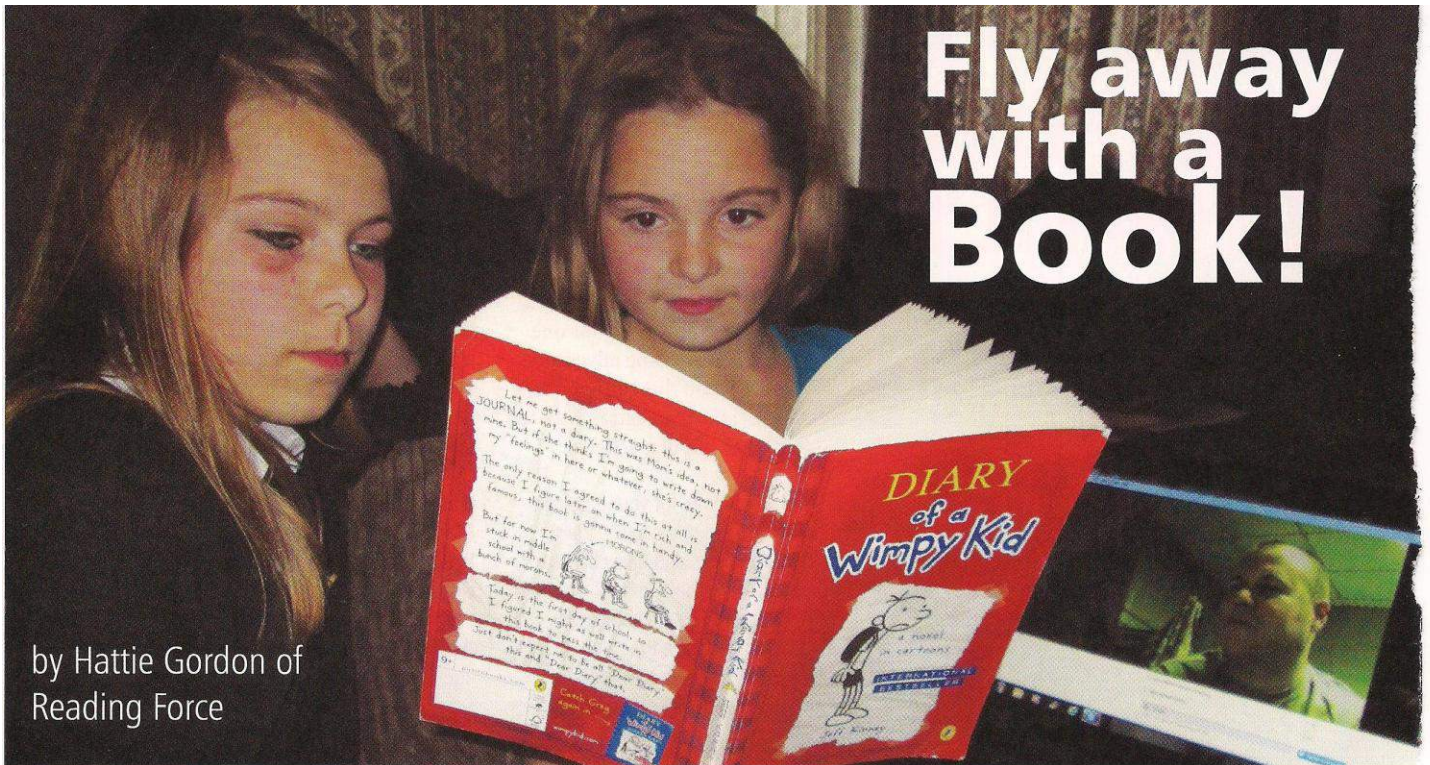


# Fly away with a Book!



by Hattie Gordon of Reading Force

**R**eading Force is the first national reading initiative for Service families and is free to every Service family to take part.

One of the best things about reading books is sharing and talking about them with family and friends and that's what Reading Force is all about! The scheme encourages family members or loved ones to read the same book and talk about it, whether they are at home together or separated by deployment, training or for any other reason. The idea is that children, parents, grandparents and siblings all reading the same book is a fun way to read and boosts communication, particularly when separated.

The scheme was founded by Dr Alison Baverstock, academic, author, mother and service wife of 30 years. Alison found that when she and her husband were separated by deployments, some of their best phone conversations were when they were both reading the same book. She soon involved her four children in shared reading. Alison realised many service families could enjoy and benefit from reading and talking about a book.

After families have read the book they fill a provided scrapbook with their thoughts about the book. Families can submit their scrapbook to the Reading Force competition and win some lovely prizes such as family theatre tickets. Every family who

enters the competition receives a certificate and wins a book for taking part.

The Edmonds family from Oxfordshire have taken part. Dad Michael is in the RAF. Michael was at home with his family when Reading Force was launched, and his two daughters decided the family would read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney.

Before they had finished the book however Michael was posted to Afghanistan, so they read the second half of the book together over Skype. Chloe and Nicole said it was difficult to find the time because Dad was working shifts, but they did manage some Skype calls and said these were special times.

Chloe, Nicole, and their Mum, Marie, completed the Reading Force scrapbook at home, filling it with their thoughts about the book, photos, drawings and notes. Their family scrapbook was so impressive that they won one of the top scrapbook competition prizes and were invited to watch a Hello! Magazine celebrity photo shoot. Michael was home the week of the shoot, so the whole family were able to enjoy their prize together. Marie says her daughters still talk about the book and their prize.

The initiative has encouraged some parents and children who have never read together before to enjoy sharing and talking about a book. Families who have been separated by postings have read to one another over Skype, or sent e-blueys about the chapters they are reading. One 12-year-old participant said, "This was the best father/daughter experience ever." Many families have said



The Duchess of Cornwall with Alison Baverstock and Elaine Boorman of Reading Force at Highgrove

it brought them closer together, that it helps keep continuity when separated and most say how much fun it is to share a book.

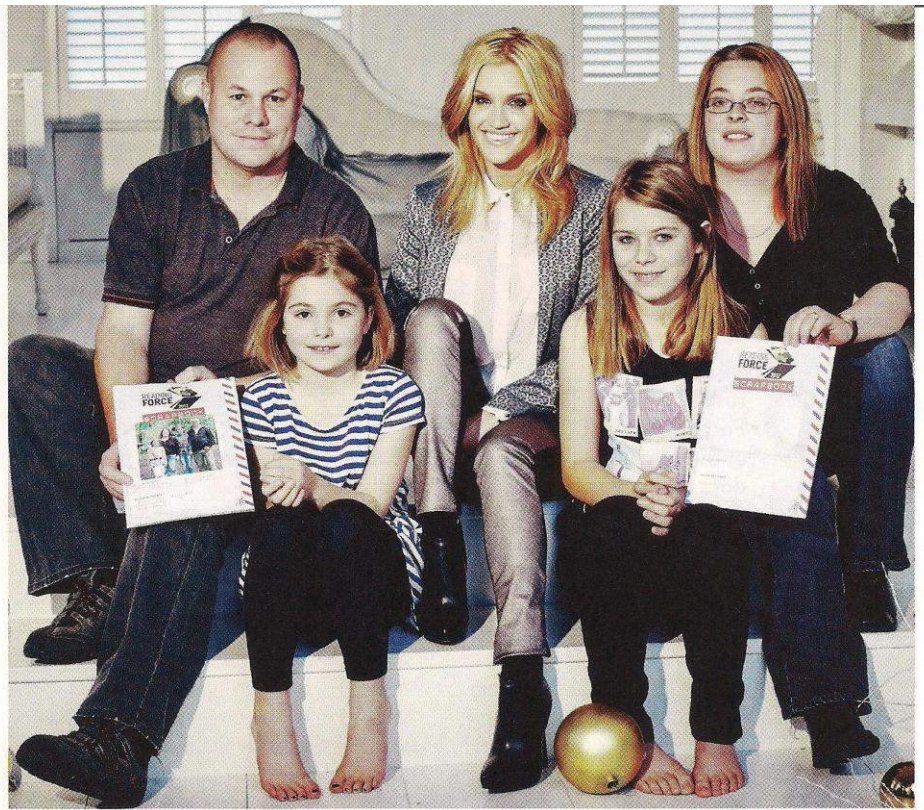
*Reading Force* is for all Service families. See [www.readingforce.org.uk](http://www.readingforce.org.uk) for more information and to register to take part.

#### Put reading at the heart of your family

- Taking part in *Reading Force* is **free** for all Armed Forces, reserves, cadets and ex-service children, families and friends.
- Wider family and loved ones can take part too, girlfriends, boyfriends, grandparents and parents of children in the Armed Forces.
- Whether your loved ones are at home or away, all can get involved.
- It's fun and easy to take part, and brings people closer together.

#### How to get started

- Pick up your free special scrapbook from your local school or HIVE, or register on the Reading Force website and we'll send you one.
- Choose a book you will all enjoy reading.
- All read the book, together or separately, and talk about it.
- Fill the scrapbook with everyone's thoughts about the book.
- Include anything you like – e-blueys, letters,



*The Edmond family on the Hello! set with Ashley Roberts*

- photographs, drawings, notes.
- Enter the Scrapbook Competition and you could win a great prize! (all scrapbooks are returned)
- All entries receive a certificate and win a book!
- Check out our new website for loads of info and ideas: [www.readingforce.org.uk](http://www.readingforce.org.uk) 