# Think tank calls to double Combined Cadet Force access in UK schools by 2029



# Expanding Cadet Programmes in Schools: A Call for Discipline and Opportunity

A think tank in the UK has called for a significant increase in army-style discipline training for students through the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) as part of their education. The New Britain Project (TNBP) advocates for the number of schools offering CCF to double from 268 to 500 by 2029, citing compelling evidence that such initiatives can enhance students' behaviour and overall well-being.

The CCF, which is supported by the Ministry of Defence, engages students in structured activities that aim to build essential life skills. These include leadership training, first aid, and navigating the outdoors—experiences designed not only to foster teamwork but also to instill discipline and responsibility. According to data from the University of Northampton, these activities can significantly improve various aspects of a student's life, including attendance rates, motivation, and personal growth.

Polling conducted by TNBP shows strong public backing for the expansion of CCF programmes, with 55% of respondents supporting the initiative and only 7% opposed. The survey also revealed that 60% of those polled would encourage their child to participate, highlighting a societal preference for initiatives that instil a sense of national duty and personal responsibility. "The CCF isn’t a silver bullet," remarked Anna McShane, director of TNBP, "but it is a practical and proven tool that can support thousands more pupils, especially those who stand to benefit the most."

The benefits of cadet participation, as discussed in several studies, extend well beyond immediate behavioural improvements. Research has shown that involvement in cadet schemes can lead to increased social mobility and enhanced self-belief among young people. Studies commissioned by the Ministry of Defence establish that cadet membership not only increases confidence and academic success but also leads to higher aspirations and a better sense of community engagement.

For many students, particularly those without strong role models at home, membership in a CCF can provide the first encounter with structured discipline. A report emphasized that for some children—especially those from less advantaged backgrounds—the CCF may represent a unique opportunity to experience guidelines and expectations that foster personal development. This was echoed by various educational institutions that integrated CCF into their curriculums, showcasing how cadet programmes can nurture independence and prepare students for the challenges ahead.

However, the push for expansion comes amid rising concerns over youth behaviour and school absenteeism, which have been deemed critical issues in contemporary education. With one in 13 state secondary schools currently offering a cadet programme and around 80 schools on waiting lists, TNBP's proposal seeks not only to increase access but also to create a long-term strategy for integrating cadets into more mainstream educational offerings alongside subjects like music and sport.

Furthermore, the call for cadets to become a cornerstone of the state secondary school experience reflects broader debates about the role of discipline and character-building in education. Addressing the complexities of youth behaviour today requires multi-faceted approaches—including investment in mental health services and teaching practices—to ensure comprehensive support for students.

The vision laid out by TNBP points towards a future where cadet training could be a staple of a well-rounded education, enhancing not only academic performance but also the character of young people across the UK.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692547/Children-army-style-training-schools-behaviour.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://kimboltonschool.com/news/the-value-of-the-combined-cadet-force-ccf-at-kimbolton-school/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://combinedcadetforce.org.uk/news/independent-report-shows-cadet-forces-benefit-young-people), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cadet-forces-increase-social-mobility-and-help-young-peoples-self-belief-new-report-finds--2)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cadet-forces-increase-social-mobility-and-help-young-peoples-self-belief-new-report-finds--2), [[5]](https://www.independentschoolparent.com/london-schools/ccf-the-combined-cadet-force-at-school/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.droylsdenacademy.com/curriculum/character-development/combined-cadet-force/), [[7]](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-01-29/debates/ECE15232-4B45-4031-B378-C10692E01309/CadetForces)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692547/Children-army-style-training-schools-behaviour.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://combinedcadetforce.org.uk/news/independent-report-shows-cadet-forces-benefit-young-people> - An independent report by the University of Northampton highlights the positive impact of Cadet Forces on young people, including increased social mobility and enhanced self-belief. The study found that cadet membership leads to improved school attendance, better behavior, and higher motivation. Additionally, cadets develop essential life skills such as leadership, resilience, and teamwork, which contribute to their personal growth and success. The report emphasizes the significant benefits of cadet participation for individuals and the wider community.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cadet-forces-increase-social-mobility-and-help-young-peoples-self-belief-new-report-finds--2> - A report by the University of Northampton, commissioned by the Ministry of Defence, reveals that joining Cadet Forces offers a range of benefits to individuals and the wider community. The study found that cadet membership increases self-belief, improves school attendance, and leads to better behavior and attitudes. It also highlights the potential for greater academic success, contributing to increased social mobility. The report underscores the positive impact of Cadet Forces on social inclusion, mobility, and the mental well-being of young people.
4. <https://kimboltonschool.com/news/the-value-of-the-combined-cadet-force-ccf-at-kimbolton-school/> - Kimbolton School's Combined Cadet Force (CCF) offers pupils opportunities to develop leadership, resilience, and teamwork beyond the classroom. The CCF provides a structured environment where students challenge themselves, build confidence, and learn the value of service. Participation fosters discipline, responsibility, and initiative, equipping pupils with transferable skills that support their academic studies and future careers. Activities include navigation exercises, fieldcraft, leadership training, and adventure training, helping shape confident, independent young people prepared for life's challenges.
5. <https://www.independentschoolparent.com/london-schools/ccf-the-combined-cadet-force-at-school/> - The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) in schools offers teenagers opportunities to gain confidence and understand more about themselves. Schools like Cranleigh have integrated CCF into their co-curricular programs, focusing on outdoor experiences like navigation training to improve teamwork and discipline. The CCF also manages training for the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, pushing recruits out of their comfort zones with adventurous activities such as rock climbing, mountain biking, and parachuting. These experiences develop character and independence in a safe and controlled way.
6. <https://www.droylsdenacademy.com/curriculum/character-development/combined-cadet-force/> - Droylsden Academy's Combined Cadet Force (CCF), sponsored by the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Education, is recognized as a first-class extracurricular activity. It provides opportunities to exercise and learn leadership skills in a disciplined environment. The CCF offers a broad range of activities, including adventure training, leadership, marksmanship, drill, community work, first aid, Duke of Edinburgh Award, expeditions, field craft, and summer camps. Participation in the CCF is voluntary and aims to develop personal development and character building.
7. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-01-29/debates/ECE15232-4B45-4031-B378-C10692E01309/CadetForces> - A UK Parliament debate highlighted the strong benefits of cadet membership, including improved career prospects and social mobility. The report stressed that the positive impact of the cadets was particularly strong for those who suffered economic and other disadvantages. Cadets tend to have a higher sense of self-esteem, heightened aspirations, a heightened sense of social responsibility, and a higher respect for authority than their peers. Participation in CCF is associated with improved school attendance, preventing serial absenteeism, and changing young people’s life outcomes in the long run.