

DEFENCE SCHOOL MENTORS (DSM's)

At Harrison school we have a large defence community. To accommodate the needs of our defence students there are 2 Defence School Mentors – one in the Junior Area and one in the Senior Area. Our Junior School is covered by Sarah McGavin (Preschool – Year 6) and in our senior area is Zoe Rossiter (Years 7 to 10). At least one of us is available each day of the school week during school hours with Sarah working Mon –Wed and Friday and Zoe working Mon – Thursday. We welcome you to contact us via email or by phoning the Front Office anytime. DSMs are funded by the Department of Defence through the Defence Community Organisation and employed as a member of the school staff.

In our roles as DSMs we can assist with:

- **Settling in:** Transitioning into a new school can be stressful for some students. Understandably, the reasons are often not knowing anyone and having to make new friends or adjusting to a different educational system. We will work on helping your child feel that they are an important member of the school community and develop friendship and support networks as quickly as possible. We can provide information on educational allowances provided by the Department of Defence, should your child require extra tuition.
- **Deployed parent/Absent from Home (Courses or MWDU):** Family separation affects all members of the family and children's behaviour can sometimes alter as they try to adapt to the changes in home life. Often children enjoy and benefit from being in the 'Defence Friendship Group'. This is a support group held at recess on Monday's for children who have a parent away for an extended period. Children are invited to attend this group if they wish and can bring a friend. It is highly recommended for you to notify your child's teacher and the DSTA/DTM when a parent is away so your child can be supported.
- **Posting Out:** Most children adapt well and see moving as an adventure. Other children need extra encouragement and positive thinking strategies. We work with students who are posting out of Canberra to farewell their current friends and talk through preparing for their new school.

Throughout the week, we work in many classrooms allowing us to come to know your child. This also allows them to be familiar with us so they feel confident in approaching us should they need help.

We also run a number of weekly activity groups.

Throughout the year we hold Morning Tea's and Dinner's and invite you to join us in getting to know other Defence Families in the area.

If you require assistance or would like to have a chat please don't hesitate to contact us on:

Sarah.mcgavin@ed.act.edu.au or zoe.rossiter@ed.act.edu.au