

THE UNSEEN MARCH

Questioning the militarisation of education in Britain's schools.

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Quaker Peace
& Social Witness

The militarisation of education in Scottish and Welsh schools

The Unseen March of militarised education is not unique to England. Meeting of Friends in Wales and General Meeting for Scotland have expressed concern about the militarisation of young people.

While education is subject to the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales, the Ministry of Defence operates across the whole United Kingdom. Therefore, while some initiatives in England such as alternative provision with a “military ethos” do not extend to Scottish or Welsh schools, the military is nevertheless playing an increasing role through cadet forces in those countries.

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Some of the approximately 150 new Combined Cadet Forces that are to be set up in disadvantaged state schools by 2020 under a £50m expansion will likely be in Wales and Scotland¹ though details of how this will work were still being clarified according to Education Scotland in November 2015.

Similarly, Scotland and Wales have not been subject to the same “academisation” as schools in England which has led to some schools and chains embracing a military ethos² and even facilitated the creation of state University Technical Colleges with extensive links to the military and arms industry as well.

However, Scotland and Wales receive a large number of visits to their schools by the armed forces.

¹ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2015-09-04.9043.h&s=cadet#g9043.q0>

² <http://www.forceswatch.net/news/big-development-military-academies-academies-enterprise-trust-signs-armed-forces-corporate-cove>

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Cadet Forces in Scotland

Until recently, Scottish state schools seemed to be free of cadet forces. While the Westminster government is encouraging more cadet troops in state schools through the [Cadet Expansion Programme](#), the last Combined Cadet Force (CCF) contingent in a Scottish state school closed in 2009. However, more information has become available through a written answer in the House of Lords. This shows that local army brigades have established a “Linked Detachment Programme” which uses the army cadet syllabus. There are eleven groups in six schools totalling a number of nearly 150 pupils:

- Govan High School (2 groups totalling 22 pupils);
- Broxburn Academy (3 groups totalling 37 pupils);
- Lasswade High School (2 groups totalling 25 pupils);
- Hawick High School (2 groups totalling 25 pupils);
- Viewforth Academy (1 group of 16 pupils);
- Kirkcaldy High School (1 group of 16 pupils)

They join three CCF groups in private institutions and over a hundred Army Cadet forces which operate outside schools.

Cadet Forces in Wales

In Wales, the first ever Combined Cadet Force attached to a state school opened in Treorchy Comprehensive in 2007³. It has since been joined by St Brigid’s State School and there are four more forces in private institutions. In Welsh communities, there are in addition 629 Army Cadet Forces, 60 Air Cadet squadrons, and 600 Sea cadets (number of units unknown)⁴, some of which will have close relationships with schools.

Visits to schools

Research points to a disproportionately high number of visits by the armed forces to schools in Scotland and Wales compared with England.

The military visits schools for a range of reasons. Some will be explicitly about recruitment, such as a presence at a Careers Fair; others are not officially linked to recruitment, but still aimed at the Ministry of Defence’s goal to build support among young people for the armed forces⁵.

³ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/ccf-not-just-private-schools-2251979>

⁴ <http://wales-rfca.org/content/cadets>

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/28390/20120705_yer_final.pdf

Visits to Welsh Schools

According to research by Forces Watch, schools in Wales receive a high number of visits⁶, with army recruiters visiting 88% of state secondary schools⁷. In fact, these visits seem to disproportionately target areas of deprivation such as the valleys of south Wales.

A Welsh Assembly report prompted by a petition⁸ from [Cymdeithas y Cymod](#) (Fellowship of Reconciliation) has called for the Welsh Government to investigate whether a fair and balanced view of the military is presented in schools. Prompted by this petition, in September 2015 the Assembly debated armed forces visits to schools and accepted the Petition Committee's three recommendations⁹:

- to consider research into the unevenness of armed forces visits to schools in Wales, focusing on areas of higher deprivation;
- ensure the provision of 'guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools takes account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of views with pupils about their role'
- and to consider how to increase the range of employers visiting schools

It is hoped this will lead to more scrutiny of military involvement in schools.

Read more analysis from Forces Watch in [Concerns About Armed Forces Visits To Secondary Schools In Wales, In The Context Of The Welsh Assembly's Current Examination Of The Issue](#)¹⁰.

Visits Scottish Secondary schools

The most up to date data we have on armed forces visits to secondary schools comes from this [Forces Watch report](#), which was co-sponsored by the Educational Institute for Scotland. Headlines from the report include

- Across Scotland, 83% of all state secondary schools (303 schools out of a total of 367) were visited at least once during the two year period.
- Armed forces visits to state secondary schools account for 95% of all visits at the secondary level and 100% of all visits made by the Army. Only 28 independent schools in Scotland providing secondary education (50%) were visited by the armed forces during the two-year period.
- Edinburgh, Fife, North Lanarkshire, Angus, Dumfries & Galloway, and Perth & Kinross recorded the highest number of visits to state secondary schools from the armed forces as a whole (more than 80 visits).

⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20150619165731/http://dailywales.net/2015/06/19/welsh-gov-told-to-review-the-way-british-military-recruits-in-welsh-schools/>

⁷ http://forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Concerns_armed_forces_visits_secondary_schools_Wales.pdf
http://forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Concerns_armed_forces_visits_secondary_schools_Wales.pdf

⁸ <http://forceswatch.net/blog/armed-forces-visits-schools-debated-welsh-assembly>

⁹ <http://forceswatch.net/blog/armed-forces-visits-schools-debated-welsh-assembly>

¹⁰ http://forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Concerns_armed_forces_visits_secondary_schools_Wales.pdf

- Of the 32 Scottish local authorities, 50% (16) had armed forces visits to all, or almost all, of their state secondary schools (95% or more).
- 31 state secondary schools were visited 10 times or more during the period and between them accounted for nearly one third (31%) of all visits to state secondary schools. Six were visited 20 times or more.
- All Army visits were made to state secondary schools; they made no visits to independent schools.
- Further education and sixth-form colleges were in general visited more frequently than secondary schools. 27 colleges were visited during the 2 year period, an average of 8 times each. Three colleges were each visited 20 times or more.
- Careers-related activities accounted for 35% of all visits. Visits described as mainly curriculum related accounted for 20% of all visits and those that focus on the development of the students accounted for 42%.
- Despite assurances by the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces that they do not recruit in schools, many of the activities provided by members of the armed forces in schools are recruitment-related and the armed forces' policy of visiting schools has a recruitment purpose that is linked to defence needs.

Visits to Scottish Primary Schools

As part of the work on the Scottish Parliament petition, Forces Watch and Quakers in Britain have asked about armed forces visits to primary schools using the Freedom of Information Act. The following are the headline results:

- Data on visits to Scottish state primary schools by the armed forces has only come from the navy and army as it is claimed the RAF have undertaken no visits.
- The navy has not recorded this information since 2012, meaning the picture of visits is incomplete.
- The armed forces claim that all visits are only undertaken at “the specific invitation of the schools and colleges themselves”.
- The Ministry of defence in their reply said “The purpose of these visits, agreed with the schools beforehand, range from raising awareness of the Armed Forces and their place in a democratic society, to practical sessions (aligned with the National Curriculum) designed to enhance teamwork, communications and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills, as well as building interest in the Services.”

For more information on visits to Scottish schools, read [Armed Forces Visits To Secondary Schools In Scotland](#).

Timeline for recruitment

Children can be recruited into the British armed forces at the age of sixteen. The recruitment process can officially start at 15 years and 10 months. Children need to have their parent’s signatures to allow them to join – although ForcesWatch maintains that

there is no mechanism to check the veracity of the signatures. This New Statesmen [article](#) claims that some children try to forge their parents' signatures.

Thanks in part to campaigning by Quakers, children can leave the armed forces at any point up until their 18th birthday¹¹, although they have to give three months' notice. Thereafter they will be in the armed forces for four years or face sanction. They can be deployed in combat situations from the age of 18. Once they become adults there is no opportunity to reassess the commitment they made as minors¹² despite research which shows soldiers recruited under 18 can face twice the likelihood of fatality¹³.

Current and future work on militarism in schools

- [The Unseen March](#) film and accompanying [actions](#) from Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) include [a questionnaire](#) which can be used to approach Head Teachers across the UK, and aid in starting a conversation with schools about peace.
- In conjunction with Forces Watch there are several Freedom of Information requests that are with the Ministry of Defence on visits to Scottish schools. This forms part of the work we are doing to submit a petition to The Scottish Parliament on this issue. I hope that this information will be ready and available in several months' time giving us a much bigger and more accurate picture of what is happening across Scotland.

What can you do?

- Keep us informed. Are you going to write to your local school? Have you already started conversations with MSPs and Head Teachers? You may have information that could be useful in the petition, or you may have a story that could be used as part of the [Stories of Witness](#) to inspire others (we need more of these from Scotland!) or get in touch with Mairi Campbell-Jack, the parliamentary engagement officer for Scotland on mairic@quaker.org.uk, or Isabel Cartwright at QPSW on isabelc@quaker.org.uk
- Are you (or do you know) a young Quaker with a story to tell about militarism in your school? Tell us about your experiences to help make the unseen march visible.
- Take action to question the militarisation of education in your area see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/unseen-march-take-action.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.forceswatch.net/news/teenage-soldiers-given-right-discharge>

¹² <http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/TermsOfService.pdf>

¹³ http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Young_age_at_army_enlistment_greater_risks%28FINAL%29.pdf