



Ongar Primary School
Young Carers
Principles in Practice

At Ongar Primary School we are committed to supporting all our pupils to reach their full potential. We recognize that some children and young people may take on significant caring responsibilities for family members who have a disability, long-term illness, mental health condition, or dependency on drugs or alcohol. These children are known as **young carers**.

Young carers may experience challenges that affect their education, social development, and emotional wellbeing. We believe that identifying and supporting young carers is essential in ensuring equal access to learning, participation, and achievement.

This policy outlines how young carers at St Teresa's will be supported, thus ensuring they are recognized, respected, and offered the appropriate help and understanding in a confidential and sensitive manner.

Definition of a Young Carer

A young carer is a child or young person under the age of 18 who provides regular and ongoing care to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled, or misuses substances. The care they provide can include but is not exclusively:

- Emotional support
- Personal care (washing, dressing)
- Household tasks (cleaning, cooking, shopping)
- Managing finances or medication
- Supporting siblings or helping them attend school

Not all children who live with someone with care needs are young carers. The defining feature is the regular and substantial nature of the caring responsibilities that go beyond what would normally be expected of a child of their age.

Our Aims

- To raise awareness among staff and pupils of who young carers are and the issues they face.
- To identify young carers within the school and provide appropriate and timely support.
- To ensure young carers are not disadvantaged in their education or school life.
- To work in partnership with families, external agencies, and young carers to develop and implement support plans.

Key Principles

- Early Identification: We aim to identify young carers as early as possible to prevent their caring responsibilities from affecting their education and wellbeing.
- Support and Inclusion: We aim to support young carers so that they can participate fully in school life and have the same opportunities as their peers.

- Confidentiality: Information about young carers will be handled sensitively and shared only with relevant staff and professionals where necessary.
- Pupil Voice: Young carers will be consulted and involved in decisions affecting them.
- Whole School Responsibility: Supporting young carers is the responsibility of everyone in the school community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mrs S Rodway is the school's Designated Young Carers Lead. They are responsible for:

- Keeping an up-to-date register of identified young carers.
- Coordinating support within school and liaising with external agencies.
- Monitoring the wellbeing of young carers.
- Raising awareness and delivering training to staff on young carer issues.

Class Teachers and Support Staff will:

- Be vigilant to the signs that a pupil may be a young carer.
- Respond sensitively and appropriately to any disclosures or concerns.
- Pass on relevant concerns to the Designated Young Carers Lead.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will:

- Promote a culture where young carers are valued and supported.
- Ensure resources are available to implement this policy effectively.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the school's support for young carers through data, feedback, and evaluation.

Governors will:

- Review and ratify the Young Carers Policy.
- Ensure the school complies with statutory responsibilities related to safeguarding and equal opportunities.

Identification of Young Carers

Young carers may be identified through:

- Pupil self-disclosure.
- Parent/carer disclosure.
- Staff observations or concerns.
- Partnership with external agencies such as social care or young carers' services.
- Information gathered at admissions or transition.

The school will promote awareness of young carers through PSHE lessons, assemblies, noticeboards, newsletters, and the school website.

Support Offered to Young Carers

Depending on individual needs, the following support may be offered:

- Regular check-ins with the Young Carers Lead or another trusted adult.
- Access to lunchtime or after-school groups specifically for young carers.
- Flexibility with homework deadlines or provision of additional time/support.
- Provision of a quiet space to complete work or take a break.
- Attendance support and assistance with transition between key stages.
- Referral to external young carer support services (e.g. Essex Youth Service, Young carers)
- Parent/carers meetings to understand the home context and ensure joined-up support.

Supporting Access to Enrichment and Inclusion

We recognize that young carers may miss out on extracurricular activities or school events due to their responsibilities. At Ongar Primary we are committed to:

- Encouraging participation in clubs, trips, and events by offering additional support or flexibility where possible.
- Ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent participation
- Offering mentoring or buddy systems to promote peer support if appropriate.

Working with Families

Engaging with families is crucial in supporting young carers. The school will:

- Approach families in a respectful and non-judgmental way.
- Reassure parents/carers that the aim is to support the child, not to question parenting.
- Encourage open dialogue to better understand the family's needs and offer signposting to support services.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality while being clear about safeguarding obligations.

Safeguarding and Confidentiality

Young carers may be at increased risk of emotional distress, neglect, or inappropriate levels of responsibility. All staff must be aware of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures.

Disclosures from or about a young carer will be handled sensitively, with a clear explanation to the child and their family about who information will be shared with and why.

If staff believe a child is at risk of significant harm, they must follow the school's safeguarding procedures without delay.

Training and Awareness

- All staff will receive training on young carer awareness as part of their safeguarding and induction training.
- The Designated Young Carers Lead will undertake relevant professional development and network with local agencies.
- The school will promote Young Carers Awareness Day and other national initiatives to raise the profile of young carers.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The school will monitor the impact of this policy through:

- Pupil feedback and voice.
- Attendance and progress tracking of identified young carers.
- Staff awareness and referral rates.
- Annual review of the policy by SLT and the governing body.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- PSHE/RSE Curriculum
- SEND Policy

Local and National Support Services

- Essex Youth Service – youth.essex.gov.uk / email: young.carers@essex.gov.uk
- The Children's Society – www.childrenssociety.org.uk
- Carers Trust – www.carers.org
- Action For Family Carers – www.affc.org.uk

Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or guidance. Feedback from staff, pupils, families, and partner agencies will inform future updates.

Date: September 2026

Review Date: September 2028