

Young Carer Policy

2023-2024

“Every person, uniquely made in God’s image, merits the best we can give”.



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We recognise that many students will have caring responsibilities at some point during their time at St Michael's Middle School, and that these responsibilities can impact a student's performance in any area of the curriculum; a whole school commitment is therefore necessary. St Michael's Middle School acknowledges that high standards and expectations are crucial to enhance personal and academic progress for all students, including those with caring responsibilities. We believe that all pupils should be equally valued (*"Every person, uniquely made in God's image, merits the best we can give"*) and strive to eliminate prejudice and discrimination. We aim to create an environment whereby all students will flourish and feel safe and that seeks to remove barriers to learning and participation. The importance of enhancing positive self-esteem is also recognised, which allows opportunities for increased engagement, social development, and achievement.

Therefore, additional provision for young carers is balanced with appropriate challenge to reach longer term outcomes and opposes a sympathetic acceptance of low achievement.

St Michael's Middle School will engage with MYTIME Young Carers through their Level-Up Programme, which aims to improve the knowledge of staff in supporting and identifying young carers, and of students by educating them regarding the role which young carers may carry out outside of the school day and the impacts their role may play on day-to-day life and future choices. Additionally, children will understand the impact their decisions have on a young carer's life.

Our young carers policy takes account of findings and recommendations given by Barnardo's Still Hidden, Still Ignored; Who Cares for Young Carers? report published in 2017, and the Children's Commissioner's Voices of England's Missing Children report, published in 2022, which both emphasise the role and accountability of school staff and procedures regarding provision for, and progress of, young carers. This guidance suggests that schools have a key part to play in the provision of holistic and effective support to young carers, and our Governing Body will ensure that we fulfil this responsibility.

St Michael's Middle School acknowledges the need to keep up to date with advice, publications and research regarding provision for young carers, and therefore this document is subject to review at regular intervals.

This policy has been produced in collaboration with local experts, MYTIME Young Carers

AIMS OF YOUNG CARER PROVISION

- To raise awareness of young carers among staff and to ensure the identification of all young carers as early as possible on entry to the school and make referrals when necessary
- To foster respect and understanding towards young carers among all students
- To address any underlying inequalities between young carers and other students in a graduated and timely manner
- To improve the progress and raise the standard of achievement for young carers
- To support young carers in improving their attendance
- To ensure that young carers feel included and supported within their school community as possible, and that reasonable adjustments made to promote this
- To protect young carers from unjust treatment due to their caring role and improve co-ordination with other agencies and support services
- To give young carers a voice in the school community and that they are involved in decisions affecting young carer provision
- To ensure that staff recognise that flexibility may be needed when responding to the needs of young carers

Definition of a young carer

A) Young carers are children under the age of 18 who help to look after someone in their home or another family member. This could be a sibling, parent, both parents or a grandparent who has a disability, illness, mental health condition or who misuses substances.

B) A child is a young carer if he/she holds a significant caring responsibility for a relative who, due to illness, disability, addiction, or mental ill health, is unable to fully care for themselves. Our definition of a young carer extends to include any child who holds a significant caring responsibility for a sibling.

D) St Michael's Middle School definition of a young carer is a child, under the age of 18, who is either the main carer, shares a caring responsibility for, or whose day-to-day life is impacted by someone in their home, which extends to a sibling or siblings, parent, both parents or a grandparent, who has a disability, illness, mental health condition, misuses or is addicted to substances, or is unable to fully care for themselves.

Having a clear definition of the role of a young carer is important, but unfortunately, many will remain hidden from view due to the potentially negative impacts they feel speaking up or self-identify may have on their family.

From the outside, caring can look like a tiring, thankless and overwhelming responsibility, but we recognise that it can be highly rewarding and fulfilling due to the impact that these amazing young people have on their family. Not only do they possess an abundance of empathy, understanding and generosity, but they have developed practical life skills and understand the importance of a strong family unit.

To help identify and support those hidden young carers, it is vital that professionals are equipped with the understanding and knowledge to detect potential signs, that a young person may have a caring responsibility. There are many potential identifiers but listed below are some of the more common signs. A young carer may show one, or many, of these identifiers:

- Attendance issues, including persistent lateness or absences, leaving school in the middle of the day, arriving late for lessons
- A lower attainment or progress score than anticipated or predicted, underperforming or not fulfilling their potential
- Poor homework record or quality
- Poor engagement both within lessons and extra-curricular activities
- Low emotional wellbeing including signs of:
 - tiredness, worry, anxiety and low self-esteem which could lead to social isolation and trouble maintaining healthy friendships
- Displaying behavioural problems or showing sudden changes in behaviour and mood
- Understanding or showing interest in adult matters such as finances or medical conditions which are not appropriate to their age
- Being very keen to offer help and support to adults, even at the detriment of their own social time, and appearing to find interacting with adults easier than with their peers
- Reference to supporting people at home or commenting on the behaviours of people in their home
- Reporting of bullying
- Difficulty in engaging or supporting parents
- Appearance: not having full uniform or equipment, is not replaced or ill fitting.
- Knowledge gained from communication/interactions with parents.

EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION

St Michael's Middle School aims to make reasonable steps to ensure that young carers are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other students, and to ensure equal educational and social opportunity for all.

St Michael's Middle School strives to maintain a climate of tolerance, understanding, respect and trust that allows all students and staff irrespective of background or personal circumstances to feel safe and be safe from any form of discrimination or emotional harm. This young carer policy is supported by other school policies including our equality policy and anti-bullying policy which can be viewed separately on the St Michael's Middle School website.

Strategies To support young carers

A multitude of strategies can be implemented at various levels within a school to ensure that young carers are identified, supported, and enabled to succeed both academically and socially. This requires a collaborative approach where every adult is held accountable for young carers.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

- To include space on school application forms for parents to declare:
- Application pack to include young carer registration:
 - a) Whether or not their child is a young carer
 - b) Whether or not their child is registered as a young carer
- To create a young carer register accessible to all members of the pastoral team and any other necessary staff
- To monitor the attendance of young carers and respond accordingly with appropriate intervention
- The school will add the pupil to the vulnerable pupils' list
- To ensure that young carers have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion around the schools' provision for young carers
- To maintain and regularly review our young carer's policy

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LEVEL-UP PROGRAMME

To engage in MYTIME Young Carer's Level-Up Programme, where the school pledges:

- To ensure that all school staff receive training on how to identify and support young carers through CPD
- To appoint a young carer champion, who is held to account by a dedicated member of SLT and an appointed Governor. The young carer champion will be responsible for maintaining a young carer support group and corresponding with external agencies such as Dorset and BCP council to stay up to date on a young carer's circumstances and needs
- To raise awareness of young carers, to develop a culture of respect for young carers among the student community, and to encourage young carers to come forwards
- To host MYTIME young carer assemblies and PSHE lessons
- To engage with MYTIME Young Carers in providing opportunities for young carers (Zoom Youth Group, making memories days, Christmas, and Easter events)
- To sign up to the Level-Up and MYTIME newsletters
- To create and organise a young carer group and young carer display board visible by students and staff

IN SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CARERS

- To offer extra-curricular opportunities for relaxation, leisure, and social connection for young carers
- To support young carers in getting to and from the school, and where necessary, provide advice to parents if there are difficulties in transporting a young carer to school
- To offer a programme of careers advice and guidance and, where possible, work experience placements. Furthermore, to build the career aspirations of young carers by taking them to open days and on tours of further education establishments
- The school will provide young carers with opportunities to speak to someone in private, and will not discuss their situation in front of their peers
- To ensure young carers can access all available support services in school
- To ensure that young carers have access to the mental health support available across the school where necessary
- The school will create young carer passports which all staff can access
- To be identified on registers and seating plans
- To make reasonable adjustments to usual School policies and show flexibility on a case-by-case basis regarding issues such as lateness to school, late homework, and poor attendance. These include, but are not limited to:
 - access to a telephone, during breaks and lunchtime, to phone home, with pastoral support or independently
 - negotiable deadlines for homework/coursework by speaking to the Young Carer Champion (48 hours)
 - access to homework clubs during the school day (where these are available)
 - identifying support for young carers and their family to enable them to attend school trips and educational activities
 - With support from the young carer champion, young carers will have access to a reflection card if required
 - lunchtime detentions rather than after school detentions (where possible)
 - arrangements for schoolwork to be sent home (when there is a genuine crisis); any approved absence for a young carer will be time limited (DfES 2006)
 - access for parents with impaired mobility
 - alternative communication options for parents who are sensory impaired or housebound

REFERRAL AND EXTERNAL AGENCIES

- The young carer champion will consult with relevant colleagues, and other relevant agencies, regarding their caring responsibilities, with the consent of the young carer
- The school will follow child protection procedures regarding any young carer at risk of significant harm due to inappropriate levels of caring
- The school 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
- Where appropriate, the school will refer a young carer to the local authority for a referral

Young Carer Voice

Following a recent student voice session, the young carers of St Michael's Middle School have identified the following points to be considered best practice when supporting young carers in school:

TO BE COMPLETED ONCE A YOUNG CARER GROUP HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

To supplement the school policy, the young carers have created an agreement/young carers guidance document to demonstrate how they are taking ownership of their schoolwork, in line with their caring role. The teachers at St Michael's Middle School have pledged to support young carers on a case-by-case basis, and the young carers at St Michael's Middle School have pledge to:

TO BE COMPLETED ONCE A YOUNG CARER GROUP HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

GUIDANCE AND FURTHER READING

- Barnardo's Still Hidden, Still Ignored; Who Cares for Young Carers?
<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/still-hidden-still-ignored.pdf>
- Children's Commissioner for England, Voices of England's Missing Children
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/voices-of-englands-missing-children/>

