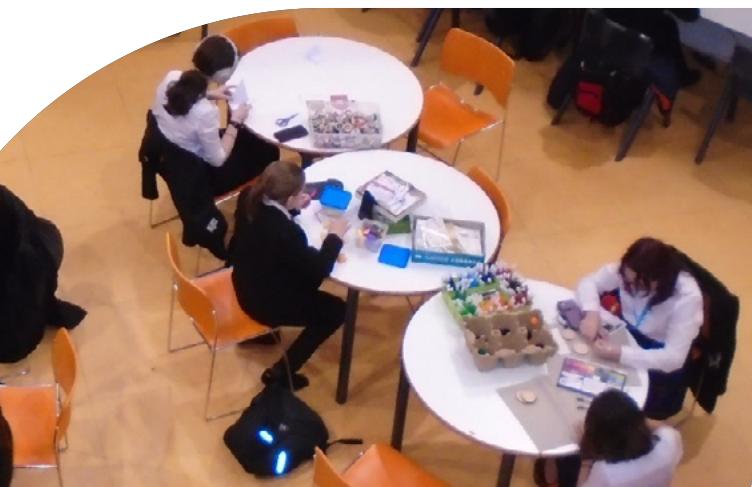
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES:

Parents provided feedback on their engagement with TWA, communication during the transition, and how well their children settled into school life.

PASS DATA ANALYSIS:

Quantitative data from the GL Assessment PASS tool was used to track attitudinal changes between September 2022 and March 2023. These indicators served as proxies for predicting academic outcomes among pupils who experienced the transition programme.

The research design drew on the SCiP Alliance Thriving Lives Toolkit to frame the design and support the interpretation of the findings.



KEY PROJECT FINDINGS

1

ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

This project highlighted the importance of a comprehensive and well-structured transition programme for Service pupils. The appointment of a Transition coordinator has been key to this. TWA continues to enhance the programme, ensuring that students settle into school life swiftly and comfortably.

This reflects principle 4 of the Thriving Lives Toolkit, that systems and support ensure seamless transitions for pupils arriving at school. It also highlights the importance of engaging parents and carers (principle 6) and ensuring staff are well informed about the arrival of new students (principle 7).

2

ENHANCING PEER SUPPORT AND SOCIAL SPACES

A key improvement has been optimising the allocation of buddy pairs.

The school ensured the best possible match between students and buddies, making sure that tutors understand the role of the buddy: to help students navigate their first days at school. This is communicated clearly to both students and buddies, ensuring there's no undue pressure attached to the role or the relationship.

To better support students in forming friendships during their early weeks, TWA relocated the Service Student Support room to the heart of the school, replacing its previous location in a more isolated building. This move has increased its visibility and popularity, providing a welcoming space where students can form friendships and settle into school life at their own pace.

These developments contribute to supporting the wellbeing of new students (principle 2) and are informed by the perspectives of pupils who have experienced the transition process and the buddy system (principle 5).

3**OPTIMISING ACADEMIC PLACEMENT THROUGH INDUCTION TESTING**

The project emphasised the importance of ensuring that students' timetables and class placements are as accurate as possible. The induction testing programme supports this by placing students in sets that match their academic abilities, minimising the likelihood of unsettling class changes during those crucial first weeks. The Transition Coordinator collaborates with core-subject leaders and pastoral teams to monitor progress and ensure that students continue to receive the necessary support as they transition out of the induction programme.

This responds to principle 3 of the Thriving Lives Toolkit, namely supporting and maximising students' achievement by ensuring they are placed appropriately from day one. It also supports teaching staff in understanding and responding to the academic needs of new students (principle 7).

4**ENSURING CONSISTENCY IN TEACHING AND HOLISTIC REPORTING**

The project further highlighted the value of consistency and routines in teaching and learning. TWA are continually refining their teaching model and professional development practices to strengthen this consistency.

The school reviewed their praise and recognition system, alongside behaviour and conduct policies, to ensure greater uniformity across the school. The reporting process has also been enhanced, allowing parents to gain a more holistic view of their child's school experience, in addition to academic performance. For instance, reports now reflect students' involvement in extra-curricular activities, participation in our careers programme, and their supportiveness toward peers. This provides parents with a fuller picture of how their child is settling into life at The Wellington Academy.

This supports principle 6 of the Thriving Lives Toolkit through promoting stronger communication with parents and carers.

5**DEEPENING MILITARY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

TWA are strengthening their partnership with the Army. The Transition Coordinator attends regular meetings with army representatives to better understand expected student movement into the area, enabling the school to prepare more effectively.

The school has expanded their reading buddies programme, which now involves local soldiers coming into the school to assist students with their reading.

This has the potential to foster improved engagement with families (principle 6) and support school staff in their understanding of the wider community context (principle 7).

6**BRIDGING INFORMATION GAPS FOR NEW ARRIVALS**

One challenge remains: receiving relevant information from a student's previous school before their arrival at The Wellington Academy can be inconsistent and varies significantly from school to school. This reinforces the importance of the school's transition programme, which plays a vital role in supporting students as they join The Wellington Academy. It ensures their transition is smooth, identifies potential challenges early, and helps them begin their journey at The Wellington Academy on a positive and successful note.

This aligns with the Thriving Lives Toolkit in supporting a robust and supportive transition process (principle 4) underpinned by more robust understanding of their academic and pastoral needs on entry (principle 3).

NEXT STEPS

The school has taken a number of steps to enhance the strategic focus on, and capacity to address, some key issues arising through the project. Senior leadership have identified key focus areas:

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES:

TWA will continue to monitor the attainment of pupils who transition mid-year compared with the settled population using internal data.

ATTENDANCE:

Strategic responsibility for attendance has been raised to Deputy Head level. The aim is to raise the profile of efforts to improve attendance and to strengthen the capacity of leadership in this area. Additional capacity has been provided to the attendance team within TWA to strengthen actions in this regard.

BELONGING:

On the theme of improving a sense of belonging, TWA is also developing a range of approaches including further opportunities for trips, extra-curricular activities and other enrichment opportunities. This has included ensuring a focus on enrichment and streamlining internal processes for trips is included within a senior leadership remit.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT:

TWA has also recognised the need to strengthen engagement with parents and carers, and will be investigating opportunities for this moving forward.



The enhanced strategic focus at senior leadership level aims to ensure greater understanding of how TWA's processes can improve outcomes for Service pupils (Thriving Lives Toolkit principle 1).

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of The Wellington Academy's transition programme has demonstrated the significant progress made in supporting Service pupils through structured processes, strong pastoral care, and meaningful community partnerships. By embedding the principles of the SCiP Alliance Thriving Lives Toolkit, the Academy has strengthened its ability to welcome new students, foster belonging, and ensure academic continuity despite high levels of mobility. With senior leadership now prioritising attendance, belonging, and enrichment alongside academic outcomes, TWA is well positioned to continue refining its transition approach and delivering sustained, evidence-based support for Service pupils and their families.



*For more information on
this project please contact
scipalliance@winchester.ac.uk*



THRIVING LIVES FOR
SERVICE CHILDREN

