

SPOTTING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS: FIRST STEPS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF

In every primary school, there are children who help care for someone at home.

Many do not talk about it. Many do not realise their role has a name.

With the right understanding and support, young carers can feel confident, included and able to enjoy school life. Young carers have the Right to Dream.

This simple guide offers gentle first steps to help you support a pupil who may be helping someone at home.

Seen. Supported. Succeeding.

Understanding Young Carers in Primary School



Who is a young carer?

A young carer is a child who helps look after someone at home who may be unwell, disabled, experiencing mental health difficulties, or needing extra support.

At primary age, this help might include:

- helping a grown-up or sibling
- doing small household jobs regularly
- helping with routines
- offering comfort or reassurance
- helping someone stay safe
- helping younger siblings get ready for school
- translating or helping communicate
- worrying about someone at home

Many young carers are very thoughtful and responsible children, but caring can sometimes make school feel more difficult.

Signs a pupil may be helping someone at home

Sometimes there are clues, but often there are none. Possible things you might notice:

- seeming tired or worried
- finding it hard to complete homework
- being late or absent more often
- finding it difficult to join clubs or trips
- seeming more grown-up than peers
- wanting to stay close to familiar adults
- becoming upset when talking about home
- difficulty concentrating at times

Some young carers do very well in school and may not show any outward signs. Creating a safe environment where pupils feel comfortable talking is often the most helpful first step.

Starting a supportive conversation



You do not need to have all the answers. A calm, private and supportive conversation can help a pupil feel understood.

Young children may not use the term “young carer”, but they may talk about helping someone at home.

You might gently ask:

- “Is everything okay at home at the moment?”
- “Do you help someone at home a lot?”
- “Is there anything that sometimes makes school tricky?”
- “What helps you when things feel difficult?”
- “Is there anything school could do to help?”

Helpful Approaches

- Be calm and reassuring
- Listen carefully
- Avoid rushing the conversation
- Let the pupil share at their own pace
- Avoid making promises you cannot keep
- Thank them for talking to you
- Young children often feel relieved simply to be listened to.

Simple ways school can help

Small adjustments can make a big difference:

- a trusted adult check-in
- extra time to settle into the day
- flexibility around homework where appropriate
- help with organisation
- reassurance when routines change
- opportunities to talk or draw feelings
- support to stay included in activities
- helping maintain friendships

Support does not need to be complicated.
Consistency, understanding and encouragement help children feel safe.

Talking with parents or guardians



Families may not always describe their child as a young carer. A supportive conversation can focus on:

- understanding the child's experience
- identifying helpful support in school
- recognising strengths as well as challenges
- reducing pressure where possible

Reassure families that the aim is to help the child feel settled and able to enjoy learning.

Recording young carers

Schools can record young carers as part of pupil information, including the school census. Recording helps ensure young carers are visible and can access appropriate support. A pupil may still be identified as a young carer based on professional understanding of their situation, even if a parent chooses not to engage.

Remember

Young carers are children first.

With the right support they can:

- feel included
- enjoy friendships
- achieve at school
- look forward to their future

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