



Hewett Primary School

Defence School Mentor



My name is Belinda and I am the Defence School Mentor (DSM) at Hewett Primary School. For those of you who have never encountered a DSM before, I am here to provide the following services:

- Welcome and Farewell Australian Defence Force Families
- Assist children to quickly develop a sense of belonging to the school community
- Encourage children in their friendship group and school activities
- Supporting Defence students during their time at the school, especially during settling in periods or during times of deployment or parental absence and leading up to the end of their posting here
- Assisting Defence students and their families with accessing relevant Defence programs
- Linking our Defence families to the community through information sharing, newsletters and participation in school and community events.



The DSM position was created in response to the fact that many Defence families move location regularly. This can lead to the children facing friendship and bullying issues, feeling isolated and lonely, and problems with school performance through changes in curriculum and schools. Some Defence students cope extremely well with moving, but others can sometimes benefit from having someone to talk to. Deployments and parental absence from home can also cause disruptions to home and school life. The DSM can also be a reference point for families to access services through the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and other community organisations that they may not have discovered on their own.

Some of the things that I do or have done are:

- Give a school tour for New Defence Families in Week 0 - we will also have new and second-hand uniforms available to purchase during the tour.
- Defence Buddy positions – Defence students are able to apply in Term 4 to be a Defence Buddy for the following year. Students that are chosen for the positions need to be available for the week 0 School tour, Defence kids club every Tuesday Recess time, able and willing to help run different programs throughout the year and also be part of the Hewett Primary School Remembrance Day ceremony.
- Welcome groups and activities at the start of the year - I get all the new Defence students together and run some activities so they can get to know each other and are able to set up buddies during play time to help with transitions being at a new school. This is done during the first week of school.
- Welcome Packs - containing information about my role, information about the community and different sporting clubs in the area. I have added important contact information about local doctors and hospitals the area. I have also added local attractions or things you can do and see in Adelaide.
- Tyler Turtle resilience program for Reception to Year 4 students - I will be running this program in Term 4 with a small group to start with and then I will be continuing with the program next year.
- Defence Kids Club - this runs every Tuesday as recess times in the Performing Arts room. The Defence Buddies help with the planning of the different activities. We do board games, arts and crafts and loads more, it is a lot of fun and a chance to meet other Defence students in the school.
- Coffee and Chat Mornings – this currently runs every Tuesday 9am-10am in the Hewett Primary School Community House, everyone is welcome to come along, have a chat and meet new people.



- Year 5-7 Port Power Excursion - this program is funded through the Defence Force and the Port Adelaide Football Club. It is a great resilience program for the older age groups.
- Deployment Wall - near my office is a map of the World, underneath we have some clocks that say Our Time, Mummy's Time and Daddy's Time. When parents are away students are able to put a marker on the map where their absent parent is and then they can change the clock to what the time would be for their parents.
- Hero the Dog Kimochis set - this is in my office, I read the story with small groups of students and work with these students to help build resilience and talk about their feelings.
- Count down Calendars - when parents have told me of a deployment, I create a countdown calendar for their children to keep in their classroom and every morning they cross off the days until the parent/s returns.
- Diaries – I have also created little diaries for students to keep at their desk, they write in their special things that may happen during the day, they take the diaries home and when they are able to speak to their absent parent, they can look through the diary and can talk about what has happened during the day. This helps to keep the conversations going.
- Defence Facebook Group - I started this in Term 3, I have found that I am able to communicate more effectively with Defence Families and keep everyone up to date with information.
- Cooking groups - students learn to cook easy meals for their families. I have done this in small groups for year's 5-7 students whose parents are deployed for an extended period of time.
- Farewell parties - the parties change every year but we farewell the Defence students that are leaving us and enjoy fun games and activities, while saying goodbye to our friends.



Some of our past projects and classroom activities:

- Defence Mural all made of finger prints from all Hewett Primary School students, including Childcare and Kindy
- Remembrance Day Quilt
- Remembrance Garden
- The Light Horse Association has attended the school
- Phil Cummings read his book - Anzac Biscuits to the school
- Ken Duthie brings in his displays and talk to all classes so students can have a better understanding about the Defence Force
- ASLAVs attended the school



Although the main focus of my position is Defence students, I always like to include the wider school community in my groups and activities, in order to help the children make their own networks within the school. The DSM is a part time position. For further information please contact me via the below information:

- The Defence Families closed Facebook group, Just search for "Hewett Primary Schools Defence Families" on Facebook and send in a request.
- Phone: 8522 1486 or fax: 8522 1837
- Email: Belinda.Longman37@schools.sa.edu.au

