

Impact of Cadet Units in Schools

The following information is a summary of the responses from headteachers and staff from schools hosting a cadet unit (42 schools responded). Schools were asked to provide feedback on the impact of their cadet programme in the following areas: **educational engagement, personal development, and wellbeing**. Responses for all 3 areas were overwhelmingly positive and showed consistent patterns of improvement in outcomes. No negative responses were received.

1. Educational Engagement

Cadet programmes are strongly associated with improved pupil engagement, behaviour, and relationships in school.

- **Attendance & Readiness to Learn:** Persistent absentees and school refusers began attending regularly due to cadets; punctuality and discipline improved.
- **Behaviour & Conduct:** Cadets showed fewer behaviour incidents, improved classroom focus, and significant reductions in exclusions. One school described its detachment as *“the best disciplined class in the school.”*
- **Relationships with Staff:** Seeing teachers as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers fostered trust, respect, and cooperation, benefiting classroom relationships.
- **Participation & Responsibility:** Cadets became more confident in lessons and extracurriculars, often taking on leadership roles; many progressed into prefect positions.
- **Inclusion & Belonging:** Cadets provided pride, structure, and belonging for SEND, disadvantaged, and disengaged students, acting as a leveller across diverse groups.
- **Aspirations:** Cadets gained access to opportunities (e.g. Cyber First Defenders, Ten Tors), awards, and recognition that raised ambitions for STEM, public service, and military careers.
- **Case Studies:** Multiple examples highlighted pupils turning around behaviour, overcoming disengagement, and achieving success in education through cadets.

Summary: Pupils engaged in cadet programmes demonstrate higher attendance, stronger discipline, better relationships, and improved educational outcomes.

2. Personal Development & Life Skills

The cadet programme has a profound effect on confidence, resilience, teamwork, and leadership.

- **Confidence:** Pupils moved from withdrawn or anxious to confident public speakers and leaders. In one case, 7 of 9 volunteers for a school poetry recital were cadets.
- **Resilience:** Cadets persevered through challenges, showing improved exam preparation and post-Covid recovery compared with peers.
- **Teamwork:** Pupils demonstrated greater cohesion and empathy, with SEND and disadvantaged students particularly benefiting. Many engaged in volunteering and peer mentoring.
- **Communication & Leadership:** Cadets excelled in public speaking, drill, and leadership roles. They were overrepresented in head student and prefect teams, with some leading hundreds of peers in wider cadet battalions.
- **Character & Responsibility:** Pupils displayed courtesy, maturity, and independence, often remarked on by parents. Some cadets demonstrated real-world courage and life-saving calmness in emergencies.
- **Case Studies:** Examples included students at risk of exclusion becoming senior cadet leaders, autistic pupils responding better to cadet peers than teachers, and anxious students leading training sessions.

Summary: Cadet programmes consistently equip pupils with essential life skills—confidence, resilience, communication, and leadership—that transform both individuals and their school communities.

3. Wellbeing

The cadet programme is widely described as *life-changing* for pupil wellbeing, with benefits extending to staff.

- **Mental & Emotional Wellbeing:** Pupils reported reduced loneliness, lower anxiety, and greater emotional regulation. School refusers and socially isolated students became confident participants.
- **Belonging & Identity:** Cadets gave pupils a sense of family and safe space, particularly for SEND and vulnerable students, steering them away from negative influences.
- **Physical Health:** Adventure, outdoor training, and residential improved fitness and reduced stress, especially for those disengaged from traditional sport.
- **Resilience & Self-Regulation:** Pupils showed greater resilience in exams and life challenges, learning constructive coping strategies.
- **Wider Community & Role Models:** Cadets became positive role models, challenging toxic behaviours, supporting peers, and engaging in community service.
- **Impact on Staff:** Teachers volunteering as CFAVs reported improved wellbeing, skills, and friendships. They also observed cadets as more positive, respectful, and hardworking.
- **Case Studies:** Students overcame school refusal, serious mental health difficulties, or disabilities through cadets. Staff highlighted personal wellbeing gains from participation.

Summary: Cadet programmes enhance wellbeing by providing belonging, purpose, and resilience. Pupils become happier, healthier, and more socially connected, while staff also benefit from involvement.

4. Overall Conclusion

The cadet programme delivers **transformational impact** across education, personal development, and wellbeing.

- **Educationally:** Cadets improve attendance, discipline, relationships, and aspirations.
- **Personally:** Cadets gain confidence, resilience, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills.
- **Wellbeing:** Cadets experience reduced anxiety, greater belonging, improved health, and stronger emotional resilience.

For disadvantaged, SEND, or disengaged pupils, the effect is often described as *life-changing*. For staff, cadets also provide new opportunities, skills, and improved wellbeing.

In short: Cadet programmes help young people and staff to thrive—building confident, resilient, community-minded individuals who enrich their schools and prepare for successful futures.