

# Children in Service families

The quality and impact of partnership provision for children in Service families

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This survey examines the quality of provision and outcomes for children and young people who are in families of Service personnel whether living in England or abroad. In particular, it looks at the support provided by a sample of schools, local authorities and other agencies to enable children and their families to cope with the experience of geographical mobility and the deployment of family members who are serving within the Armed Forces.

**Age group:** 5-16

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**Published:** May 2011

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**Reference no:** 100227

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## Executive summary

This survey was requested by the Ministry of Defence to examine educational and other outcomes for Service children and to evaluate the quality of provision made for them whether living abroad or in England. Service children face challenges that often go beyond the experience of the majority of families and children living in the UK. The families of Service personnel who are deployed in overseas Commands, and/or are actively deployed, are often highly mobile. The combination of deployment of a family member and regular moves of home and school can cause anxiety and stress for Service families whether living in the UK or overseas: education is disturbed, social networks are disrupted and parents left behind have to cope with the effects of being a 'single parent'.

During the survey, inspectors visited 30 maintained and three independent schools in England with varying percentages of Service children on roll in 16 local authority areas. They also visited 11 Service Children's Education schools<sup>1</sup> and four Pupil and Family Service Centres in Germany and Cyprus. Interviews were held with children and young people, parents, school staff, governors and associated professionals from military and civilian backgrounds. Inspectors also held discussions with 16 local authorities who had varying numbers of Service children within the school population. In addition, 166 maintained schools in England responded to a survey questionnaire and the views of Service Children's Education schools located outside of Germany and Cyprus were also gathered.

Although, according to the Department for Education (DfE), Service children make up around 0.5% of the total school population in England,<sup>2</sup> there is currently no definitive record of the number of service children living in the UK and/or overseas. DfE data; Ministry of Defence personnel records and other sources of data, have identified anywhere between 38,000 and 175,000 dependants of military personnel in education. There is no requirement for Service personnel to either declare children on their personal military record or to schools, and the DfE only collects data from State schools in England.

Data from the DfE's 2010 research report indicate that many Service children, who are geographically mobile, do not perform as well as non-mobile Service children across all key stages. Moving schools in Years 10 or 11 in particular, is associated with a considerable fall in performance. During this Ofsted survey, inspectors found

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<sup>1</sup> Service school provision overseas is organised through Service Children's Education (SCE), an arm of the Ministry of Defence which is responsible for the administration, development and quality assurance of Service education and for supporting pupils and families who are encountering difficult situations. Service schools are situated in various parts of the world but principally in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Gibraltar, the Falklands, Belize and Brunei.  
[www.sceschools.com/home-ie6.php](http://www.sceschools.com/home-ie6.php).

<sup>2</sup> *Department for Education research report DfE-RR011: the educational performance of children of Service personnel*, DfE, 2010. According to the report, there are 938 maintained primary schools and 423 maintained secondary schools with Service children on roll.  
[www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR011](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR011).

that many schools visited had difficulty in setting accurate academic targets for those Service children who were mobile, to ensure that they could achieve to their full potential. However by the end of all key stages, inspectors found that Service children's progress was broadly in line with other pupils in the school whether educated in English schools or overseas. In some cases, achievement was found to be a little higher for those educated overseas; at Key Stage 4, for example, attainment of Service children educated overseas is above the England average.

Inspectors found some important shortcomings in provision in the schools and local authority areas visited in England, especially where small numbers of Service children were being catered for. These included:

- problems with school admissions; a small proportion of the families interviewed had siblings in the same key stage in different schools because of unsuccessful applications and a lack of availability of school places
- children missing parts of, or repeating areas of, the curriculum
- poor transfer of information about pupils between schools, with particular difficulties with the transfer of statements of special educational need
- slow assessment and support for Service children with special educational needs or a disability
- a general lack of awareness of Service families and their additional needs.

Local authorities in England with higher percentages of Service families' children, and Service Children's Education schools abroad, were more able to quickly and successfully address the needs of children transferring into their schools, for example by providing good quality support services and taking steps to overcome the challenges associated with school admissions.

There were good examples of partnership working between schools and external agencies, both in England and abroad, which were helping to meet the needs of Service children. In these cases, schools worked very successfully with other agencies such as educational psychologists and Army Welfare Services to support Service children and their families, particularly prior to, or following, a move.

Inspectors found deficiencies in the organisational model for post-16 education and training provision for young people from Service families in Germany and Cyprus. The curriculum options for young people over compulsory school age, was very limited in scope and sixth forms were geographically dispersed and small in scale.

Although some progress has been made in reducing the impact of the challenges identified in the 2005-06 Defence Committee Review, many of the issues faced by Service children in schools in the UK and overseas have not been fully resolved.

## Key findings

- In the UK there is no accurate record of the number of Service children and no organisation is properly accountable for tracking their location and/or movement between schools. This includes pre-school children, those who are home educated and those who are not in education, employment or training.
- Service children in the schools visited were achieving generally in line with their peers academically by the end of each key stage, but many children's learning had slowed or receded by continual moves and they needed additional support to catch up. Some did not achieve the grades they might have achieved, if they had not been geographically mobile.
- Service children were generally susceptible to social and emotional disturbance while a parent or other family member was on active deployment. This was further heightened for some children with special educational needs or where parents were deployed in areas of military conflict.
- In the best instances, effective pastoral systems ensured that schools had an early knowledge of family circumstances. Staff were able to monitor and, where necessary, support students who were reacting adversely to a change in home/school environment or disruption within their families.
- Schools with high proportions of Service children on roll, including Service Children's Education schools abroad, were often more effective in supporting children's personal needs effectively and promptly.
- Continual moves had a considerable impact on Service children and young people's social and emotional development and their friendships.
- Local authorities visited in the UK during the survey had differing systems for school admissions and this caused problems for Service families, because of delays in admissions departments processing requests for school places, or finding a school that could meet a child's needs.
- Systems of transfer of children's records between schools were uncoordinated and important information was delayed or did not arrive at all.
- There was no continuous learning and development record which accompanied a Service child throughout the whole of their education. Information from the previous school was sometimes insufficient to ensure that the receiving school could prepare for and meet the child's learning needs immediately upon arrival.
- Partnerships between schools and external agencies were judged to be good overall, both in England and in Service Children's Education schools overseas. Key aspects of this provision included the collaborative work of Pupil and Family Services in Germany and Cyprus in helping to meet a wide range of pupil needs; and the role played by some local authorities in England in assisting schools to provide social and emotional support to Service children and their families.
- Local authorities that had a long serving association with Service families and those with higher numbers of Service children in their schools were better placed to recognise and meet their needs.

- Additional funding streams for Service children varied from local authority to local authority in England so there was no equivalence of provision.
- There was generally a lack of continuity of support and provision for children from Service families as they moved between the schools surveyed, particularly those that moved singly or in very small numbers in the UK, or when they moved during term times. This tended to have a greater effect on those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with missing records or those whose parents did not disclose their needs at all.
- Service Children's Education schools in Germany and Cyprus were not able to fully meet the needs of all of the 14–19-year-olds. Staying on rates in school sixth forms were too low. Young people were not always able to follow courses of their choice due to the limited range of subject options and the restricted qualifications structure available to them. As a result, some young people dropped out of full-time education or training; their destinations were not specifically monitored and there was weak accountability for their outcomes.

## Recommendations

The Department for Education should:

- ensure that, where relevant, national policy includes Service children as a distinctive group so that their specific needs remain visible
- collate and disseminate the most up-to-date research and good practice relating to Service children and their families to help schools and local authorities to better understand and respond to their needs.

The Ministry of Defence should:

- consider the benefits of developing and maintaining an accurate register of Service children and young people, including those that have left compulsory education, in the UK and overseas to track where they are
- as far as military priorities permit, allow greater flexibility in relation to movement dates for the families of serving personnel to minimise the impact of school moves on Service children.

Service Children's Education should:

- take steps to better meet the needs of all 14–19-year-old young people from Service families overseas in order to assist their progression into further and higher education and to provide them with further vocational, as well as academic, options.

Schools should:

- be aware of the distinct needs of service children and make any necessary provision for them

- improve the system for the transfer of children and their records from one school to another, ensuring that: all records are cumulative; remain confidential; are of a consistently high standard; and arrive in a timely way at the receiving school and local authority
- use all available information to carry out a prompt assessment of children's needs.

Local authorities should:

- re-evaluate their admissions processes to ensure they fully carry out the requirements of the School Admissions Code and take appropriate account of requests from service families for school places
- ensure the prompt assessment of Service children's particular needs
- work with schools to develop an effective system for the transfer of documentation of any child with special educational needs and/or disabilities including any previous statutory assessment of need.

## Service families and their children

1. Service children are those children or young people who have a parent or parents who are Service personnel, serving in the regular military units of all Her Majesty's Forces, and exercising parental care and responsibility. Many Service personnel are actively deployed in overseas conflicts and their families are highly mobile. The combination of deployment of a family member and regular moves of home and school has the potential for causing high levels of anxiety and stress for Service families whether living in the United Kingdom or overseas.
2. In 2006, the House of Commons Defence Committee identified a concern that there was no accurate record of the numbers of children from Service families in the UK, or where they were. Since that time, the Department for Education (DfE) has included an indicator in the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) to record numbers of Service children in state schools in England. Using the indicator, the annual census in January 2010 identified 37,940 Service children in English schools.<sup>3</sup>
3. However, developing an accurate database for Service children in the whole of the UK is fraught with challenges since the DfE only collects data for Service

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<sup>3</sup> A Service child identifier was introduced into the DfE's Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) in 2008. This indicates if a child has a parent or parents who are Service personnel, serving in regular military units of all HM Forces and exercising parental care and responsibility. This is only relevant to children whose parents are designated as Personnel Category 1 or 2, as shown on the Ministry of Defence website. An additional code of 'unknown' is recorded by the school to indicate no response given or other reason for no information. This information is collected in the January census only, for all pupils on roll on census day and is fed into the National Pupil Database (NPD), which is a database for all pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) to Key Stage 5.



children educated in state schools in England. Additionally, parents have the choice whether or not to declare that they are a Service family. Other estimates, which include England and abroad, place the number of Service children significantly higher:

- The Ministry of Defence’s Children and Young People’s Plan 2010–2013 estimated that over 120,000 children and young people belonged to the Service community.
  - The Royal Navy and Royal Marine Children’s Fund calculated in November 2009 that there were 174,341 Service children.<sup>4</sup>
  - A review of Ministry of Defence personnel records in November 2010 showed a total of 90,450 dependants, aged 18 and under of military personnel. However, this figure is likely to be underestimated as not all children are entered onto the personal military record of serving Service personnel. For example, there is no definitive number of pre-school Service children. Further, there are no known numbers for serving reservists, so neither are there known numbers of how many children are in their families.
4. Service Children’s Education holds a database of children educated in Service schools or who are home educated overseas. There is no accurate number of nought to three-year-old children overseas or accurate number of young people not in education or training overseas. At the time of the survey’s fieldwork, 9,799 Service children were being educated in Service Children’s Education schools outside of the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> There were 8,127 Service children and young people educated in UK boarding schools, of which 860 were in state boarding schools.<sup>6</sup> This did not include all day students at independent schools.
  5. Service children make up an estimated 0.5% of the total school population in England. Out of 152 English local authorities, 85 have at least 0.1% of the local school population made up of Service children. Eighteen local authorities currently have the highest concentrations of Service families with between 1% and 8.1% of those on roll being Service children. In total, there are about 1,361 maintained schools in England and Wales known to have Service children on roll and in varying proportions.<sup>7</sup> There is no accurate record of Service children educated in independent schools as not all serving personnel claim the

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<sup>4</sup> *The overlooked casualties of conflict survey*, MoD, 2009; using MoD Continuous Attitude Surveys for Armed Forces personnel and families of Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel 2008 (un-validated data) [www.rnrmchildrensfund.org.uk/research](http://www.rnrmchildrensfund.org.uk/research).

<sup>5</sup> *Service Children’s Education Autumn Census*, SCE, 2010 (See footnote 1)

<sup>6</sup> Children’s Education Advisory Service (CEAS) database as at September 2010.

<sup>7</sup> DfE PLASC data, January 2010 (See footnote 3): for maintained nursery, maintained primary, state-funded secondary and special schools.

Continuity of Education Allowance through the Children's Advisory Service which provides an indicator of their status as Service children.<sup>8</sup>

6. There is a clear recognition by Government that the mobility associated with Service life can have a detrimental impact on children's emotional well-being and their educational attainment. In 2006, the House of Commons Defence Committee published a report on the education of Service children and stated that the Ministry of Defence should work with the then Department for Education and Skills, local authorities and individual schools to mitigate the worst effects of such mobility.<sup>9</sup> It also noted that the system for the transfer of student records between schools was often poor and needed to be improved. *The third joint chief inspectors' report on safeguarding children* also recognised the vulnerability of Service children and identified that when Service families are based overseas, the Ministry of Defence has a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting their welfare.<sup>10</sup>
7. A number of Armed Forces welfare organisations do provide important support services for Service families. For example, one base visited by inspectors, employed Community Development Workers as part of the Army Welfare Service, whose role included family, school and Service base liaison.<sup>11</sup>
8. The Children's Education Advisory Service was established in September 2004. It is an organisation funded by the Ministry of Defence and a part of the Ministry of Defence's overarching Directorate of Children and Young People. It provides information, advice and support to Service families, and eligible Ministry of Defence civilians, on a range of issues relating to the education of their children in the UK and overseas including assistance with claiming the Continuity of Education Allowance.<sup>12</sup>
9. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) is commissioned to provide safeguarding Services on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. The

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<sup>8</sup> There are currently 750 children whose parents claim a Continuity of Education Allowance for the boarding element of their schooling at maintained boarding schools in the UK. Parents of children without a special educational need and/or disability receive no assistance towards the education of their children in independent schools; any allowance is only to cover the boarding element. Parents may claim an education allowance if their child has a special educational need (CEA (SENA)). Children may be cared for and educated in specialist or non-specialist day or boarding independent schools. There are approximately 1,204 CEA (SENA) claimants which covers their specialist education. If the child boards, their parents may also be amongst the 750 CEA claimants.

<sup>9</sup> *Educating Service children: eleventh report of Session 2005–06*; House of Commons Defence Committee; [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmdfence/1054/105406.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmdfence/1054/105406.htm).

<sup>10</sup> *The third joint chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children*, 2008, paragraphs 251/252/253: [www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk/Safeguarding-Children/2008-report](http://www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk/Safeguarding-Children/2008-report)

<sup>11</sup> Army Welfare Service: [www.modoracle.com/service\\_welfare/aws.html](http://www.modoracle.com/service_welfare/aws.html)

<sup>12</sup> The Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS); [www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Education/ChildrensEducationAdvisoryService](http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Education/ChildrensEducationAdvisoryService).

association provides statutory social work services, and some health provision, to the overseas Commands. It provides a non-statutory service to the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the United Kingdom. It provides a statutory social work service, and non-statutory (personal support) service, in Brunei, Gibraltar and Cyprus. A representative from SSAFA sits on the Ministry of Defence's Children and Young People's Board. Local Commands, such as in Germany and Cyprus, have local Safeguarding Children's Boards and SSAFA is represented on these.

10. Service parents also obtain support through the relevant families' federations: The Army Families' Federation (AFF); the Royal Air Force Families' Federation (RAFFF) or the Naval Families' Federation (NFF). Small teams answer in excess of 7,000 enquiries each year, of which at least 5% are related to education and childcare.<sup>13</sup> Each federation tries to promote the role of the Children's Education Advisory Service and may signpost families to other support services.

### **The characteristics of Service family life**

11. Service children have unique needs. Whether living in the UK or overseas, they face challenges that often go beyond the experience of the majority of families and children living in the UK.
12. A key feature of life in the Armed Forces is that families are likely to move home, to different parts of the UK and abroad, on a regular basis. The number of moves will be dependent on the length of service of the serving parent and their role within the Armed Forces. Some families, including the children in these families, are more resilient to this disruption than others and therefore their needs are not always the same. However, in discussions with inspectors, parents invariably identified the disruption, caused by their geographical mobility, as being the biggest challenge faced by themselves and their children. Disruption is further exacerbated for children in these families as they had to change schools generally outside of normal school term dates.
13. There is considerable complexity in the structure of the Armed Forces which means that they should not be regarded as a single entity. For example, infantry regiments often move together in large-scale deployments, whereas Army engineers and Air Force personnel are more likely to move singly or in small-scale 'trickle' postings. As a result, the impact and experience of mobility for a Service family in one branch of the Armed Forces may not be the same as for another.
14. Parents spoken to during the survey recognised the importance of stability for their children and, in particular, for their academic success and well-being. They were potentially faced with making crucial life choices to support this and secure a good education for their children, in a good school. For example, some

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<sup>13</sup> Based on AFF statistics for 2008–2010 from *aff Annual Report, 2008-2009*; [www.aff.org.uk/aff\\_publications.htm](http://www.aff.org.uk/aff_publications.htm)

serving forces personnel told inspectors that they had not taken a promotion where this would have required another family move; others were making the ultimate choice to leave the Armed Forces.

15. The survey also found that the pattern of settlement of Service families in England was in the process of change. With the introduction of new employment models and the frustrations of continual moves experienced by some ranks, Service families were increasingly seeking to put down roots within communities outside of their military base by moving out of military accommodation to buy or rent their own home. In some cases, this meant that the deployed Service parent commuted to work or went unaccompanied abroad.
16. The frequency and duration of operational deployments by a parent can have far-reaching consequences for Service families. This includes lengthy periods of separation and dislocation. In extreme cases, it could involve bereavement, or lead to a family having to accept and cope with physical or mental damage to a parent as a result of operational deployment. Inspectors came across children who needed additional support during such times.
17. A very small number of Service children and young people have both parents serving in the Armed Forces who are deployed away from home at the same time.<sup>14</sup> While the Ministry of Defence is keen to minimise these situations, inspectors came across a small number of children where this was a reality: for example, where they had a mother who was a military nurse serving in Iraq and a father who had been deployed to Afghanistan. Such children may be cared for by other family members or by nannies. This situation may cause emotional disturbance for these children as they worry about both parents being away.

## Outcomes for children and young people

### Academic achievement

18. National data show that, in general, most Service children educated in mainstream maintained schools in England and overseas, attain as well as or better than their non-Service peers at the end of every key stage.<sup>15</sup> This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those learning English as an additional language. This suggests that most children and young people make good progress in overcoming barriers to learning

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<sup>14</sup> The *overlooked casualties of conflict report*, MoD, 2009; states 9.5% of the Naval Service is female. Women and mothers regularly head to sea as part of their military career. This is a feature of the modern Armed Forces; [www.rnrmchildrensfund.org.uk/research](http://www.rnrmchildrensfund.org.uk/research)

<sup>15</sup> Attainment is the term used for the standard of pupils' work generally shown by test and examination results. National data are published on the Department for Education website; [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

associated with Service life and respond to the additional interventions and support offered to them.

19. In 2009, Service children in mainstream maintained secondary schools in England outperformed their peers slightly at GCSE; on average by one grade higher in one subject, based on DfE calculations. However, there were four local authorities where Service children did not follow this national trend.
20. The attainment of Service children educated overseas in Service Children's Education schools is also broadly similar, and in some cases higher, than that of their counterparts in English schools. Service children overseas achieve higher National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and at Key Stage 4. In 2010, Service children in England generally achieved higher National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 2 than Service children overseas, however in previous years the situation was reversed. In 2010, Service children making two levels of progress at Key Stages 1 and 2 in schools abroad is in line with their counterparts in England.<sup>16</sup>
21. At Key Stage 4, 78% of 2,176 Service children in England, reported in the 2010 cohort, achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C and equivalents compared to 76% of non-Service children. When comparisons were made including English and mathematics, 59% of Service children achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C and equivalents compared to 55% of non-Service children.<sup>17</sup> For the same period, Service Children's Education schools overseas achieved a 62% pass rate for A\* to C grades including English and Mathematics, which was above the English national average.
22. There are less than five entries in each subject at GCE A level in the vast majority of Service Children's Education sixth forms in Germany and Cyprus in each academic year. In 2010, there were just 292 entries across these schools, which represented fewer than 100 students. Four out of the six Service Children's Education secondary schools with sixth forms in Germany and Cyprus achieved a 100% pass rate for GCE A level at grades A to E and one school achieved a 100% pass rate at grades A to C, with a Service Children's Education overall success rate at grades A to C of 71%, which was slightly below the schools in England unvalidated pass rate.
23. Despite the relatively positive picture of Service children's attainment overall, national data indicate that mobile Service children do not perform as well as

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<sup>16</sup> According to Service Children's Education's 2010 Data, 84% of all primary pupils made the required two levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English and 83% made the required two levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in mathematics. These are equivalent to the percentages for all children's progress in mainstream maintained schools in England. However, it must be noted that it is difficult to assess Service children's progress accurately whether educated in mainstream schools in England or in schools abroad, due to the high mobility of pupils and the changing cohorts.

<sup>17</sup> [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

non-mobile Service children across all key stages. For example, the Department for Education's recent study of Service children found that moving schools in Years 10 or 11 was associated with a massive fall in performance at GCSE level and those young people who were geographically stable during these crucial years achieved better.<sup>18</sup>

24. The national picture of achievement for Service children was also reflected in the sample of schools visited during the survey. Twenty seven out of the 30 maintained schools visited specifically tracked Service children's attainment, although in some schools this work was in its early stages. In 25 of these schools, the data showed that Service children achieved broadly in line with or better than other pupils. Three schools visited, in England, however, had no clear procedures to monitor the outcomes of children from Service families, as a discrete group, and there was insufficient data available to undertake more detailed analysis.
25. In those English schools visited, with considerable proportions of mobile Service families' children on roll, inspectors found that the schools' published attainment data were potentially misleading. Frequently, their school population was not stable and therefore their published attainment figures referred to quite different cohorts of pupils, making it impossible to quantify pupil progress accurately. If children left before the end of Year 6, it could appear in published data that a school had underachieved because not all of those children on roll at the end of Key Stage 1 completed their education to the end of Key Stage 2. Children's progress from one key stage to another could not be accurately measured and was therefore statistically flawed.<sup>19</sup> Equally when schools gained children from Scotland, Northern Ireland or from outside of the United Kingdom, with no equivalent data, it was difficult to illustrate their progress as they did not appear in national datasets. Many of these schools, therefore, used individual progress as a more accurate representation of the true progress for pupils in their school.

One school in England experienced 33% mobility in its school population. The school helped many of the children to make progress, only for them to move away before the end of Year 6. Consequently, these pupils' actual test results were not counted in the school's overall results for progress and attainment.

26. The educational achievements made by Service children in the schools visited were often the result of high levels of targeted support necessary to enable them to catch up with their learning following a move from another school.

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<sup>18</sup> Department for Education research report *DfE-RR011: the educational performance of children of Service personnel*, DfE, 2010; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR011](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR011).

<sup>19</sup> Average mobility in England varies. Average mobility in Service Children's Education primary schools is 70% each year according to Service Children's Education data.

Inspectors also found indications that some pupils from Service families did not achieve as well as they might have done if they had been more geographically stable. Some teachers found it hard to set accurate and appropriately challenging targets for children new to their school and some children did not hit the targets predicted of them at their previous school, even though they achieved in line with national norms.

## Social and emotional well-being

27. Although some Service families' children were more resilient than others, the survey confirmed that a key impact of Service life on children and young people was one of social and emotional disturbance. Schools reported an increasing number of problems relating to the social and emotional welfare of Service children and were taking targeted steps to address them through school-based training and by working in partnership with a range of support agencies, such as bereavement and other counselling services. In the best instances, effective pastoral systems ensured that schools had early knowledge of those families where parents were deployed in areas of military conflict. Staff were able to monitor and, where necessary, support students who were reacting adversely to the situation.
28. None of the schools visited during the survey identified any considerable differences in the general behaviour displayed by children from Service families and those from non-Service families. However, three schools, two of them secondary, noted that the behaviour of some children deteriorated while a parent was on active deployment and one primary school commented that the greatest impact in deterioration of behaviour was seen in boys at Key Stage 1. Several schools which returned the survey questionnaire also commented similarly.

One pupil inspectors spoke with said that he missed a male presence in the house and that his father's placement in Iraq, when he was much younger, still worried him. He reported he would welcome the opportunity to speak to someone about army life and his dad's work. His mother felt that her son's behaviour deteriorated when his dad was away from the home.

Another boy inspectors spoke with said that he has reacted badly to the many changes of school as his stepfather was posted around the country. He explained how he was 'silly rather than bad' but he had developed a reputation within schools and on the camps as someone always in trouble. His teenage years were as difficult. He was bored and troubled. However, the staff at his school never gave up on him, talking to him each day at times, to try to help him improve his behaviour. Finally, in Year 11, with predicted GCSE grades of Es and unclassified, he agreed to undertake a

Connecting Youth Culture<sup>20</sup> course with a local voluntary youth Service provider. This provided the trigger he needed. He went on to pass all his GCSEs, with sufficiently high grades to be considered for selection at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

29. Schools also recognised a number of social and emotional pressures that were created around single families and the readjustments needed when a partner returned from active service. In some schools visited, the vast majority of parents from Service families told inspectors they functioned as 'single parents' while the other parent was posted abroad. Many children said they were missing the male role model in their family. They were worried about whether Dad would come back and were anxious when he went away.

One school who responded to the survey questionnaire stated: 'It is everyday talk in our dining room to hear children say: "Four more sleeps before Daddy is home!" Weekly repatriation is on our school doorstep and it is not unusual for children to comment, as Hercules fly over: "There goes another 'body' plane".'

30. Parents reported that children with certain special educational needs and/or disabilities, found frequent moves particularly hard. Where a move was at short notice or during the middle of the academic year, getting the child emotionally prepared for a new school could be very difficult and was particularly so for children on the autistic spectrum; these children feared the unknown new home or school, they hated losing friends when they left and were anxious about forming new friendships.

One mother inspectors spoke with, who had recently moved, said that she had to fight to get an address so that photographs of the new house could be taken and a visual representation could be given to her child with autism.

31. With few exceptions, the Service children told inspectors that they did not like their frequent changes of school. One young person said, 'You have to get on with it, but I don't like it.' While young people confirmed that they developed resilience when moving, they found the interruptions to their friendships difficult to cope with. They felt that this had an impact on their personal development and were upset by the uncertainty that sometimes accompanied a proposed move.
32. Children in Service families reported that they found it particularly hard to make friends when they moved part way through the school year, as other children in the school had already established their friendship groups. It was common for pupils spoken to by inspectors, to state that they had virtually no lasting

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<sup>20</sup> Connecting Youth Culture aims to work with the arts and youth culture to help young people unlock their potential; [www.c-y-c.co.uk](http://www.c-y-c.co.uk).



friendships. Even with modern communication technology, they had found sustaining friendships very difficult. Although they said that they were generally happy, many young people could not name a particularly close friend.

33. When educated abroad in Service Children's Education schools, children often said that they favoured the military environment because they received moral support from their friends in times of difficulty. They spoke highly of the support they received from these schools when they were about to move, due to their parent's posting, or when a parent was soon to be absent for a long time. This was also true of Service children's comments in those schools in England that were highly attuned to the needs of Service children because they had a large Service children population.
34. Headteachers in some of the English schools visited reported that a small proportion of civilian families had moved their children out of schools with Service families' children on roll to avoid their children losing friends on a continual basis. Some parents from Service families told inspectors that their children avoided making close friendships altogether. This was confirmed by some of the older Service children spoken with. They generally found it easier as boarders, or when in Service Children's Education schools, as all the families were then, as one young person described it, 'in the same boat'. One example of a successful move to boarding provision is illustrated below:

One lower sixth boarder had previously attended five different primary schools. He said that he had been unsuccessful in his educational studies prior to starting at boarding school. The various school moves, while offering a 'fresh start' each time, had left him with poor literacy skills. He found that the stability offered by boarding provision, including supervised evening prep, had helped him to re-engage with learning, enabling him to progress in writing and catch up with his peers, which he had been unable to do prior to this.

## The impact of mobility on provision

### School admissions

35. Inspectors found a general frustration among Service families concerning the process of applying to a school from abroad or from another posting, particularly when given very short notice or when notification of a new permanent address was delayed. In a small number of instances, parents said that they received as little as 10 days' notice of a posting although, more generally, the notice period was around 12 weeks. Difficulties were also exacerbated by the fact that not all local authorities were prepared to accept a British Forces Posted Overseas (BFPO) address or confirmation of a new posting as sufficient information to enable them to start processing an application. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities worried that they would not be able to get their child into a school of their choice, and which was appropriate to their needs, particularly if the

notification of posting came towards the end of the summer term or during the summer holidays.

36. Because of the particular mobility patterns experienced by Service families, applications for admission to schools were often being made outside of the normal local authority admission process and were known as 'casual' or 'additional' admissions. Redeployment of Service families did not often neatly coincide with the start of a school year or term. This meant that, to gain a place in their preferred or any popular school, parents almost always had to go through the local authority's appeals process. A small proportion of families spoken with during the survey, had siblings in the same key stage in different schools because of unsuccessful applications and a lack of school places available to them. The following examples illustrate the complexity of the issues involved, particularly when families are seeking places in already heavily subscribed schools.

One family had been settled in an area for some years. The father was deployed in Afghanistan and was expecting to be stationed near to home on his return. While in Afghanistan, he had been informed that he would be moving to another part of the UK, from where he would be required to go to sea. The family had sold their house and were in the process of moving into married quarters, but little could be arranged until the father's return to the UK. He discovered the difficulties of applying for schools outside of the usual deadlines for admission. His eldest son did not initially get into the secondary school of choice, but now had a place after an appeal. Two sons were of junior school age. One son had got into his school of choice after a place became available on the waiting list. However, the other boy had been allocated to a different junior school and the family was in the process of appealing. The younger sister was due to attend a separate infant school. If the appeal failed, the family would have to find ways to get children to and from four separate schools.

A mother had had to move while her husband was serving in Afghanistan. Her three children were all going to be educated in separate schools. She felt that the welfare of families during postings was not sufficiently considered and said that wives were frequently left to sort the moving house and finding of schools when their husbands were already deployed. She said that it was very stressful trying to sort everything on her own.

37. The school admissions policies operated by the 16 local authorities in England, taking part in the survey, were variable in practice<sup>21</sup>. Three of the local

<sup>21</sup> *The School Admissions Code*, DFE, 2009: [www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmissions/a00195/current-codes-and-regulations](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmissions/a00195/current-codes-and-regulations). The code requires local authorities to be responsible for all admissions including in-year admissions. A local authority's protocols for admissions must include Children of UK Service personnel.

authorities had 'smoothing' systems in place so that Service children could be allocated to schools before they left their previous schools. In these cases, no proof of residency was required before a place was allocated. In four authorities, council officers were aware of the difficulties that Service families experienced in gaining entry for their child to the school of their choice and three of the four were looking at strategies to resolve the issue. Two of the authorities included a representative from the Armed Forces on their school admissions forums. One local authority recognised Service family status as criteria on admissions appeals. Some of the authorities, however, made no special arrangements for admissions in respect of Service families, leaving systems particularly challenging to navigate for parents.

38. Some schools in England, particularly those near to large military bases, almost exclusively admitted Service children.<sup>22</sup> However, even in these local authority areas, inspectors found that a significant minority of Service children were being educated in schools where there were very few other pupils from Service backgrounds. Where this occurred, it was often the result of families choosing to live in private housing away from the base but sometimes it was because no places were available at schools nearer to the base. This sometimes caused additional difficulties, as schools with less experience of Service children were generally less empathetic to their particular needs and did not always have the resources to provide additional support if necessary. Some schools were not even aware that a pupil was from a Service family and therefore were unable to identify Service children as such on their annual school census. Service children's needs may be completely masked if they are not disclosed to schools.
39. Many parents who had been posted abroad had considered the option of claiming a Continuity of Education Allowance to facilitate a boarding place at a school in the United Kingdom in order to minimise disruption to their child's secondary education. However, some expressed concern that this funding did not cover the cost of education (as opposed to boarding) provision in an independent school or to further education outside of a school. As a result, some families said that they were unable to fund alternative education routes themselves if they were unsuccessful in gaining places at maintained boarding schools or colleges.

## **Children's transfers and their records**

40. The system of transferring information when a Service child moved from one school to another was found to be uncoordinated and relied on the parents taking records with them by hand, which potentially led to them being lost or tampered with. This was problematic in the case of records for excluded children, particularly if there was a time delay in finding a new school place.

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<sup>22</sup> DfE annual school census data and school responses to survey questionnaires

41. Inspectors found no cases of a single cumulative learning and development record for each child which could be passed between providers. Records rarely indicated whether a pupil had undergone multiple moves. This was particularly an issue where a child had not manifested problems in the previous school, but had experienced difficulties further back in their education.
42. Schools in England and overseas reported that they were not always in a position to send records ahead of time because they did not know in advance which school the child would be joining. At other times, records followed the child, but these were sometimes considerably delayed or never arrived at all. This meant necessary assessment and provision was delayed, as illustrated by the example below:

One family who arrived in England from Germany faced problems with the transfer of records and continuity of support for their son's speech and language needs. Both school and family had to wait for the records to arrive, only to discover they contained nothing about the son's special needs. Fortunately, the mother had kept copies of the relevant documentation so the school was able to make a referral. However, the whole process was very slow and it had taken 12 months to gain access to the necessary support.

43. In the schools visited in England, headteachers, special educational needs coordinators and administrative staff all commented on the frequent difficulties they had in chasing up children's records that were missing or lacking in detail. Schools stated that they found following up records with schools in Scotland and Northern Ireland particularly difficult.
44. Inspectors found that Service children were not routinely tracked by their schools or any other agency upon leaving. Consequently, there was a danger that they could be effectively 'missing' from the system. Some headteachers told inspectors that they did not know where Service children had gone after leaving their school. No agency was sufficiently accountable for tracking pupils' moves.
45. Transfer of accurate information relating to children's specific needs was sometimes affected by parents' reluctance to disclose relevant information. Some parents, for example, told inspectors that they had not informed the school or the Children's Education Advisory Service of their child's special needs prior to transfer for fear that this may impact on their postings or promotion; this was despite the Ministry of Defence advice that this would not usually be the case, unless it was felt strongly that a child's needs could not be met. This invariably meant that the receiving school may know nothing of the child's needs and could not effectively prepare for them.
46. In some instances, social work involvement was crucial to the successful transfer of a pupil from the UK. Where this was the case, the social worker from the local authority contacted the Service Children's Education school

before the child arrived so that they could be informed and prepared. Conversely, when abroad, the SSAFA social worker or Service Children's Education educational social worker was expected to work closely with families and children with the most complex needs to ensure a successful transfer. This included notifying the receiving local authority and contacting the receiving school as shown in the following example:

A Year 6 pupil came from a Cyprus Service Children's Education school, with identified mild Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Asperger's Syndrome, for which he received medication. The Cyprus school contacted the school in England prior to the family's move. He arrived with a comprehensive set of records, including academic records, paediatric, medical, educational psychiatric reports and a 'diary' of events, completed by teachers and learning support assistants who logged any incidents, in or out of the classroom. The school was therefore aware of these difficulties prior to the pupil's arrival and had been able to plan for his provision. The parent and child reported that his educational social worker in Cyprus had helped greatly prior to transition. He had talked about the new school with the pupil; they had looked together at videos of the area and the school's website. The pupil had found this series of one-to-one sessions very helpful and he mentioned the educational social worker by name, on several occasions, as being someone who had helped him.

47. Transfer of information between the Service Children's Education schools abroad was generally smoother than between these schools and schools in England or other parts of the United Kingdom. This was partly because the Service Children's Education schools shared the same data systems but also reflected the close working relationships between the headteachers, who played a key role in supporting the successful transfer of information between their schools.
48. A small number of families who spoke with inspectors believed that their child's needs could not be fully met in Service Children's Education schools abroad, but they had no desire to request a posting back to the United Kingdom. They had therefore made the decision to educate their child at home. Service Children's Education had a system in place to record all children known to be educated at home. The Agency undertook a minimum of one annual visit and any identified safeguarding concerns were reported to the appropriate agencies overseas.

### **Settling in – the role of schools in transition**

49. In the schools visited with clearly defined transfer procedures, and where destination details were available in good time, staff proactively contacted the receiving school and/or looked at the new school's website with the child to smooth the transition. This is illustrated in the following example:

A pupil with a statement of educational needs transferred between schools in Year 1. The move was problem free because there was excellent communication between the headteacher at the previous school and his current school. The transfer of information had been smooth and full records had been passed on. The continuity of needs had been managed very sensitively and careful consideration had been given to whether the school could meet the pupils' needs. The child's mother felt she had been well informed and fully involved throughout the process. In addition, there has been open dialogue with school staff who made suggestions that helped the parents support their child at home. The school also supported the parents successfully to request an extended posting, so that the pupil did not have to change schools again before the end of Year 2.

50. In the schools with boarding provision, induction arrangements were particularly well defined with published admissions procedures. All the boarding schools visited had a specific policy of keeping in close contact with the parents of new pupils to ensure that they settled in well. They offered flexible formal opportunities for young people and their families to visit the school and meet with staff.
51. Service children confirmed that settling into a new school, whether in the UK or abroad, was made easier if they had received a warm welcome. They found that buddy systems, and the additional classroom support they often received when they first arrived, were helpful in enabling them to feel settled. However, several pupils described how they had experienced problems with settling that sometimes affected their behaviour or attitudes. In one school in the UK, for example, pupils complained of bullying that focused on the fact that their parents were members of the Armed Forces.
52. Secondary schools visited, or which responded to the survey questionnaire, and pupils spoken to by inspectors, confirmed that transition between schools was particularly difficult when Service children were preparing for GCSE examinations or A levels. This was often because schools followed a range of different syllabuses and used different examination boards, so courses were frequently not compatible. Sequencing of various topics within the syllabus also varied from school to school so that Service children who were subject to several moves sometimes repeated or missed out on aspects of the curriculum. Inspectors found examples of schools, and unit commanders in the military bases in England and overseas, being sympathetic to this and doing as much as they could to mitigate the negative impacts of transition during this phase of young people's education.

A pupil arrived in a Cyprus school a term before he was due to take his GCSE examinations. Through good liaison with the sending school, teachers managed to provide specially planned work to enable the pupil to continue his courses to completion. While he did not do as well as expected, he still achieved enough to be able to take A-level courses in the school and reported that he was 'back on track'.

The parent of another Cyprus pupil was deployed to the UK half way through her GCSE course. The unit commander allowed the rest of the family to stay an extra year in military accommodation so that the daughter could finish her courses and take her examinations.

53. Service Children's Education schools overseas worked closely with the Commands to gain an early indication of when regimental or significant moves were planned. Sometimes, but not always, these fell outside of school term times and sometimes the military priority meant that a shorter notice period was given.
54. The Service Children's Education schools visited were well prepared to provide an effective induction for pupils and their families at any time in the school year. Secondary schools in both Germany and Cyprus arranged a comprehensive and well-planned programme for pupils transferring from Year 6. It was usual practice for the receiving Service Children's Education headteacher to visit schools in England where large numbers of children were transferring from.
55. Sending and receiving schools in England found it difficult when children and young people transferred mid term. It was not only unsettling for Service children but also disruptive to existing groups and classes.
56. A small number of Service Children's Education schools and schools in England employed a 'mobility' or 'family support' coordinator whose specific task is to prepare children for transition in and out of the school. The success of their role was dependent on them having a thorough knowledge of both the education system and the Armed Forces.

A school in Cyprus had employed a mobility coordinator specifically to manage the transition of pupils as they arrived in and departed from the school. The parents highly valued the support and guidance they and their child received from this member of staff. He gave them very useful information, answered their questions and generally put their minds at rest well before they moved to their new base. When children are newly admitted to the school, the mobility coordinator regularly checked that they were settling in well and provided any support that was required. He kept in regular contact with the parents during these early days as well. As a result, the parents report that their children settled in very quickly and the children agreed.

57. Where Service Children's Education schools used a mobility coordinator, there were instances of those individuals liaising closely with, or visiting, the destination schools in the UK to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

## Support for Service children and their families

58. All but two of the schools visited in England during the survey expressed the view that at particular times, Service children's needs were different from those of other pupils at the school and required the school to give additional support – socially, emotionally and academically. Some children had become very resilient and needed little additional intervention and support; others coped less well with moving regularly and their changing friendship groups.
59. While not all Service children were considered to be vulnerable, many became vulnerable at particular times, such as following or preparing for a move, or when a family member was deployed on active service. This was exacerbated by the higher levels of military activity in areas of conflict such as Afghanistan, during the time of the survey, and the associated media coverage. Some of the schools visited in England had become increasingly aware of greater levels of distress among pupils whose parents were serving in Afghanistan.

One father who had been deployed in Afghanistan reported that a good support package was offered by army welfare to assist his family while he was away. For example, they organised trips to places of interest during the holidays and arranged social functions for wives and children. The school also offered his child very good emotional support while he was away and ensured his schooling didn't suffer. He also reported that the school was very understanding when the family requested one week for a family holiday on his return from Afghanistan.

60. The rotation of regiments meant that, in schools with high numbers of Service children, the proportion of vulnerable pupils within the school may suddenly rise. Most of the schools visited in England had a nominated person responsible for coordinating support to identify vulnerable children, including those from Service families, as part of the provision for care, guidance and support. In some cases there was a specific person appointed in schools in England to link to Service families, for example a parent support adviser or a family support coordinator as illustrated by the examples below.

One school in England had developed a project in which a family support coordinator post had been established as a liaison between school and Service families. Parents, pupils, school staff and civilian and military professionals all confirmed that this role was proving to be highly effective. The coordinator was making a real difference to the lives of Service families and to the extended school community. She provided both practical and emotional support and managed her caseload effectively. This was aided by her educational knowledge from previous roles working in schools and in the field of child protection. She also had in-depth knowledge of the military having been a Service child herself, later becoming a Service wife and mother, and having worked for Service welfare organisations in the past.



Another school in England placed considerable emphasis on supporting all pupils' emotional and personal development needs and used several complementary programmes. One successful example was the appointment of an 'emotional first aider' to provide early intervention and support for pupils. This person was much appreciated by the Service pupils especially where they were separated from a parent for a long period or where they were undergoing stressful family situations.

61. The need to support parents who were feeling isolated while their partner was deployed abroad was identified by three of the English schools visited. In two of these schools, parents had been offered training to allow them to volunteer as classroom assistants in their child's primary school. The schools saw this as a way of getting them engaged in the local community and in their child's learning, as in the example below.

One school organised English classes for mothers in Service families who wished to develop their language skills. This had supported parents who sometimes felt isolated to meet, engage with the school community and develop their confidence. As a response of their feedback, the school was considering the use of a crèche to support parents who had younger children to attend future courses.

62. A small number of parents interviewed said that they felt uncomfortable about sharing personal information with the Army Welfare Service because they had doubts about confidentiality.

For example one parent, a serving soldier, was reluctant for his Year 11 son to receive any form of support. The boy needed support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service due to significant emotional difficulties. However, the parent felt that there was a stigma attached both to notifying the Army Welfare Services of his son's needs and in seeking the appropriate professional support for a member of his family.

63. Some of the schools visited had experienced a change in the ethnic background of Service children joining them. For example, the British Army employed Gurkhas and other foreign nationals in some of their regiments in large numbers. These personnel were accompanied by their families, which sometimes meant that a school with an influx of minority ethnic pupils had to respond to a number of complex cultural and social issues. In one school, for example, Service children spoke seven different languages. While some of these children arrived with a good command of English, others were having to learn English as an additional language and had to be given significant additional support. An example of successful practice is illustrated below:

In one school, most Service families were from Gurkha regiments. The school ensured a smooth transition by employing a Nepalese teaching assistant to liaise with the families and support the children. She was able

to inform the school when fathers were away and ensured that the children's culture and religions were recognised and celebrated.

64. Some schools were running 'E-Blueys' clubs which enabled pupils to communicate electronically with parents and carers who were away on active service.<sup>23</sup> These could take place after school or during lunch times as illustrated below:

A primary school had responded sensitively to the needs of its Nepali children. Realising that these children rarely stayed for after school activities, the weekly E-Blueys club was organised during lunchtime. During these sessions, pupils had the opportunity to communicate directly by email with parents who were serving in Afghanistan. Each week, class teachers also completed comments in the 'E-Bluey Book' so that information could be passed on to serving family members about their children's progress and achievement.

65. Funding streams for Service children varied between local authorities so there was no equivalence of provision. Six of the 14 local authorities visited by inspectors provided extra funding for schools with high proportions of Service children. All of these authorities had the highest proportions of Service children within their schools. In one local authority, additional funding was distributed through the Schools Forum to mitigate the impact of mobility and Service life on the attainment of pupils from Service families.<sup>24</sup> Several schools received some form of turbulence funding from the local authority added to their annual budget. In the local authorities visited, the amount per pupil, and the mechanisms for calculating need, differed greatly.
66. Most of the schools visited in England reported that any additional high level needs for Service children normally had to be accommodated from within their existing budgets. While some schools merely saw this as a challenge to be overcome, others referred to the specific problems this posed for meeting the extra costs involved in providing emotional and learning support for Service children. Many of the schools found it hard to predict the numbers of Service children they might receive in any one financial year which also affected the accuracy of their budget setting.

<sup>23</sup> The e-bluey is a hybrid mail system that allows Service personnel, relatives and friends to maintain a personal and private contact with each other while serving on operations or exercise for more than 60-days duration. Probably the most important factor is that the system is two way. This means those Service personnel with access to the Internet can send e-blueys back home.

<sup>24</sup> For information on Schools Forums:

[www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/schoolsrevenuefunding/schoolforums](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/schoolsrevenuefunding/schoolforums).

## Provision for Service children with special educational needs and/or disabilities

67. While all Service children have unique needs, some encounter a number of other issues in relation to their special educational needs and/or disabilities, aspects of which may not be as prevalent if they were less geographically mobile. Some children do not cope well with change and the unfamiliar. They are genuinely fearful of a new home, a new location and a new school and having to make new friends; particularly when arriving midway through the year when friendship groups are already established. In the best practice, professionals recognised the potential difficulties associated with mobility for children with special needs and identified whose role it was within schools to help parents and children before and after the move. They helped to hasten the settling process and ensure the child's needs were met as soon as possible by liaison with other professionals, including the Children's Education Advisory Service, who were able to act as an advocate for the child and parents. In the worst cases, schools were not prepared for the arrival of a child with special educational needs and the Children's Education Advisory Service had not been informed. The specific needs of the child could therefore not immediately be met and the family and child were left feeling isolated, and sometimes frustrated because of the lack of coordination between the sending and receiving schools and the lack of documentation to make clear the child's needs.
68. Inspectors found that the main issues were related to the transfer of statements of special educational need and the decision by some local authorities in England to reassess these needs when a Service child moved to a school in their area.<sup>25</sup> This was sometimes coupled with inadequate information being sent to the receiving school and sometimes, as a consequence, led to support packages being delayed. In addition, some parents did not declare their child's special educational needs and/or disabilities so that, at best, they went unrecognised for a short period of time or, at worst, were not able to be met during their schooling abroad. In England, problems were worsened if a child could not be admitted to the school of their choice and that was most suitable for their needs due to a lack of available places.

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<sup>25</sup> There is a statutory duty on local authorities in England and Wales to carry on maintaining statements and arranging the special educational needs provision in those statements for pupils who move into their areas; *The Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (consolidation) Regulations 2001 – Regulation 23*. Local authorities have to state within six weeks whether they will review the statement and when they intend to do a new assessment, but they have to maintain the existing statement in the meantime. Children returning from overseas or another country in the UK will not return with a current statement. In guidance letters sent to local authorities and school governing bodies by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in January 2009, local authorities were urged to reassess returning Service children for their special educational needs as soon as possible and taking account of previous statements.

69. A considerable number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities arrived in Service Children's Education schools without clear information about their needs and past provision being transferred with them. These were referred to as 'under the wire' pupils. In Cyprus alone, in October 2010, 49 of the 126 pupils identified as having special educational needs had arrived in schools with no record of their needs. This situation occurred for a number of reasons but primarily because parents had not registered with the Children's Education Advisory Service. Such registration is required to trigger a special educational needs enquiry to check that the child's needs can be met in a Service Children's Education school. Inspectors found examples of parents who did not notify the advisory Service when they should have done, either because they were not aware of the system or sometimes because they did not realise that their child's needs were the sort that needed to be reported. The following example highlights some of the difficulties surrounding schools not being appropriately prepared for the arrival of pupils with very specific needs.

When a primary aged pupil joined his new Service Children's Education school, it was apparent that he had severe special educational needs, including the need for support with his personal care. The child's needs had not been made known to the Children's Education Advisory Service. Therefore, there was no opportunity to prepare appropriate support prior to the child starting at the school. When he arrived, his behaviour was aggressive. The school had received no information from previous schools but the current school eventually tracked down a previous school and discovered that the boy had been excluded for violent behaviour. Such was the serious nature of the behaviour that the previous school had retained detailed records of incidents. The current school was not told the family was only there for a six-month posting and the boy was facing permanent exclusion, even though the parents were soon due to go onto their next posting. The parents felt unable to respond to the school's questions and presented the school with a letter stating that they were going to home tutor the boy from the very next day. This took place and the family went overseas shortly afterwards, where the boy continued to be home tutored.

70. Systems for dealing with referrals from schools and assessing children's needs varied within the local authorities visited. When a child who formerly had a statement of special educational need transferred back to the UK, it was usual for the special provision previously identified not to be provided until such time as an assessment was completed and a new statement was drawn up. The time taken to reassess children varied considerably. Parents were frustrated when moving back to the UK from overseas when they found that their child's previous statement of special educational need was not recognised by the receiving local authority. A child would usually have to go through the assessment procedure again before the school could access funding and obtain the highest level of support required by the child. For some children moving between local authorities, statements were honoured but too slowly. This reflects the finding of Ofsted's 2010 review of special educational needs and

disability.<sup>26</sup> There were further challenges for parents and children moving to and from other countries in the UK, with different regulations and procedures, often leading to further time delays. Parents told inspectors that, due to the period of time needed to have their child's special needs identified and provision determined, it could take the duration of more than one posting to obtain a full assessment of need. The following case study provides an example of the repercussions of delayed assessment. Again, this reflected findings from Ofsted's review of special educational needs and disability:

A family with a severely dyslexic child, who had attended five schools in as many years, stated that they had encountered problems getting formal assessments carried out. In addition, there was no consistency in the level of assessed need and no transfer of assessment information from one local authority to another. This resulted in delays in assessment and consequently in getting appropriate support. The mother said that one school had been unreceptive to her son and the family felt forced to remove him. Following this further move, the assessment process had to be started over again. This was frustrating and stressful for all the family.

71. Four of the 15 local authorities inspectors visited as part of the survey recognised the challenge in continually reassessing Service children and had honoured a Service child's statement and support packages immediately without the necessity of immediate reassessment. However, as not all local authorities adopted this approach, and resources were often already stretched, there was no consistency for a Service child arriving with additional needs.<sup>27</sup> In two local authorities visited, Service children were given priority with other groups of children considered to be the most vulnerable. They were assessed promptly, not only for their special educational needs but also for their immediate social and emotional needs. Educational psychologists coordinated the provision alongside other related professionals.
72. Inspectors found some deficiencies in the system for assessing whether Service Children's Education could meet a child's emerging special educational needs once a family was already deployed. There had been delays in agreeing appropriate support or provision in a small number of cases. The assessment panel was made up of different partners, not necessarily all with an educational or special needs background or specialism. There were a small number of cases brought to inspectors' attention where the panel was reported to not fully understand the needs of the child or able to be fully objective. Sometimes, the educational placement depended on the availability of non-educational provision abroad, for example specialist health services, or on the viability of

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<sup>26</sup> *The special educational needs and disability review (090221)*, Ofsted 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090221](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090221).

<sup>27</sup> Some local authorities devolve their special educational needs funding to schools in their area. Schools in these areas are therefore responsible for funding interim support for newly arrived children, including Service children.

returning to England for such services. These services were outside the responsibility of Service Children's Education. The military Command had the final decision on retaining the serving person and their family in a particular location.<sup>28</sup>

73. In practice, however, inspectors found that the substantial majority of Service children with low-level special educational needs in the schools visited were fully supported in Service Children's Education schools in accordance with the organisation's policy on inclusion. Service Children's Education schools provided appropriate support for children with special educational needs as soon as they arrived, regardless of the time in the school year when this occurred, providing they had information about the child's needs and these needs had been assessed and could be met.
74. There was a good range of specialist services available to provide low-level support for children and young people with special educational needs attending the Service Children's Education schools abroad. However, because of the small numbers of children with higher level needs, the full range of expertise and provision was not retained overseas. Service Children's Education commissioned appropriate specialist Services as and when required, for example to support hearing and visual impairments. Where a child needed specialist medical support which could not be made available in the overseas location, arrangements were made for the family/child to return to the UK on a temporary basis to attend specialist appointments or to received specialist treatment. Only a tiny minority of cases (four out of approximately 10,000 children in the last six and a half years) had required a permanent return to the UK.
75. Inspectors found instances where good support from unit commanding officers, and unit welfare officers, had enabled the specific needs of children and young people to be met in certain circumstances. A good example was of a family in Germany whose eight year old child had significant medical needs. This required the family to return to England every six months to attend a specialist children's hospital. This was possible because of the flexible approach the Commanding Officer adopted towards the family's leave arrangements in order to facilitate these visits.

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<sup>28</sup> Inspectors came across similar instances in local authorities in England where not all assessment panels, for children with special educational needs, had representation from professionals who sufficiently understood the possible additional needs of Service children.

## Curriculum delivery

76. Inspectors found that the curriculum for Service children was often disrupted by the continual flow of them arriving at, or leaving, schools; this frequently led to them having gaps in their learning.

One primary school had accurately identified the impact of pupil mobility on progress in mathematics. Analysis showed that some concepts were missed due to breaks in learning. Supported by local authority funding, resources and systems had been used to identify and close any gaps in the pupils' understanding and enabling them to achieve better.

77. The Service children who took part in the survey tended to have to fit in with existing school curriculum and this led to some confusing changes of practice at various stages in their school careers. During their early years' education, for example, Service children had sometimes been exposed to different approaches to reading and writing which they had found hard to adapt to. Thus, in one school a Service child may have been taught to print and then had to re-learn how to write in script in their new school. Inspectors found this to be a common experience of moving schools both within the United Kingdom and between England and abroad.

One pupil had experienced multiple moves prior to Year 6. He felt that frequent changes of primary school had 'held him back'. His mother expressed her concern that different teaching methods in various primary schools had impacted on his reading. In particular she cited difficulties arising when changing from one reading scheme to another, together with a 'starting from scratch' approach at different primary schools, which she said had slowed down his reading development.

78. Service children frequently said that they repeated topics as they moved from school to school, which they viewed as inevitable, but many found boring. For example one boy complained to inspectors about repetition in his work, saying that he was presently, 'building my third Tudor House'. He also noted that his new class was currently revising work that he had not yet even started. In the best instances, teachers ensured that this kind of repetition did not happen and Service children were given different tasks or activities which provided the opportunity to build on their previous knowledge and skills.
79. Pupils who transferred school during Key Stage 4 told inspectors that they often experienced problems with the transfer of modular GCSE grades, coursework, or the continued availability of specialist vocational courses. This was confirmed by some of the schools visited. Some teachers in Service Children's Education schools abroad had adapted their teaching to cope with as many as four

different syllabuses to cater for the range of students in their classes which demonstrated an effective approach to individualised learning<sup>29</sup>

One school in England had adapted its Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure students who joined late had the best chance of achieving. They provided an additional syllabus specifically for those children who were partway through their course, allowing them to complete their study more seamlessly. This proved expensive, but worthwhile, as the school could demonstrate that the gap in attainment between Service children and the rest of the school population was substantially reduced.

Two of the secondary schools in England responded to transfers into Key Stage 4 by offering a flexible curriculum, allowing these students who arrived mid-year to adopt a personalised timetable or follow a one-year intensive GCSE course, thus assisting students to obtain external accreditation. The schools worked hard to ensure students had continuity in their studies.

80. Unlike maintained schools in England, there is no statutory obligation to provide a suitable full time education in Service Children's Education schools abroad for pupils excluded on a fixed term basis. Although only three children had been permanently excluded from Service Children's Education schools abroad over the past two years, the support provided for them was limited to one day per week through locally based Inclusion Support Teachers. For the remainder of the time, there was an expectation on parents to ensure their child was supervised at home.
81. Around a third of the schools visited were making good and sometimes innovative use of various forms of electronic communication and 'learning platforms' to support children and young people from Service families and to facilitate better communication with their parents and carers.<sup>30</sup> These initiatives had a consistently positive impact on the pupils' learning and well-being. They also helped to promote successful engagement with parents and carers, particularly when they were on active service or living abroad. The following three examples illustrate successful use of technology to enable parents serving in the Armed Forces to keep in touch with their children's learning:

In one infant school, the virtual learning environment was well established and was used very successfully to enable children to communicate with parents while they are deployed on active service. In addition, there were planned opportunities in lessons to use this form of electronic

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<sup>29</sup> Individualised learning is a programme of study pertinent to a child or young person's individual needs

<sup>30</sup> Learning platforms are accessed by parents securely via the internet. These systems help parents to understand what their children are learning and to support them more effectively.



communication as part of a project linking with a parent who was a chef in the Royal Navy. Children had access to this facility during the school day and could also access it from home, via the virtual learning network. One serving parent said that it was an important way to help him keep in touch with his children and to find out about their schooling when he was away at sea.

In a primary school, one Year 6 pupil from a Service family who left before the end of the academic year was allowed to access the school's virtual learning environment (VLE) from her new school. Although the pupil had only joined the primary school in Year 5, this opportunity enabled her to stay in contact with friends via the 'blog' function and provided some continuity of support during a period of transition.

In a sixth form college, the parents' portal provided parents and carers with the opportunity to see up-to-date information about their children's progress as well as a lesson by lesson breakdown of attendance and useful dates such as coursework deadlines. It also provided a quick and effective means of contacting college staff. This was particularly helpful for those students from Service families who were boarding at the college; it strengthened the existing use of email as an easy way for parents to alert house-parents to concerns about their children's progress or well-being. House-parents also attended parents' evening on behalf of the students and sent detailed notes via email to parents and carers who were abroad. Boarders at the college felt that this was very effective and noted that parents were sent very regular information about their progress. As one student said 'If I miss a lesson they know!'

## 14–19 education and training in Germany and Cyprus

82. In 2009, a 14–19 review was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence's Children and Young People's Trust Board, 'to identify how best to deliver 14–19 education in the spirit of the government's 14–19 agenda for the children of entitled personnel in Germany'. The review acknowledged that the Service Children's Education's structure needed to better meet the needs of all learners whether in school or in other 14–19 destinations, including employment and work based learning. Subsequently, a number of recommendations were made, one of which was to carry out a full investment appraisal of the options identified. All options focused on expanding the curriculum and considered the viability of the potential changes and possible disruption levels to existing arrangements.
83. Several organisational models had been reviewed, including the model of treating Germany as a whole and placing schools under a federated arrangement of learning centres. In September 2010, the Ministry of Defence's Children and Young People Trust Board accepted the need for the

establishment of a vocational training programme and the development of federated school sixth forms in Germany. At the time of this survey the recommendations of the report had not been fully implemented. While many of the Service Children's Education secondary schools visited during the survey had endeavoured to tailor the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and sixth form to pupils' interests and needs, their capacity to do so, and to work collaboratively, was constrained by both the relatively small numbers of students and the geographical distance between schools.

84. Inspectors found that the 14–19 curriculum available to Service children in Germany and Cyprus was insufficiently broad to cater for the full range of young people's needs. Young people had few choices and limited access to vocational qualifications. The major routes of study were towards GCSEs and A levels with few diplomas or vocational alternatives on offer. Classes ran according to demand and subjects offered were sometimes restricted by numbers and access to specialist teaching. This meant young people were not always able to take their chosen subject. The sixth forms had variable entry requirements. There was insufficient monitoring of post-16 provision overall and schools were not being held sufficiently to account for young people's outcomes, academic or otherwise.
85. Partnerships between Service Children's Education schools and two work-based learning providers (one in Germany and one in Cyprus) meant that some learners registered in school were able to access some work-based options and apprenticeship schemes, but these were limited in scope and capacity. More recently, the vocational link in Germany had been formalised and links with a small number of other local businesses and community facilities provided an extended school model with some after school vocational activities. However, this was not available in all Service Children's Education secondary schools, or to all young people, and there was no assured consistency or accountability across garrisons. There was no mechanism for transferring funds to other providers if a student needed to complete the programme with another provider, for example because of a move back to England.
86. A careers guidance service for young people who were leaving Service Children's Education schools was in place, although the overseas context meant that it was not possible to fully replicate the Connexions model as it existed then in England. The advice was delivered by careers advisors and garrison-based youth workers, but this was focused on young people who wished to follow an academic route and did not sufficiently assist those wanting to pursue vocational qualifications or gain access to the workplace. Some work was carried out by partnership managers with those young people who were less academically able, but who wished to remain overseas. There was less support available for young people who wished to return to the UK to attend vocational courses at further education colleges, which were not available in British Forces Germany or Cyprus.

87. The impact of the restrictive post-16 curriculum within Service Children’s Education schools was that some young people dropped out of education prematurely. Inspectors found that there is a limited work offer available to them and that this generally involved either voluntary placements or shop work in the local garrison. Other young people had nothing purposeful to pursue and were effectively not in education, employment or training. During the fieldwork period of the survey, inspectors were able to identify 56 young people who were known not to be in education, employment or training across the Paderborn, Hohne and Rhine areas in Germany. There were no data available from Cyprus or from the rest of the world. At the time of the survey, the data held on these young people were scant and lacked verification.

## Partnership provision

### The role of local authorities

88. None of the local authorities in England taking part in the survey could identify with certainty the numbers of Service children educated within its schools or the numbers of Service families and ex-Service families within its communities. This reflected the general concerns about the lack of accurate local authority data on children moving between areas identified in a 2010 Ofsted report on children missing from education.<sup>31</sup> Information on Service background was not consistently or routinely sought when children were admitted to schools in England. Local authority officers informed inspectors that as there was no requirement for Service and ex-Service families to disclose their Service backgrounds for the school census, they therefore, had no sure way of knowing the numbers of Service children in their schools.
89. Inspectors found evidence of a clear difference between the quality of partnerships within the local authorities, visited in England, that had relatively high proportions of Service children and families, compared with those that had not. Nine of the 16 local authorities included in the survey were involved in one or more innovatory projects aimed at improving provision for Service children and their families through partnership working. In particular, the local authorities with high proportions of Service families had developed close partnerships with the Armed Forces and agencies such as the Children’s Education Advisory Service over many years and could provide examples of the effectiveness of those arrangements, as illustrated below:

One local authority area contained a number of Army and RAF bases, including the largest garrison in the UK. Research conducted by the authority, which had a considerable proportion of Service children in its schools, indicated a high level of need linked to anti-social behaviour and high-risk activities among young people living at the garrison. Over a period of time the local authority’s youth Service had developed a strategy

<sup>31</sup> *Children missing from education* (100041), Ofsted, 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100041](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100041).

to address the needs of 11–19-year-olds in areas serving Service communities. The Service delivered a range of diversionary and targeted support activities on particular issues. Community youth bases were used in a number of locations across the area, with free transport available to and from the sessions; these were extremely popular with young people.

In a city with a large number of naval bases, the local authority had recently set up a pupil group called 'HMS Heroes' for pupils from Service backgrounds to have a voice. The group consisted of 18 pupils from Key Stages 2 and 3. The young people had chosen the group name and set the meeting agendas, facilitated by adults. They met once a month in venues hosted by a range of schools and the Royal Navy. The group advised on issues facing Service children and supported the development of resources, such as a 'pupil passport', that aimed to provide pupils with the information they needed when joining a new school. The group had also worked with the schools' library service to help devise a pack of books and resources dealing with Service family life which could be used in schools.

90. Eight of the 16 local authorities in England visited, expressed some concerns about the social and emotional impact of mobility and the deployment of parents on active service on Service children, which occasionally manifested in these children as social or emotional difficulties, such as being withdrawn or depressed. Of all of the agencies, local authority educational psychology services were at the forefront of this work and were the most frequently quoted by schools in their discussions with inspectors as being the most effective services, in terms of providing social and emotional support for children from Service families with additional or special needs.

One local authority's educational psychology service helped to meet the needs of those most vulnerable pupils affected by a range of factors, including the consequences of high mobility and out-of-area detachments, by fast tracking their assessment and the provision of support. The children being supported included those who arrived with suspected significant special educational needs and/or who had a parent deployed in a zone of conflict in its 'high priority group'. The service worked hard to raise the profile of the needs of these children with other departments within the authority and with other authorities. These changes and developments to policy and practice were new and it was too early to assess the impact on outcomes for children and young people accurately. However, parents reported a satisfaction with prompt referral and 12 young people from Service families who received planned interventions around the time of induction at a new school, showed an overall reduction in anxiety levels following specific input from support staff and professionals.

91. In the local authorities where there was a good awareness of the Service children population, schools were required to track and report the performance of Service children as a discrete group. These authorities used their School Improvement Partners to routinely discuss the achievement of Service children during their visits. They also built in Service factors into their funding formulae. At worst, local authorities did not recognise that Service children may be vulnerable and that their families may have particular needs.
92. In some of the local authority areas, an increasing trend of recruiting soldiers from Commonwealth countries into the British Army had resulted in increased pressure on local authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Services to support children and families learning English as an additional language. The following example illustrates some of the challenges involved.

A regiment of Gurkhas had recently been deployed to barracks located in one local authority area. Up to 80 Service children of Nepalese ethnicity had joined local schools during a single regimental changeover. The local authority's extended children's Services and schools prepared very thoroughly to receive the children and their families. Potential cultural and language difficulties were being overcome and the arrival of Nepalese families had resulted in a greater mutual understanding of different cultures and an important contribution to the schools' community cohesion. This has been achieved through successful partnership working between local children's centres, private providers, community learning partnerships, advisers for minority ethnic groups, school advisers, schools and Army Family Support Officers. Partnership services had sought to support and integrate Service families, particularly mothers, as well as Service children and young people.

### Partnership working in schools

93. Partnerships between schools and external services were judged by inspectors to be good overall, both in England and abroad, and in some schools inspectors judged them to be outstanding. In these cases, schools worked very successfully in partnership with other agencies, such as educational psychologists and Army Welfare Services to ensure that all of the background information necessary was provided; that children were assessed promptly; and that an appropriate care and support package was put in place. Relevant professionals met with families on arrival to identify any additional needs. For example, in one primary school, a visiting health worker interviewed all new families and arranged appropriate support. In a secondary school, a parent support adviser was available to give additional support to parents during transition; the adviser organised events and provided a frequently asked question service. Some parents commented that the Children's Educational Advisory Service had been supportive around school moves.
94. With local authority assistance, a number of the schools in England had trained staff to provide social and emotional support, aimed mainly at Service children

and their families. Some schools in England had also received training from, or used high-quality materials developed by, senior professionals working for Service Children's Education to help with their understanding of Service children's behaviour and emotional well-being. This incorporated information on deployment and mobility and how to mitigate the impact of these. Two local authorities funded 'emotional literacy support assistants', who provided particularly effective educational guidance and support. Another school employed an 'emotional first aider' to provide early intervention and support for pupils, which was highly effective, as illustrated below:

In one school, staff had developed an expert understanding of the additional stresses experienced at times by Service pupils and their families. Communication between staff on behalf of Service pupils was highly organised and effective. Staff worked extremely productively with the army through the office of the Unit Welfare Officer. A teaching assistant had special responsibility for Service children and young people. She was from a Service background and had the confidence of Service pupils within the school. Communication with soldiers on active duty in Afghanistan was a high priority for the Regiment. Partnership working was developing well for the benefit of Service children and families. The provision on the base (called the 4th Dimension) was improving, countering the isolation Service families occasionally experienced when a parent is on active service. The local authority's extended services worked closely with the school. The police, through the safer neighbourhoods policing initiative<sup>32</sup>, and the voluntary and community sector, through community youth initiatives, also had close and productive relationships with the school. These agencies worked to prevent and resolve issues and were particularly important when young people from Service families experienced social and behavioural problems. The school was therefore well placed to support Service pupils in potentially stressful situations through the strength of its partnership working.

One school in England provided special support for particularly vulnerable Service families. Crucial to the school's success was the way in which it worked in partnership with other agencies to ensure that families and children were healthy, happy and able to learn. The school had strong relationships with the local authority, ensuring that those who needed extra support received it swiftly. It also worked very productively with the visiting health worker from the local primary care trust and with Relate, who provided family counselling and support.<sup>33</sup> Relationships with Army Welfare Services were also strong, and the work of the school was fully integrated with that of a special services centre, ensuring that pupils and their families were prepared well for the next stage in their journey. Pupils

<sup>32</sup> Safer Neighbourhoods policing initiative; [www.met.police.uk/saferneighbourhoods](http://www.met.police.uk/saferneighbourhoods).

<sup>33</sup> For information on Relate; [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk).

often had complex problems requiring urgent solutions. The school was imaginative, and sometimes ingenious, in swiftly ensuring that pupils received the support that they need. The school had close working relationships with other local primary schools. Pupils from this school participated in sporting activities at another local school which had made return visits for events such as performances by visiting theatre companies. The school also participated in shared training and development for staff organised with other schools locally.

95. Inspectors found very few of the schools visited had systems specifically aimed at evaluating the impact of the school's work with Service families and other partners. In general, this was subsumed within the wider mechanisms that the school used. In some schools, this was mostly through parental satisfaction questionnaires.

### **Pupil and Family Services in Germany and Cyprus**

96. A key aspect of the provision for any pupils with additional needs, including special educational needs and/or disabilities, in Germany and Cyprus was the partnership working between schools and teams of professional support workers organised under the umbrella of Pupil and Family Services, an arm of Service Children's Education. At the time of the survey, there were four Pupil and Family Service centres in Germany and one in Cyprus. In both Germany and Cyprus, links between schools and the Pupil and Family Service were judged by inspectors to be strong overall.
97. Pupil and Family Services' teams included professionals employed by Service Children's Education, such as an educational psychologist, inclusion development teachers, and an education social worker. Speech and language therapists, employed by SSAFA, were co-located in centres with these teams and worked closely with them. The teams worked in partnership with other professionals such as health workers and those working for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. They were able, as a team, to work collaboratively with children and young people who were not attending as well as they should; school 'refusers'; those excluded from school; those who were depressed and therefore required the support of experienced professionals.
98. Partnership work with pupils was based on an action plan, agreed with the family, setting out team member roles, timescales and expected outcomes. Progress was monitored rigorously in terms of actions completed in time and outcomes achieved.
99. In Cyprus, local area teams of professionals collaborated effectively with schools. Each person had a clear role, knew who they were working with and what they were required to do and by when. This avoided any duplication of provision. This example reflects the difference this professional approach made to the whole family:

In a Cyprus school, the parents of a Year 8 pupil appreciated being invited to multi-agency meetings to take part in discussions with the 'team around the child' that had been set up as a result of a Common Assessment Framework report.<sup>34</sup> Not only did the parents feel involved in decision making about their child's support, they also valued having a single point of contact with a group of professionals who all knew their child very well so that they not have to answer questions from several different professionals working separately. This resulted in a much closer working between professionals and a seamless and coordinated provision for the child.

100. In Germany, inspectors found evidence of some duplication in provision, for example several professionals delivering similar training. There were also some examples of disjointed Service provision where support had broken down and did not meet the needs of pupils and their families.
101. As part of Pupil and Family Services in Germany and Cyprus, inclusion development support teams also worked in close partnership with schools, helping them to meet a wide range of pupil needs. Their work was focused on providing prompt additional learning support and training teachers in meeting pupils' needs and assessing their progress. This meant that there was often less recourse to categorising pupils as having a special educational need.
102. Links with other services, for example health, were found to be variable in quality, particularly for those schools that were located some distance away from the Ministry of Defence's Joint Headquarters or which suffered from staff changes. Behaviour support was provided from several sources, with information not always shared between all professionals working with the child.

## Conclusion

103. There is currently no accurate record in the UK of how many children are from Service families, or an effective system that tracks their movements.
104. Although good efforts were being made to mitigate the impact of mobility and deployment on Service children, case studies carried out during the survey showed that these were not wholly effective, particularly for those with a special educational need and/or disability.
105. Despite a generally positive picture of their academic outcomes, available data indicate that some Service children who are geographically mobile do not do as well as those who are non-mobile. Moving home and school during the

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<sup>34</sup> The Common Assessment Framework is a standardised approach to conducting an assessment of a child's additional needs and deciding how those needs should be met. [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/caf](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/caf).



secondary phase of education can have a particularly negative impact on young people's progress and achievement.

106. A key, and potentially adverse, impact of Service life on Service children and young people is one of social and emotional disturbance. In the best instances, effective pastoral systems ensured that schools had an early knowledge of family circumstances. Staff were then able to monitor and, where necessary, support students who were reacting adversely to different situations.
107. Schools with high proportions of Service children on roll, including Service Children's Education schools abroad, were often more effective in supporting children's personal needs effectively and promptly than was the case in schools where small numbers of Service children were being catered for.
108. There were good examples of partnership working between schools and external agencies, both in England and abroad, which were helping to meet the needs of Service children and their families. Key aspects of this provision included the collaborative work of Pupil and Family Services in Germany and Cyprus and the role played by some local authorities in England in assisting schools to provide social and emotional support.
109. Local authorities that had a long serving association with Service families and with higher numbers of Service children in their schools were better placed to recognise and meet their needs. Funding streams were variable in local authorities, so there was no equivalence of provision for Service children.
110. Service Children's Education in Germany and Cyprus was not able to fully meet the needs of all 14–19-year-olds. There were limited options available for those young people who do not want to leave their families and/or were not sufficiently confident to return to the UK on their own.

## Notes

Between June and October 2010, inspectors visited 30 maintained and three independent schools in England in 16 local authority areas. Schools were chosen from primary and secondary phases and included some with provision for specific special educational needs and/or boarding. The schools had varying percentages of Service children on roll; some with as few as 4% of their pupils being Service children, to some where over 90% of their pupils were Service children. Those children represented families with serving personnel in all three Armed Forces. Inspectors also visited 11 Service Children's Education schools from both primary and secondary phases and four Pupil and Family Service Centres in Germany and Cyprus.<sup>35</sup> Interviews were held with around 500 children and young people and around 100 parents. Inspectors spoke with over 200 school staff, governors and

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<sup>35</sup> Service Children's Education schools are owned by the Ministry of Defence and are inspected by Ofsted on invitation.

associated professionals from military and civilian backgrounds in a range of one-to-one interviews and forums during the course of the fieldwork. Inspectors also held discussions with 16 local authorities who had varying amounts of Service children within the school population. In addition, 166 maintained schools in England responded to a survey questionnaire which was sent out by the Children's Education Advisory Service on behalf of Ofsted. The schools were all on the Children's Education Advisory Service's database.<sup>36</sup> The views of seven Service Children's Education schools located outside of Germany and Cyprus were also gathered by questionnaire.

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<sup>36</sup> The schools known to CEAS were those schools which were on the Service children in state schools database. These represent approximately half of those schools known to have Service children in them on the DfE database which is put together from the Annual School Census.

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## Annex A: The local authority areas, schools and centres visited

### Local authorities

Buckinghamshire  
 Bracknell Forest (by telephone)  
 Central Bedfordshire  
 Cornwall  
 East Riding  
 Hampshire  
 Kent  
 Lincolnshire  
 North Yorkshire  
 Oxfordshire  
 Plymouth  
 South Gloucestershire  
 Staffordshire  
 Wiltshire  
 York

### Maintained primary schools

School	Location
Boston West Primary School	Lincolnshire
Brompton-on-Swale Church of England Primary School	North Yorkshire
Campton Lower School	Bedfordshire
Cove Junior School	Hampshire
Cranwell Primary School (Foundation)	Lincolnshire
Dishforth Airfield Community Primary School	North Yorkshire
Edith Weston Primary School	Rutland
Halton Community Combined School	Buckinghamshire
Leconfield Primary School	East Riding of Yorkshire
Lypiatt Primary School	Wiltshire
Marchwood Church of England Infant School	Hampshire
Mayhill Junior School	Hampshire

Nansloe Community Primary School	Cornwall
Ranvilles Infant School	Hampshire
Red Barn Community Primary School	Hampshire
Ringshall School	Suffolk
South Wonston Primary School	Hampshire
St Augustine's of Canterbury RC Primary School	South Gloucestershire
St Mary's Catholic Primary School	Hampshire
St Oswald's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	North Yorkshire
Titchfield Primary School	Hampshire
Whitfield and Aspen School	Kent
Wilton and Barford CofE Primary School	Wiltshire
Woolaston Primary School	Gloucestershire

### **Maintained secondary schools**

<b>School</b>	<b>Location</b>
King Edward V1 School	Staffordshire
Looe Community School	Cornwall
Needham Market Middle School	Suffolk
Thirsk School & Sixth Form College	Yorkshire

### **Maintained schools/colleges with boarding provision**

<b>School</b>	<b>Location</b>
Peter Symonds College	Hampshire
Sexey's School	Somerset

### **Independent schools**

<b>School</b>	<b>Location</b>
Dame Hannah Rogers School (by telephone)	Devon
Fyling Hall School	North Yorkshire
Kelly College	Devon
Wellbeck, the Defence Sixth Form College	Leicestershire

## Service Children’s Education schools

School	Location
Akrotiri Primary School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Ayios Nikolaos School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Bielefield Primary School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Dhekelia Primary School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
King Richard School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Kings School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Oxford Primary School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Prince Rupert School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
St John’s School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Tower School	BFPO Overseas Establishment
Windsor School	BFPO Overseas Establishment

Thanks to Episkopi for the time afforded in being consulted with.

## Service Children’s Education Pupil and Family Service Centres

Cyprus  
 Gutersloh  
 Paderborn  
 Rheindahlen

Thanks to the 166 SCISS schools, two independent schools and seven Service Children’s Education schools who kindly completed questionnaires.

## **Annex B: The partners**

Representatives from the Children's Education Advisory Service  
Representatives from the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association  
Representation from the welfare organisations: Army Families Federation; Royal Air Force Families Federation; Naval Families Federation

## **Annex C: Focus groups, meetings and other contributions**

The Ministry of Defence Children and Young People's Trust Board  
A number of representatives from the Ministry of Defence  
A number of representatives from Service Children's Education  
The national Service Children In State Schools group  
The Service Children Support Network (SCSN) based in Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire  
Buckinghamshire Vulnerable Groups Working Party (now to be renamed Service Children Consultative Group)  
Representatives from Admissions and Standards Directorates at the Department for Education