Millhouse Primary School and Nursery: Young Carers Policy

At Millhouse Primary School and Nursery, we are committed to supporting young carers so they can enjoy, achieve, and thrive alongside their peers. We recognise that caring responsibilities can impact a child's attendance, emotional well-being and academic progress. We provide a safe, non-stigmatising environment to support them.

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1. What is a Young Carer?

A **young carer** is a pupil under the age of 18 who provides regular or ongoing care to a family member—such as a parent, sibling, or grandparent—who is physically or mentally ill, disabled, elderly, or misuses substances.

A young carer may look after someone by taking on responsibilities that typically belong to an adult, including:

- **Practical tasks:** Cooking, cleaning, shopping, and managing family budgets.
- **Physical care:** Helping someone dress, bathe, use the toilet, or move around.
- **Personal/Medical care:** Administering or tracking medication and collecting prescriptions.
- **Emotional support:** Providing companionship and monitoring a relative's well-being.
- **Childcare:** Looking after younger siblings alongside their primary caring role.

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2. Supporting Young Carers in School

To alleviate the hidden pressures young carers face, Millhouse Primary School provides flexible, sensitive, and child-centred interventions:

- **Designated Lead: Ms Slade** is our named Young Carers Lead and champion. She provides a trusted point of contact, regular welfare check-ins, and a private space for pupils to speak.
- **Communication Support:** We operate a discrete system, allowing pupils to telephone home if they are worried about a relative, or access early lunch passes without explanation.
- **Academic Flexibility:** We offer flexible homework deadlines and extra support with learning during the school day, if needed.
- **Confidentiality:** Staff will always discuss a pupil's family circumstances in private, ensuring that their privacy is respected and that they are not singled out in front of peers.
- **Targeted Resources:** Eligible young carers are fast-tracked to the vulnerable pupils list to secure necessary Holiday and Food (HAF) funding and extra-curricular inclusion.
- **External Partnerships:** We collaborate directly with local networks, including the Essex Youth Service Young Carers Team, to coordinate personalized key worker sessions, counselling, and recreational breaks.

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3. Information and Guidance for Parents

We know that many young carers are "hidden" because families see these responsibilities simply as a normal part of everyday life. If you feel your child fits this description, or is taking on extra responsibilities due to a change in family health, please know that **seeking support will never be judged; it is a positive step to protect your child's education and well-being.**

If you feel your child might be a young carer, you can:

- **Speak to the school:** Contact **Ms Slade** directly through the school office, via email, or at the school gate to arrange a private, informal chat.
- **Request an assessment:** You can ask the school to help you access a formal Young Carers Assessment through Essex County Council, which looks at what support the whole family might need.
- **Self-refer to local services:** You can explore guidance and register for independent support directly through the Essex Youth Service Young Carers page.

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4. Alignment with School Policies

This policy functions directly alongside our core Millhouse Policies and Procedures:

- **Attendance Policy:** Whilst we expect high attendance, we recognise that family crises cause sudden absences. We use structured welfare calls to balance robust attendance tracking with early, compassionate intervention.
- **Anti-Bullying & Equality Policies:** We foster an inclusive culture that prevents stigmatisation or social isolation resulting from a child's home dynamics.
- **Medical Conditions Policy:** When parents have fluctuating physical or mental health conditions, the school proactively arranges local support to guarantee pupils safely commute to and from school.

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5. Safeguarding and Child Protection in Essex

Caring responsibilities do not inherently mean a child is unsafe, and we celebrate our young carers' exceptional resilience and empathy. However, in strict accordance with the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) guidelines and statutory *Working Together to Safeguard Children* mandates, we are alert to the risks of excessive caregiving.

- **Early Help Assessments:** If a child's caring responsibilities appear age-inappropriate or heavily impact their developmental, mental, or physical well-being, the school initiates an Early Help Assessment. This triggers a multi-agency family support plan to reduce the child's care burden.
- **Child Protection Referral:** If an inappropriate level of care places a pupil at immediate risk of chronic neglect or significant physical and emotional harm, staff will bypass internal interventions and escalate the case directly through standard Essex child protection referral pathways.

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