



## Young Carers' Policy

At Birchwood School we believe that all children and young people have the right to an education, regardless of what is happening at home. When a child looks after someone in their family who has a long term illness, mental health issues, a disability, or misuses substances, then he or she may need extra support to help them get the most out of school. This Young Carers' Policy says how we will help any pupil who helps to look after someone at home.

### Defining a Young Carer

A Young Carer is someone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way affected because of a caring role for a family member who has a long term illness, mental health issue, a disability, or who misuses substances. The Young Carer may be impacted by what is going on at home and may help in many different ways such as: doing household chores, providing personal care, administering medication, giving emotional or communication support, looking after siblings and themselves. The level of responsibility assumed by a Young Carer can be inappropriate to their age and at a level beyond simply helping out with jobs at home which is a normal part of growing up.

### Identifying a Young Carer

Unless the school is advised about a pupil's home circumstances, Young Carers risk first being identified by negative aspects of their behaviour or work. Some Young Carers worry about bullying or interference in their family life, and may seek to conceal their role from their peers and from teachers.

Some of the warning signs that might indicate that a pupil has unrecognised responsibilities are:

- Regular lateness or unauthorised absence, possibly increasing
- Tiredness in school
- Erratic response to homework with incomplete, late or non-compliance to set tasks
- Lack of concentration, anxiety or worry
- Under-achievement for potential capability
- Behavioural problems, especially inappropriate responses possibly resulting from anger or frustration
- Few or no peer friendships but possibly with a good relationship with adults and presenting as very mature for their age
- Victim of bullying, perhaps linked to a family member's disability or state of health, e.g. substance misuse or due to Young Carer not being perceived by peers as dressing in the latest fashion
- Lack of interest in extra-curricular activities, especially after school
- Apparent parental disinterest due to non-attendance at parent's meetings.

All the warning signs mentioned may be indicators of a range of problems, some not associated with caring, however in dealing with any pupil exhibiting any of the signs, staff should consider asking the pupil if they are helping to look after someone at home. Staff should also enquire from colleagues with pastoral responsibilities for the pupil. Education Welfare Officers and Education Social Workers, together with pastoral support staff, investigating pupils causing concern should also consider the possibility of caring roles, especially when working directly with family members. Any concerns about a pupil who may be considered an as yet unidentified Young Carer should be reported to the member of staff with responsibility for Young Carers (the Young Carers Lead) as should new information about already identified Young Carers. The Young Carers Lead responsible for co-coordinating Young Carer support is the key person in school through which relevant matters need to be passed.

It is much better to start from a positive base so our enrolment process will seek to establish if:

- The pupil lives with a family member who has a disability or long term illness or mental health issue.

- The pupil has a responsibility for looking after that person over and beyond normal inter-personal relationships within a caring family setting.
- The family is in contact with a support service that could help reduce their reliance on the pupil.

Some families will choose not to disclose this information. Any information gained as a result of this process will be held on the pupil's personal file, kept securely and made available in the first instance to the Young Carers Lead. We will respect the right to privacy and will only share information about Young Carers and their families with people who need to know in order to be able to help. Before sharing information with anyone else, we will seek consent from the Young Carer and from a parent.

### School support for identified Young Carers

- A member of staff will be the lead for Young Carers within the school. They will be the point of contact for Young Carers and their families and will liaise with the Young Carers' Service. Their name and contact details will be displayed in the school, on the school website or from reception.
- Awareness raising sessions will take place including assemblies, PSHE lessons and staff/Governor training.
- Wherever possible staff will talk to Young Carers in private and not in front of their peers.
- Information about the Young Carer and their family will only be shared with people who need to know in order to help.
- Young Carers have the option to be put in touch with the local Young Carers' Service if they fit the criteria.
- Where possible we will negotiate deadlines for homework etc in advance of them being set.
- Additional support needs for Young Carers struggling to achieve their potential will be identified and provided where appropriate and in consultation with Young Carers' Service.
- Alternatives for Young Carers unable to attend out of school activities due to their caring role will be considered.
- We will liaise with support services to ensure that we can refer and signpost families to additional help.
- If a parent is unable to travel to parent's sessions due to family circumstances, we will try to make alternative arrangements. The Young Carer or parent may request this.
- We will provide advice about how young people can get into school where transport is a problem.
- The school is accessible to parents who have mobility and communication problems.
- We seek feedback and ideas from Young Carers and their families.
- Establish individual pupil support plans for those Young Carers with specific needs where appropriate.
- We allow Young Carers to use a telephone to call home during breaks and lunch times so as to reduce any worry they may have about a family member.
- The Young Carers Lead keeps up to date with national and local developments and with legislation and guidance affecting Young Carers and their families.
- We welcome any child, parent or family member who wishes to discuss their family circumstances so that we can help the child in achieving their potential.

### Children Act 2004

Most Young Carers will meet the definition of a 'child in need' under the Children Act 2004 and may be entitled to an assessment from Children's Services. In the event of any Young Carers being considered to be at risk of significant harm the school's child protection procedures should be followed.

### Equality Act 2010

Young Carers have protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act because they are associated with a family member who has a disability or illness and cannot be discriminated against because of this.

### Children and Families Act 2014

The Act has a section on Young Carers and, in conjunction with the adults-focused Care Act, seeks to make sure Young Carers get the support they need. Local authorities are expected to try and identify Young Carers so they can be offered support.

**Policy dated:**

**Review and renewal due:**

This policy has been prepared in consultation with Birchwood School and the Warwickshire Young Carers' Project.