

- **armed forces 'youth engagement'**
- **'military ethos' in schools**
- **government-sponsored 'learning resources' about the armed forces**



"The army careers advisers who operate in schools are skilled salesmen."

Head of Army recruitment strategy, quoted in *New Statesman*, 2007

Two government ministries, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education, have collaborated with the Prime Minister's office to produce a demonstrably biased educational resource and have promoted it to all schools in furtherance of a political programme of the current government.

Don Rowe, Citizenship Education consultant on *The British Armed Forces Learning Resource 2014*

should the military be promoted in SCHOOLS

"The three Services each run or part-fund very comprehensive external engagement operations with children and young people in schools and communities. This external engagement should meet two clear Defence outcomes: An awareness of the Armed Forces' role in the world...in order to ensure the continued support of the population; and recruitment of the young men and women that are key to future sustainment and success."

Ministry of Defence Youth Engagement Review, 2011

"The sanitised view of war presented by 'The British Armed Forces Learning Resource' suggests that it aims to generate both prospective recruits and wider support for the armed forces amongst the young. Such an approach has been criticised for failing to equip students to make an informed choice, particularly about enlistment in a career that carries such a high risk"

A critical response to the 'The British Armed Forces: Learning Resource 2014', *ForcesWatch*, March 2015

The influence of the military in UK schools and colleges

The armed forces have a growing involvement in secondary schools, colleges and even primary schools. While the Army, Navy and RAF have long run activities in schools as part of the Ministry of Defence's Youth Engagement programme, the Department for Education have recently begun to promote a 'military ethos' within education.

The UK armed forces make 11,000 visits to schools and colleges annually. Far more state schools are visited than private, and in some areas almost every school is visited, often numerous times each year.

Visits include: • careers related activities • curriculum related materials • student development • physical activity • interviews for Insight courses (pre-recruitment courses at armed forces bases) • sessions with staff • visits to bases and military museums

The Ministry of Defence state that they do not recruit in schools, specifying that, "no pupil or student is ever 'signed-up' or otherwise makes a commitment to become a recruit into the Armed Forces during the course of any school visit". However, it is clear from their own policies that long-term recruitment is one of the main outcomes of such visits, along with promoting the armed forces.

The DfE's **Military Ethos in Schools** programme includes:

- Troops To Teachers
- 'alternative provision with a military ethos' for students at risk of failing
- the expansion of the Combined Cadet Force in state schools
- the development of military-sponsored free schools and academies

The armed forces and government provide military-related curriculum materials for schools. In 2014, the DfE promoted *The British Armed Forces Learning Resource*, produced by the Prime Minister's Office, to every school. The 'learning resource' has been criticised by educationalists as a poor learning resource, which acts as a politically biased tool for promoting recruitment and uncritical support of the armed forces and its activities.

Why is this a problem?

- Military-led school activities give a one-sided picture of life in the armed forces. There are significant physical and psychological risks, legal obligations and ethical considerations to a military career. Schools should foster that awareness.
- There is an implication that schools are not already nurturing skills such as self-discipline and teamwork and that the military are better placed than others to provide them.
- Should ex-forces (including non-graduates) be fast-tracked through teacher training?
- Who are the main beneficiaries? While the DfE makes claims for pupils' development, the MoD focuses on defence-related outcomes. Are these agendas compatible?
- The Military Ethos in Schools programme aims to give 'young people the opportunity to develop teamwork, self-discipline, resilience and leadership'; are there aspects of 'military ethos' that are not so positive and not compatible with an education environment?
- Does promoting military activities in schools deter awareness of alternatives to conflict and favour military solutions?
- The Military Ethos programme is clearly targeted at communities where young people's options are more limited. Research by ForcesWatch shows that the youngest, most disadvantaged recruits are more likely to be killed or suffer from mental health problems.
- Although activities such as the cadets provide positive experiences for many, they do so within a narrow, military framework. This expansion is at the expense of more universal provision that is accessible to all students regardless of their interest in being involved in military activities.

In 2008, the NUT voted to "support teachers and schools in opposing MoD recruitment activities that are based upon misleading propaganda", and, along with other unions, has criticised aspects of the DfE's Military Ethos programme. ForcesWatch are keen to work with teachers to raise concerns and ensure that education policy is determined by what most benefits young people.

ForcesWatch scrutinises the recruitment of young people into the armed forces and the wider role of the military in UK society.

For more about our work, and information and resources, see our website or contact our Education Campaign Worker: education@forceswatch.net

www.forceswatch.net

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