

St Monica's Catholic Primary School



Young Carers Policy 2026-2028

Approved by:

Governing Body

Date: July 2026

Created by:

Headteacher

Next review due by:

July 2028

"Success for all within a Christ-centred community"

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Statement of intent

At St Monica's Catholic Primary School, every child is created in the image and likeness of God and is entitled to dignity, safety, inclusion and the opportunity to flourish. Our mission, 'Success for all within a Christ-centred community', requires us to notice and respond when a pupil's responsibilities at home may affect their wellbeing, education or development.

The school is committed to identifying young carers early, listening to their views and providing proportionate support. We will work sensitively with pupils and families, maintain high expectations, reduce unnecessary barriers to learning and involve appropriate services where additional help or statutory assessment may be required.

A caring role can be a source of pride, maturity and close family relationships. It can also become excessive or inappropriate for a child's age and development. Staff will avoid assumptions and stigma, and will assess each pupil's circumstances individually.

Key principle

A pupil does not need to use the term "young carer" or have a formal assessment before the school offers support or acts on a safeguarding concern.

1. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has been prepared with regard to current legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989, including sections 17ZA to 17ZC concerning young carers' needs assessments;
- Children Act 2004;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Care Act 2014;
- Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015;
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 until 31 August 2026, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 from 1 September 2026;
- Department for Education school census guidance concerning the young carer indicator;
- Department for Education guidance and research on family-focused support for young carers; and
- NHS guidance, Help for young carers.

Where legislation or statutory guidance changes before the next scheduled review, the current legal requirements will take precedence and practice will be updated promptly.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Attendance Policy, Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy, Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy, SEND Policy, Equality Policy, Data Protection Policy and Records Management Policy.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Governing Body

- Approve and review this policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.
- Promote inclusive practice and ensure that the school publishes clear information about how young carers and their families can access support.
- Receive appropriate assurance about identification, support, attendance, safeguarding and outcomes without receiving unnecessary personal information.

2.2 Headteacher

- Appoint a suitably trained young carer lead and ensure sufficient oversight and support.
- Ensure that staff understand this policy and know how to raise concerns or request support.
- Ensure that school systems enable young carers to be identified, recorded, supported and included in relevant monitoring.
- Review implementation with the young carer lead and designated safeguarding lead.

2.3 Young carer lead

- Act as a recognised point of contact for pupils, families, staff and relevant agencies.
- Coordinate proportionate educational, pastoral and practical support.
- Meet pupils as appropriate, seek their views and ensure that support plans reflect their individual circumstances.
- Support referrals to local authority services, young carer services, health services and other agencies where appropriate.
- Monitor attendance, progress, wellbeing and access to wider school life, while avoiding unnecessary or intrusive monitoring.
- Promote staff awareness and contribute to policy review.

2.4 Designated safeguarding lead

- The DSL, supported by any deputy DSLs, retains lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection concerns involving young carers.
- The DSL will advise on early help, referrals, information sharing and action where a pupil may be experiencing harm, neglect, abuse or exploitation.
- Safeguarding concerns will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and will not be delayed while other support is arranged.

2.5 All staff

- Be alert to possible caring responsibilities and their impact on a pupil.
- Listen without judgement, reassure the pupil and pass information to the young carer lead or DSL as appropriate.
- Apply agreed support consistently and protect confidentiality.
- Maintain high aspirations while making proportionate adjustments to remove barriers.

3. Definition and possible indicators

Under section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989, a young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person, subject to the statutory qualifications. Caring may involve support for a parent, sibling or another family member because of illness, disability, a mental health condition, substance dependence or another significant need.

A young carer may undertake practical tasks, physical or personal care, emotional support, supervision, household management, interpretation, administering medication or caring for siblings. The nature and extent of the role will vary, and not every child who helps at home is a young carer.

Possible indicators may include:

- frequent lateness, absence or tiredness;
- difficulty completing homework or meeting deadlines;
- anxiety about a family member or a strong need to contact home;
- limited participation in clubs, trips or social activities;
- withdrawal, low mood, anger, heightened responsibility or behaviour that appears unusually mature or immature;
- poor concentration, underachievement or fluctuating attainment;
- bullying, isolation or reluctance to discuss home life;
- taking on tasks or responsibilities beyond those normally expected for the pupil's age.

These indicators do not prove that a pupil is a young carer. Staff must remain curious, record concerns appropriately and avoid making assumptions about a family.

4. Identification, assessment and planning

The school will provide more than one route for identification, including admission information, pupil self-identification, parent or carer disclosure, staff observations, attendance or pastoral review, and information from partner agencies.

Where a pupil may be a young carer, the school will:

- speak with the pupil in a sensitive and age-appropriate way and seek their views;
- discuss the circumstances with parents or carers where appropriate and safe to do so;
- consider immediate educational, pastoral and practical support;
- consider whether the pupil has SEND, health, emotional wellbeing or safeguarding needs requiring additional action;
- record agreed support and review arrangements proportionately; and
- identify a trusted adult and clear route for the pupil to request help.

Where it appears that a young carer may have needs for support, or where the pupil or parent requests an assessment, the school will discuss and support referral to the local authority for a young carer's needs assessment. The local authority has a statutory duty to assess where the legal threshold is met. The school will involve the pupil and family unless doing so would place the child at risk or conflict with safeguarding duties.

The school will not require a family to disclose a diagnosis or provide unnecessary medical evidence before offering reasonable school-based support.

5. Educational and pastoral support

Support will be based on the pupil's circumstances, views, age and development. It will be reviewed regularly and should promote independence rather than create dependency or lower expectations.

Support may include:

- a named trusted adult and planned or pupil-led check-ins;
- reasonable flexibility with homework, deadlines or forgotten equipment where caring responsibilities have had a direct impact;
- access to breakfast, homework, pastoral or nurture provision;
- support to catch up with missed learning and careful planning after absence;
- reasonable access to a telephone in exceptional or agreed circumstances;
- support with uniform, meals, trips, clubs or other costs where financial hardship creates a barrier;

- opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and build friendships;
- mental health, wellbeing or SEND support where appropriate;
- liaison with external young carer services and other professionals; and
- careful transition planning between classes, phases and educational settings.

Staff will avoid drawing attention to a pupil's circumstances in front of peers. Any adjustment will be explained only to those who need to know in order to implement it safely and consistently.

6. Attendance and behaviour

6.1 Attendance

The school will promote regular attendance and follow up absence in accordance with the Attendance Policy. Where caring responsibilities contribute to absence or lateness, staff will seek to understand the underlying circumstances, offer support and work with the family and relevant services. Caring responsibilities do not automatically authorise absence, but responses will be fair, proportionate and informed by the pupil's circumstances.

Persistent or concerning absence will be considered through the school's attendance and safeguarding processes. The school will not rely on sanctions where unmet need, safeguarding concerns or barriers to attendance have not been properly explored.

6.2 Behaviour

Young carers are subject to the same high expectations as other pupils. However, staff will consider whether tiredness, stress, anxiety, trauma or caring responsibilities may be contributing to behaviour and whether additional support or reasonable adjustment is required.

Consequences will be applied in accordance with the Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy. Where practicable, the timing of a consequence will avoid creating an unreasonable conflict with known caring responsibilities, while maintaining fairness and safety.

Any decision to suspend or permanently exclude a young carer will be made in accordance with the Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy. The headteacher will take full account of the pupil's circumstances, vulnerability, support needs and the statutory decision-making threshold.

7. Safeguarding

Some young carers may be at increased risk of unmet needs, neglect, abuse or exploitation, particularly where their caring responsibilities are excessive or inappropriate for their age and development. Possible concerns may relate to inadequate food, clothing, sleep, healthcare, supervision, emotional support or protection from harm.

A pupil may also be vulnerable to extra-familial harm, bullying, exploitation, grooming, radicalisation, substance misuse or mental ill health. Staff must not assume that caring responsibilities are safe or appropriate simply because they arise within a family relationship.

Where a member of staff believes that a pupil may be experiencing harm, the concern must be reported immediately to the DSL or a deputy DSL. The school will follow its safeguarding, early help and referral procedures. Staff must not investigate the matter themselves or promise absolute confidentiality.

Immediate action

A safeguarding concern takes priority over routine young carer support. Staff must use the school's safeguarding reporting system without delay.

8. Staff awareness and curriculum

The school will ensure that staff understand:

- the definition and possible indicators of a young carer;

- the impact caring responsibilities may have on wellbeing, attendance, learning and participation;
- how to respond to a disclosure and where to record or report information;
- the distinction between pastoral support, early help and safeguarding action;
- the importance of confidentiality, respectful language and avoiding stigma.

Age-appropriate curriculum opportunities, particularly through PSHE and relationships education, may be used to promote understanding of caring roles, disability, mental health, help-seeking and respect. No pupil's personal circumstances will be disclosed as part of teaching without an appropriate lawful basis and clear agreement.

9. Support for families and transitions

The school will work in partnership with families, recognising that parents and carers may face barriers to engagement because of disability, illness, mental health needs, communication needs, transport difficulties or other pressures. Reasonable and accessible communication arrangements will be offered.

Where a parent or carer cannot attend school in person, alternatives such as telephone or virtual meetings will be considered. A home visit will take place only where appropriate and in accordance with safeguarding, lone-working and risk-assessment procedures.

With appropriate consent or another lawful basis, the school will share relevant information with the pupil's next educational setting and involved professionals to support continuity. Information sharing will be proportionate and focused on the pupil's needs and agreed support.

10. Recording, confidentiality and school census

Identified young carers and agreed support will be recorded appropriately within the school's management information and pastoral systems. Information will be accurate, relevant, proportionate and accessible only to staff who need it for safeguarding, education or support purposes.

The school will complete the young carer indicator in the statutory spring school census in accordance with current Department for Education guidance. The indicator records whether a pupil has been identified as a young carer and, where required, how the identification was made.

Personal information will be handled in accordance with the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, the school's Data Protection Policy and its Records Management Policy. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information must be shared to protect a child or meet a legal duty.

11. Monitoring and review

The headteacher, young carer lead and DSL will monitor implementation, including identification, attendance, educational participation, safeguarding, support and pupil voice. Patterns will be reviewed to identify barriers, gaps in provision or the need for staff development.

The governing body will review this policy at least every two years. It will be reviewed sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, local procedures or the needs of the school change materially. The next scheduled review is July 2028.