

Matthew Arnold Primary School



Young Carers Policy

Introduction

At Matthew Arnold Primary School, we believe all young people have a right to an education, regardless of their situation at home. When a young person has a caring responsibility they may need extra support to help them get the most out of school. Matthew Arnold Primary School is committed to supporting young carers to access education. This policy aims to ensure young carers at Matthew Arnold Primary School are identified and offered appropriate support to access the education to which they are entitled.

A young carer is anyone up to the age of 18 who has caring responsibilities within the home, where the person being cared for is disabled, has a long term illness, mental health issues or difficulties resulting from substance and/or alcohol misuse. Young carers may be primary carers i.e. caring for a parent or carer, or a secondary carer ie. helping to care for a sibling or older relative.

In some instances a young carer may care for more than one family member. The person they look after will have one or more of:

- Physical disability (including sensory disability)
- Learning disability
- Mental health problem
- Chronic illness
- Substance misuse issue

Definition of Caring

A young carer will take on additional responsibilities to those appropriate to their age and development. A young carer might be providing the main care or share responsibilities with another family member. The caring tasks that a young carer has to deal with can range from:

Nursing care	giving medication, injections, changing dressings, assisting with mobility etc.
Personal intimate care	washing, dressing, feeding and helping with toilet requirements
Emotional care	being compliant, monitoring the emotional state of the person cared for, listening, being a shoulder to cry on, supporting a parent through depression and trying to cheer them up.
Domestic care	doing a substantial amount of housework, cooking, shopping, cleaning, laundry etc
Financial care	running the household, bill paying, benefit collection etc
Child care	taking responsibility for younger siblings in addition to their other caring responsibilities

Aims

Matthew Arnold Primary School aims to:

- To raise the awareness among school staff about the needs of young carers and to support them in establishing a whole school approach to address the issues that may arise within a school setting.
- To provide teachers with a range of referral routes and enable them to provide young carers with information and advice on where to seek assistance.

Recent research has indicated an under-reporting of Young Carers in Britain. Young carers are frequently a 'hidden group of carers and less likely to be identified than adult carers due to a number of factors.

- Young people frequently hide their caring responsibilities in an attempt not to be seen as 'different' by their peers.
- Families frequently do not admit to the amount of care being provided by children and young people for fear of repercussions and a perception that agencies will judge them negatively, rather than provide support.
- Young people often feel embarrassed to talk about their caring responsibilities, particularly if the care need arises from poor mental health or substance and alcohol use.
- Agencies concerned with care for adults, who may be working with disabled adults or adults with long term health issues, may not be picking up on the needs of the family group and may not be linking effectively with agencies tasked with the provision of social care for children and young people.
- The needs of secondary carers will rarely meet the thresholds for support by statutory social care agencies, despite the fact that secondary carers are frequently subjected to the same demands, emotionally and physically, as primary carers.

Possible Impact on a Child's Education

Caring responsibilities can impact on young people's education in a number of ways.

- **Lateness** - many young people may be late for school on a regular basis as a result of caring duties within the home or as a result of overtiredness causing them to oversleep.
- **Tiredness** - many young carers will have interrupted sleep patterns or be over- tired as a result of having to complete household tasks.
- **Non-attendance** - some carers will take time off school because they are worried about the person they are caring for, or because they are carrying out caring tasks that prevent attendance at school.
- **Late/no submission of homework and assignments** - many young carers will find it difficult to find time to complete school assignments and may also have no one at home who can offer assistance with more difficult assignments.
- **Lack of participation in extra curricular activities and school trips** - many families of young carers will be totally dependent on benefits and activities may be difficult to afford for many families. Many young carers will also be unable to stay at school or access other activities if they have to rush home to support family members.

- **Challenging behaviour** - some young carers will exhibit challenging behaviour in environments away from the home setting, to offset the fact that they have to take on adult responsibilities and behave in an adult fashion within the home.
- **Difficulties in establishing friendships** - many young carers will be unable to develop school friendships outside school, as they may not be able to invite other children home or visit friends in their homes. As a result of poverty or caring responsibilities, they may also have restricted access to out of school clubs and activities that other children take for granted.
- **Poor health** - many young carers are carrying out tasks for which they are physically ill equipped, which in turn impacts on their overall health. In addition to this, long term caring responsibilities can impact significantly on the mental health of young people. Both aspects can affect school attendance.
- **Poverty** - many families will be dependent solely on state benefit for their income, affecting their ability to afford clothing and materials for school and the ability to access school trips.
- **Family isolation/involvement** - parents will often be unwilling or unable to attend school functions and parents evening, thus becoming more isolated from the school environment and unaware of issues and problems their children may be experiencing.
- **Poor education/career choices** - young carers will often underachieve at school. They may also often feel that they are good at caring and should therefore automatically go into a care profession, without thinking through the implications of this choice.

It also might be difficult to engage their parents (due to fears about child being taken into care, fears about their condition being misunderstood or their parenting skills being called into question). They may be unable to attend parents' evenings.

Support Offered

Matthew Arnold Primary School acknowledges that young carers may need extra support to ensure they have equal access to education. This may include:

- A supportive environment for young carers by establishing a whole school approach to the identification of need and the establishment of an appropriate referral mechanism and network to meet the individual support needs of young people with caring responsibilities.
- Identify a named member of staff, DHT, with responsibility for ensuring that carers are identified and their needs met.
- Ensuring that school records identify the support needs of individual young carers and that these support needs are reflected in records accompanying children and young people within any transition to other educational providers while ensuring that the appropriate confidentiality procedures are in place to cover the necessary information sharing.
- Inset training for staff to include training on the possible identification of young carers, issues impacting on education and support/referral mechanisms available via external agencies
- Promotion of additional links with adult care agencies, who may be able to support families and relieve care responsibilities of young people and maintenance of an up-to-date referral manual.

- Offering privacy to young people when investigating frequent lateness or non- attendance at school.
- Offering young carers the facility to stay in contact with the person they are caring for during school hours by means of the most appropriate communication methods.
- Allowing appropriate leeway and extensions to young carers for completion of homework or coursework.
- Allowing appropriate leeway with regards punctuality and attendance at school to take into account unavoidable caring responsibilities.
- Providing a trusted adult within the school setting with whom the young carer feels comfortable in addressing difficult issues arising from their situation. This may not be the same person as the named person with responsibility for carers.
- Supporting parents with mobility and/or access issues to facilitate and maintain regular contact with the school.
- Support young people in maintaining telephone access to their families during the school day.

Matthew Arnold Primary School will provide young carers with opportunities to speak to someone in private, and will not discuss their situation in front of their peers. We appreciate that young carers will not discuss their family situation unless they feel comfortable. The young person's caring role will be acknowledged and respected. We will treat young carers in a sensitive and child-centred way, upholding confidentiality, and ensuring they can access all available support services in school.

Matthew Arnold Primary School will follow child protection procedures regarding any young carer at risk of significant harm due to inappropriate levels of caring. We will promote discussion and learning in all areas of the curriculum to facilitate fuller understanding, acceptance of and respect for, the issues surrounding illness, disability and caring.