

The Listening Box helps Army children

Published Date: 11 September 2009

Lancashire Evening Post



< Pupils with the Listening Box at Weeton Primary School

Starting a new school is stressful enough for any child – but it's even worse when your dad is going off to war at the same time.

Most of the 90 pupils at Weeton Primary School at Weeton Barracks, near Kirkham, have at least one parent in the armed forces.

The start of this term has been particularly tough, with dozens of dads from The 2nd Battalion of The Yorkshire Regiment (2 Yorks) being deployed to Afghanistan for six months just as school was starting.

But a little silver box is helping children to cope with any worries they might have.

It's known as The Listening Box, and pupils can pop a note inside if they want to talk about something.

Head teacher Chris Horrocks said: "It's a simple idea but simple ideas are often the best.

"It's well-used, according to the time of year and what's happening."

Concerns range from parents going to war to feeling lonely or a pal cheating at a game.

Teaching assistant Rebecca Pridmore checks The Listening Box each day and chats to any child who drops in a note.

She said: "If they are worried about dad going away we will talk about how dad has been trained to do his job, how he is very good at it and what he might be doing – polishing his boots or checking his vehicle, the non-confrontational things."

Year Four pupil Louise Dack, aged eight, used The Listening Box when she was worried about her mum after dad Aaron was deployed.

She said: "Sometimes he calls at night and I sent him a bluey (airmail letter).

"When he comes back for R and R (rest and recuperation), we are going to have a second Christmas."

Year Five pupil Charlie Masters' dad Rob is due back from a tour of Afghanistan with the Second Battalion of The Rifles Regiment (2 Rifles) next month.

Charlie said: "We keep in touch by the phone and I also send e-mails and can see my dad on the webcam.

"I am so proud of my dad and am looking forward to seeing him in October."

The school has also put pictures from start of term activities on its website so parents abroad can see what is happening at home.