



Department
for Education

Combined Cadet Forces in State Funded Schools: Staff Perspectives

Research Report

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Key Findings

The Department for Education (DfE) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) were keen to understand the effects that established Combined Cadet Forces can have on state funded schools and academies (and their pupils/cadets), to learn lessons of good practice to share with new units and understand areas of challenge.

Staffing & Integration

- To maximise the influence of a Combined Cadet Force (CCF) within a school the unit needs to be integrated into the school as much as possible.
- CCFs are run by highly skilled, committed staff, passionate about giving young people development opportunities. Frequently they do this in their own time to provide the best for their cadets. CCF staff who were interviewed, displayed a 'can do' approach when faced with challenge.
- Recruiting and retaining the right staff is a key concern for CCFs. Teachers often do not have the capacity to offer the level of commitment required to be a teacher and a CCF staff member.

School Setting

- CCFs were commonly regarded as an enrichment activity in schools like other clubs (e.g. football or drama clubs). However, some who offered qualifications aspired to be seen as co-curricular activities, adding to the educational offer of the school.
- CCFs were supported by Head Teachers and were recognised by some as a unique selling tool for their school. A CCF could still flourish even if the school was struggling.
- Most CCFs were keen on partnerships with other schools but faced barriers due to funding, administration burdens or unwillingness from other parties. Others were concerned that expansion would dilute the cadet experience, particularly when the central offer from the MoD (i.e. access to camps etc.) is already reducing.

Challenges

- Increasing administrative burdens from the MoD added to workloads. This reduced abilities of CCF staff to offer more opportunities for cadets and negatively affected recruitment of new CCF staff.
- A shortage of resources was reported by most CCFs. Many tackled this through informal links and sharing with other units. Some felt the administration requirements from sharing resources prohibited them from doing so.

The Cadets

- Many felt that the CCF played a part in keeping some pupils in school and created or increased aspirations, though cases were rare. The longer-term influence of the CCF isn't known by CCF units, who lose touch with most cadets soon after they leave the school/CCF.
- Many CCF staff felt the CCF should always be voluntary to fully engage young people.
- There is no such thing as a typical cadet, though those considering a career in the armed forces and those considered to be 'socially vulnerable' were often mentioned as particularly attracted to the CCF (these groups are not mutually exclusive).

Policy Background

Prior to the Cadet Expansion Programme there were 237 CCF contingents based in both state and independent schools and colleges throughout England (61 in state funded schools and 176 in independent schools).

On 30 June 2012, the Prime Minister announced the expansion of cadet forces. By 2015 100 more state-funded schools will be able to develop cadet units. The Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) has been given £10.85m by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) so that more young people, in state funded schools can benefit from the cadet experience. The ambition of the programme is for pupils to use the benefits of the military ethos to achieve a good education and positively shape their futures. To date 42 new units have been approved: 21 partnerships and 21¹ new units.

The CCF contingent may comprise up to 3 service sections – Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. Some Royal Navy sections also include Royal Marine detachments.

Existing Evidence

There is limited existing evidence available on the impact of cadets on the lives of young people. A major limitation of existing evidence is the inability to draw causal inferences from findings due to the potential for selection bias. For most, being a cadet is a voluntary activity and therefore it may be that the type of young person who is attracted to become a cadet already has the associated positive traits (such as increased attendance etc.), as opposed to the CCF *causing* such behaviours. This is to be noted when interpreting findings. Current evidence suggests that being a member of cadets is associated with:

¹ Correct as of 11th June 2014

- increased pro-social attitudes and behaviours, leading to increased academic achievement and decreased anti-social behaviour (Anderson-Butcher et al, 2004)
- lower levels of social exclusion in later years (Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth, 2006)
- increased school attendance and improved cadet behaviour, communication, organisational skills, self-esteem, self-confidence and attitudes to school work (The University of Wales, 2009).

Purpose of Current Project

The Department for Education (DfE) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) were keen to understand the effects that a well-established CCF has on schools and academies (and their pupils), to learn lessons of good practice to share with new units and understand areas of challenge.

Methods & Sample

Telephone interviews were held with 7 headteachers (or deputies) and 7 Contingent Commanders (or School Staff Instructors) from 7 different state funded schools across England. All CCFs had been established for several years and were not part of the CEP. All sections of the CCF were represented.

Main Findings

Not all CCF units had a physical presence (facilities or staff) in the school. Some units were based within the school grounds which helped promote the CCF and helped provide a sense of military ethos within the school. Other units were based in buildings away from the main school, staffed by external staff and this reduced the influence the CCF had within the school.

Some had excellent facilities (helped by sharing resources with other local cadet forces) whereas some had facilities in need of improvement.

Engaging Stakeholders

Headteachers were broadly positive of the CCF, viewing the CCF as *surprising*, *fascinating*, *heartening* but somewhat *old fashioned* and *quaint*. Some didn't like the military association particularly having weapons on site. However, even the most sceptical saw the potential benefits of the CCF for their school.

Most headteachers acknowledged the CCF as a unique selling point for their school to attract potential pupils and parents. One headteacher used the MoD inspection report as evidence of the success of his unit, even during periods of challenge in the school.

Headteachers regarded the CCF as an enrichment activity for pupils and did not promote it over other enrichment activities offered by the school (e.g. football, chess and drama clubs). One school was working to increase the status of the CCF as it offered BTECs to cadets.

Staff engagement varied widely. Some schools reported that all staff were aware of the CCF. Others reported low engagement; one School Staff Instructor reported some teachers making fun of pupils who attended school in cadet uniform.

Schools where staff were more aware of their CCF were more positive about its potential to help young people. Often, these CCFs had teachers or other school staff as CCF staff, or CCF staff which were based in the school more than one day per week. Increased visibility meant that CCF staff were more accessible and promoted the military ethos around high standards of behaviour and discipline. Equally it allowed teachers to learn more about the CCF and discuss cadets' behaviour.

Frequently the only governing board support mentioned from headteachers and CCF staff was a Governor attending the biennial MoD inspections.

Many parents were said to be aware of the CCF at their child's school prior to them joining. Some parents were very keen on enrolling their child in schools because of the CCF. CCFs however aren't always prominent in prospectuses or on the school websites.

Not all units allowed cadets to wear uniform outside of the CCF/school, reducing visibility. However, there were positive impacts for those who did, particularly during community events (e.g. Poppy Appeal fundraising, CCF fundraising by bag packing in local supermarkets; stewarding school events) where schools received praise and recognition for young people 'doing good'.

Recruiting & Retaining Staff

Staffing is critical in the success of a CCF and relies heavily on good will. All schools described difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. Headteachers acknowledged that most teachers did not have the capacity to commit to the CCF. CCF staff frequently expressed concerns over the amount of time the CCF took up- often in their own time. When questioned about their willingness to do so, many cited motivations to give their cadets the best possible opportunities.

One CCF staff member described the practical considerations of recruiting school staff and the impact this can have on the CCF if behaviour/tensions from school were allowed to spill into CCF activities.

SSIs who were contracted on a part-time basis (1 day per week) specifically for the CCF often said this was insufficient to cover all activities, particularly the administrative burdens.

Staff with the Right Skills & Experience

Staff must have the right skills, experience and personality to effectively engage cadets. Whilst teachers have already been assessed as suitable for working with young people, it does not automatically follow that they are suitable for working in a CCF. An SSI described a former CCF staff member (a teacher) as having the '*wrong personality*' to work with cadets, he felt that she didn't offer support and praise so the cadets didn't engage. Others felt that teachers saw the CCF as a youth club, so were surprised to see it was something very different and quickly withdrew.

Many CCF staff had a military background and/or experience in other public service professions (i.e. police, fire service etc.). This appears to be beneficial for the management of the CCF and helped encourage the military ethos. Such staff spoke very positively of the CCF and the opportunities it can provide for young people. Teaching staff with a military background who were involved in the CCF were particularly positive about the CCF. They frequently mentioned the subtle but distinct approaches to discipline which are demonstrated in the CCF compared with those of the classroom. They believed this conveyed the military authority and respect required for the CCF- often giving examples of how a pupil would respond differently to taking instruction in the CCF compared with the school setting.

One Contingent Commander (a teacher) explained how the classroom differs from the CCF for teaching and discipline. In the classroom the teacher teaches, the pupils listen, and the teacher is accountable for academic achievement. In the CCF, CCF staff instruct the senior cadets who then teach the more junior cadets- so everyone has a responsibility for each other- and everyone is there through choice. If staff were unwilling or unable to adapt to this change problems can occur and cadets may not engage.

Having the right staff can aid recruitment, one CC joined a flagging CCF with only 6 cadets in one section; within six months the section had over 40 cadets.

Facilities & Resources

Most CCF staff discussed the need to share resources with other units (e.g. staff with the right training; space to conduct activities; equipment). Informal links were vital to provide cadets with the best possible opportunities. However, administrative burdens around the sharing/movement of equipment can hinder this as often it required more time than their contracts allowed, putting pressure on staff goodwill.

One unit addressed lack of resources directly by using European funding and their own fundraising to purchase equipment or take their cadets on overseas exercises.

CCF staff preferred facilities which were for exclusive use for the CCF (so they had freedom to use how they saw fit) but which were located within the school. This allowed them to offer the best opportunities for cadets and, being based within the school, helped integrate the CCF with the school.

CCF staff highlighted the relative uniqueness of their unit- being based in a state school- and how it benefitted pupils, going a small way to '*level the playing field*' between their pupils and those in independent schools. However, many perceived themselves as the 'poor relations' because of the lack of resources available to them compared with their independent school counterparts.

Partnerships

Under the current Cadet Expansion Programme, some schools had attempted to get other schools involved in their own CCFs, though barriers led to none being successful. Initial interest waned once the other schools found out that a funding commitment was required. Others found that political differences between Head Teachers or concerns about potential problems if there were 'fallings out between cadets' were barriers to successful partnerships.

Other units felt that they did not have the resources to commit to a larger CCF, wishing to focus on the quality of experience rather than quantity of cadets. One longstanding CC expressed concern around the impact of central resources (from the military) if cadet numbers rise significantly on a national level whilst MoD services are being cut.

Administrative Burdens

Many mentioned the increasing administration burden placed on them by the MoD which reduced their capacity to do more with the cadets. It was felt to be a large factor in the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. For those units with two or more sections, staff had to duplicate administration records for each section. One well-staffed unit had one staff member contracted specifically for one day a week to complete the administration. The CC believed this was vital as other staff could focus on cadet activities.

One headteacher mentioned the administration burdens if his CCF was to start offering formal qualifications (BTECs etc.). For him this was a good reason not to offer the qualifications.

Monitoring Cadet/Pupil Behaviour

Where CCF staff had a presence in the school² cadets' behaviour could be effectively monitored and addressed. The link between the CCF and school allowed teachers to discuss cadets; if behaviour deteriorated CCF staff could address this with pupils, providing encouragement and support to improve behaviour. Some used the CCF as an incentive to improve behaviour, explaining that membership may be affected if behaviour didn't meet the required standard. It was rare for membership to be removed. In one unit, if a cadet's behaviour required improving, in addition to having a discussion with the SSI, a more senior cadet was instructed to monitor their behaviour for a short period, offering support to ensure that behaviour standards were restored.

Not all cadets were model students; one school had overhauled the CCF with a full re-launch due to poor behaviour. Some cadets were removed because of poor behaviour (as it was felt that the poor behaviour had been rewarded by CCF membership). A behaviour contract was introduced where high standards of behaviour in school had to be met for pupils to be allowed to be cadets.

A Unique Opportunity

Most regarded the CCF as an excellent experience for many young people; providing them with a wide range of valuable and exciting opportunities at little or no cost to them or their parents/guardians. This was particularly important for schools in deprived areas where many pupils were unable to go on family holidays or be involved with clubs which would attract a cost. Attending camps with the CCF enabled these young people to gain valuable skills beyond the reach of most young people and see the world; increasing aspirations for their own lives.

There was frequent discussion about the different approaches used in the CCF compared with schools and other youth groups, particularly towards behaviour and discipline. CCF discipline was demonstrated in a different way to the classroom, generated through a high level of respect for everyone and delivered in a supportive environment, using 'light touch'. A headteacher recognised the military approach to learning and development as '*second to none when it comes to bringing out leadership talents*' as young people had the opportunity to learn and teach others; an experience not readily available in the classroom.

² Either as a teacher or as an SSI/CC employed for a significant part of the week in the school

Recruiting Cadets

Most pupils heard about cadets via word of mouth or through seeing cadet activity at the school. There was limited evidence that pupils aspired to become cadets although this was more evident in schools where CCF staff were readily accessible (being teachers or being based in the school).

It was rare for any targeted recruitment of pupils. This tended to happen using a 'soft' approach; staff suggesting cadets to parents or pupils who they believed would benefit from it. This tended to happen where CCF staff were based in the school.

No CCFs were full, but concerns were raised by some that increasing numbers could dilute the experience and put further pressure on resources.

Most felt strongly that CCF membership should remain voluntary, as this increases engagement in cadet activities. Some described how it would change the ethos of the CCF if it became compulsory.

Retaining Cadets

All CCF units had more cadets on their rolls than regularly paraded. At least half of cadets in each unit regularly paraded every session. Cadets dropped out in two main time points- firstly, shortly after they first join (when they decide cadets isn't right for them) and secondly, when other school or life pressures 'get in the way' (when they had previously been committed cadets).

One unit requested all cadets join on a 3-month trial. In that time they did not buy kit, but must attend every parade session to demonstrate their commitment. If, after the three months they had attended all sessions and enjoyed it, they bought kit and became full members. Another unit gave potential cadets until Year 9 to decide if they want to sign up on a permanent basis as a way of minimising drop out.

No 'Typical Cadet'

There was no such thing as a typical cadet. Staff felt that pupils were attracted by the wide variety of activities on offer, for some the uniform made them feel more grown up. For others, cadets was a route into the armed forces and for a very few it was a way of gaining other qualifications³. Some were attracted to the formal ranking system it offered, with promotions being a visible recognition for their efforts, something not available

³ Not all CCF units currently offered these BTEC qualifications in Music and Public Service.

elsewhere. Some pupils joined the CCF to give them ‘the edge’ in their future applications for work or Higher Education.

Two main groups of young people (which are not mutually exclusive) were frequently mentioned as being attracted to the CCF:

- *Those with military aspirations* - Already expressed a desire for a military career so joining the CCF is a natural progression. Includes higher achievers aiming for officer level entry and those who would join at entry level.
- *Vulnerable pupils* - Didn’t necessarily have any aspirations to join the military (or knew what they want to do after school) but may have come from problematic, disruptive backgrounds or may have been socially excluded within school. They were attracted to the CCF because of the support and stability it offers as well as the activities which they are unlikely to get elsewhere.

Activities & Qualifications

All parading took place after school, at weekends and in school holidays so school work was not directly affected by the CCF. Some regularly paraded on Fridays, which they felt may have hindered their efforts to attract CCF staff although there was not a problem with the recruitment of cadets.

A wide array of activities was on offer which developed skills and provided experiences not readily available in school. Some units described regularly raising money either for charities (e.g. the British Legion) or for their own CCF by bag packing at local supermarkets.

All units offered the armed forces recognised courses though not all units offered externally accredited courses (e.g. BTECs in Public Services and Music). Those not offering BTECs cited a lack of resources (funding, time and facilities).

For cadets who did not excel academically, recognition was gained in the CCF through hard work and determination, demonstrated by rank. This made the CCF attractive to such pupils and set it apart from other extra-curricular activities. The formal ranking system of the CCF was felt to be highly valuable for some cadets who may not receive praise and recognition at home or in school.

CCF Influences on Pupil Behaviour & Skills

Cadets were described as being more organised and focussed than their peers; they were more used to taking instruction; took more pride in their appearance (particularly when in CCF uniform); and didn’t ‘*shirk tasks*’. The family ethos created by the CCF often spilled into the school environment and there were examples of cadets “*looking out for each other*” in school.

There was widespread belief that for *some* of the more challenging students, being a cadet had helped them avoid exclusion. It showed them a different way of life than they had thought possible. This was reinforced by cadets attending camps and participating in a wide range of activities on offer, providing a desire to improve their personal circumstances. For some at risk of permanent exclusion, joining the CCF often isn't enough to help turn their lives around.

Although little 'hard' evidence could be provided, interviewees could provide several examples of past or current pupils who had flourished in the CCF while struggling at school. For example, a cadet was described as '*going off the rails*' and was on course for likely exclusion. Encouraged to join the CCF, she thrived, and it provided a sense of achievement. She was accepted at a military college and, at the time of interview was taking part in a selection board for army officers. This had made her focus on her academic studies to ensure she had the best chance of success.

Cadets can directly affect the attainment of others. One CCF's senior cadets were allocated time to spend teaching Year 8 pupils identified as most at risk of under achievement. This created a more informal atmosphere for the pupils who regarded the cadets as role models, often from similar backgrounds.

One headteacher compared cadets with those working towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award, noting that cadets were more proactive and more thorough than DoE pupils when given the same tasks.

No one felt that the CCF directly helped academic performance of cadets, but where they could study and gain externally accredited qualifications this clearly helped improve prospects and added value to CVs.

Cadet Outcomes

Two Head Teachers intended to track longer term outcomes of cadets, both in relation to the Ofsted requirement to collect Pupil Premium spending information. This tracking applies to all enrichment activities not just the CCF. One Head Teacher recognised that the CCF may be an effective lever to raise achievement so had a particular interest in it. Another said that while the data wasn't collected currently, a system could be put in place to do so. However, these systems would only be able to collect data whilst the cadet was in the school.

It was rare for cadets to stay in touch with the CCF once they left school. Some stayed on as adult leaders in the CCF, but often left when 'life got in the way' through university or work. Concerns were raised that if cadets were tracked, it may lead to requests to alter the intake of cadets (to better represent the population of a school) rather than membership remaining voluntary. Voluntary membership was seen as vital for many; cadets had to be willing to attend and engage with activities to get the most out of the

opportunities on offer. It was felt that this distinction between compulsory schooling and a voluntary CCF was why some pupils flourished in the CCF but may have struggled at school.

Conclusions

CCF staff were highly committed to the opportunities it provided young people. They faced a variety of challenges to provide these opportunities, not least the volume of mandatory administration but also the lack of resources (facilities and staffing)- factors unlikely to improve in the near future. However, similar to the 'can do' approach described of the cadets, headteachers and CCF staff clearly had a positive outlook. Many discussed the ways in which they tackle challenges and will always aim to provide the best possible opportunities for their cadets.

When school staff were aware of the CCF, they called on the skills of CCF staff to help raise behaviour standards. They also asked the CCF to consider recruiting pupils who may benefit from the military style of discipline and learning.

CCF staff were more positive about the effect on their school if the CCF was an active part of the school community. CCF staff external to the school appeared more marginalised and, while they had positive impacts on their cadets, their reach into school life was limited.

The CCF can provide excellent value for money for families of cadets- providing first class training and adventure activities at substantially reduced cost- thus opening these opportunities up to most families.

A successful CCF which can have the most influence in the school is likely to have the following features:

- All school staff including the Governing Board will be aware of its existence and of what it can bring to their school, not simply as enrichment but as a vital part of their education offer.
- It can and should be a unique selling point for the school which has the potential to attract pupils and teachers alike. To help this, the CCF must have a presence on school websites and prospectuses.
- It will have facilities within school grounds so pupils will see the CCF as part of everyday life. School staff will be able to refer pupils as potential cadets.
- Cadets will join on a voluntary basis, even where pupils have been referred to the CCF by the school, to ensure that all cadets are committed.
- The CCF unit will have links with other cadet units in the local area, to help share resources. In addition, units should make use of all available funding opportunities, including own fundraising efforts and utilising grants.

- CCF staff are committed to it, they have the right skills to adapt to a military organisation and are involved because they want to work with young people. Staff should be a mix of internal and external staff (not always teachers). A military or public service background is helpful but not vital.
- CCF staff are fully resourced to allow them to complete the administration requirements and offer the best opportunities for cadets. This does not have to be done by CCF parading staff.
- Senior cadets can directly help the school through mentoring low attaining pupils, bringing experience from the CCF directly into the school.
- If expansion continues as planned resourcing (including those from the military) needs to reflect this to ensure the cadet experience is not diluted.
- CCFs can provide a safe haven for some young people where they can excel, however they are not suitable for everyone and cadets must be committed to reap the benefits.

Further Research & Next Steps

There are clearly limitations to this study.

- It is a small scale qualitative study, designed to get an in-depth view of how established CCFs are working within some schools. It is not designed to be representative of all CCFs.
- This study is about Combined Cadet Forces, a central part of which are the cadets who are notable by their absence in this work. It is vital that cadets are involved in any future research.
- To understand the longer term effects of being a cadet, the cadets need to be tracked beyond their compulsory education.
- Many interviewees expressed concerns that they are 'poor relations' to CCFs in independent schools, particularly regarding staff and resources- further work in this area could highlight if concerns are correct and provide further lessons of good practice.



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