

# Service Families at Buryfields

At Buryfields up to 40% of our children come from a service family – something which we feel makes our school a really special place. Many of us – support staff, teachers and lunchtime staff – have personal experiences of the forces, whether as a military spouse or child, but all of us appreciate the impact that being a service child can have on education. We also appreciate all the strengths and positive attributes service children develop through their individual experiences, hence our love of the poem about the dandelion – the flower of the military child. Sometimes Service pupils are referred to as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘disadvantaged’ – emotive terms that we don’t wholly agree with!



Whilst we must of course take into account the impact that moving schools and deployment can have, our experience of children with a parent in the military is that, given the right environment and support, they are resourceful, resilient and well equipped for any challenge thrown at them. We are very proud to have such a large contingent of Service families in our school, and value the relationship we have with RAF Odiham hugely.

On our website you will find a whole section dedicated to Service Families, with links to useful organisations, photos of what we have been up to and further information about deployment and more. You will find this under the ‘School Information’ tab. If we are missing anything you feel would be useful, please tell us!

We also love to hear about ideas from other schools our families have attended, and if there was something a previous school has done that you think would work well here, please do let us know!

## Deployment

We know that RAF Odiham is a phenomenally busy station, and that deployments are a frequent occurrence. Enclosed within this pack is a letter regarding our Deployment Club and the knitted dolls, which are sent home when we are made aware of an upcoming period of separation. Please let the office know about any deployment as soon as possible so we can support your child and family.



## Service-related Absence

You will no doubt be aware that the MOD requests that schools consider Service-specific “exceptional circumstances” when responding to a term-time request for absence. Our Attendance policy states that:

As a school with a significant number of children from a service family, we recognise that there are times when a family is unable to take a holiday in **any** of the usual holiday periods. Requests for term-time absences should be completed in the same way as for non-service families, and an additional form should be completed by the serving parent’s commanding officer, if the request for absence from school is due to deployment or other service-related constrictions. Parents should note that this does not automatically mean that a holiday will be authorised or it may be partially authorised, and each absence request is considered on an individual basis. At present the only government mandated approval for term-time holidays is from the MOD, although approval is still at the discretion of the headteacher and will be assessed on a case by case basis.