

# MEMBER'S WRITTEN QUESTION



Member submitting the question: Cllr Dylan Tippetts

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To the Cabinet Member for: sally.cresswell@plymouth.gov.uk

**Question:** Department of Education figures suggest that the number of Plymouth children registered as the children of Armed Forces Personnel and therefore gaining access to the Service Pupil Premium is at its lowest in five years and the amount of money received by Plymouth schools is at its lowest for that period too. What action has the council taken over the past 12 months specifically to encourage parents who are members of the Armed Forces and who have one or more children attending a state school in Plymouth, or who might otherwise have children eligible for the Service Pupil Premium, to notify those schools of their status, enabling the schools to access the extra funding for those pupils through the Service Pupil Premium?

Answer:

## REDUCTION IN SERVICE PUPIL PREMIUM UPTAKE

### Department for Education (DfE) data:

DfE intelligence indicates a slight but consistent decline in Service Pupil Premium (SPP) uptake over the past five years (a 6% decrease locally, compared to a 4-5% decline nationally).

### Several factors may explain this trend:

- **Demographic Shifts:** Fluctuating pupil numbers in Plymouth schools mirror national patterns. DfE data shows 59,600 fewer pupils enrolled across England this year, with total numbers just over 9 million.
- **National Trends in Armed Forces Mobility and Eligibility:** Decreased mobility among Armed Forces families, changes in eligibility criteria (e.g. shorter service periods, transitions out of active duty) and improved data accuracy and school reporting practices.
- **Local Military Context:** Plymouth remains a major military centre, home to HMNB Devonport, the largest naval base in Western Europe. However, increased use of civilian defence staff may also impact the number of pupils eligible for SPP, in line with national trends.

### Plymouth School Census Reporting:

The Plymouth School Census, undertaken tri-annually (October, January, May), formally began capturing service pupil data from October 2023. A 2.8% year-on-year reduction in uptake was observed in 2025. While this decrease may be linked to how schools engage with this reporting framework, emerging patterns are being monitored.

**In summary,** Service Pupil Premium uptake, in Plymouth, aligns with national trends, though the city continues to have a comparatively higher concentration of service pupils.

## LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION TO PROMOTE SPP AWARENESS

The Local Authority actively supports service families and schools in understanding and accessing Service Pupil Premium funding. Parents and carers receive targeted information through military, community, educational, and city council channels. Key activity includes the provision of guidance to schools and regular support issued prior to each School Census cycle and further engagement of schools, partners and service families through the 'Armed Forces Covenant Children, Young People and Families Network'. Service Pupil guidance is also shared as part of the School Admissions process. Additionally, service family engagement opportunities are utilised across the Local Authorities range of services, ranging from SEND, Youth Participation and Inclusion to Health and Wellbeing activity.

### School & Service Family Support (Past 12 Months). The Local Authority...:

- Delivered CPD and practical guidance, via the 'Young Carer & Service Family Lead's Hub', specifically regarding Service Pupil Premium.
- Worked in partnership with the [Children's Society](#) (Local Authority commissioned service) to utilise Local Authority intelligence for targeted school support.
- Completed a city-wide review of SPP use, identifying best practice in Plymouth schools. The findings were shared nationally by the [SCiP Alliance](#).
- Is responding to new [DfE/MoD 'Non-Statutory Guidance'](#) (April 2025), by reviewing current practice and developing a three-year strategic action plan, which will enhance city-wide coordination of resource and further promote of the seven principles set out in the Thriving Lives Toolkit whole school development tool ([Thriving Lives Toolkit](#): 7 Principles: 1. A Clear Approach, 2. Supported Wellbeing, 3. Maximised Achievement, 4. Effective Transition, 5. Children Heard, 6. Parents Engaged, 7. Well-Informed Staff).

**In summary**, the Local Authority continues to support service children, their families and schools in Plymouth by the coordination of collaborative advantage and the targeting of resource. This support, including raising awareness of Service Pupil Premium continues to develop to meet the needs of service families within the city.

Signed:



Date: 08.07.2025