

Lode Heath School wins award for Young Carer support

Lode Heath School has been given a Bronze award for their work to make sure students don't miss out on an education because they are young carers.

The Young Carers in Schools programme helps primary and secondary schools improve outcomes for young carers and celebrates good practice through the Young Carers in Schools Award.

Miss Stewart, Young Carers School Operational Leader of Lode Heath School in Solihull which received a Bronze Award, says: "We are thrilled to have achieved a Bronze Award for our work with young carer students. We want all our students to participate fully, including those with caring responsibilities. The Young Carers in Schools programme has been an insightful process, helping us to understand the signs that a student may be a young carer, and identify the support that might be appropriate. We are extremely proud to have such admirable young people who have high expectations in school, whilst caring for a parent or relative at home. It is challenging to balance personal and family responsibility with that of their studies and that is why we put everything possible in place to ensure our young carers gain the education and qualifications they need to be successful in the future."

Young carers are responsible for emotional, practical or physical care for a parent, sibling or other family member who has a physical disability, mental health issue or substance misuse issue. The 2011 Census statistics revealed that there are just over 166,000 young carers in England, but research reveals that this is just the tip of the iceberg. The true figure could be closer to 800,000 young carers in England, equivalent to one in 5 secondary aged school children many of whom are unrecognised and unsupported.

Research carried out by Carers Trust and The Children's Society shows that, on average, young carers miss or cut short 48 school days a year and often have lower levels of self-confidence, mental wellbeing and significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, because of their caring role. Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework states that inspectors will look at how well schools support young carers. While some schools are doing this really well, others struggle and this causes real problems for young carers.

To help schools support young carers, the programme offers a step-by-step guide for leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff, with practical tools designed to make it as easy as possible for schools. Staff can also receive training through webinars and events and the programme also features a newsletter each term highlighting relevant policy developments, spotlighting good practice and giving updates on the programme's successes.

“To achieve their Bronze Award Lode Heath School has demonstrated that it supports young carers in many ways, including homework clubs and drop-in sessions with a member of staff who is responsible for this vulnerable group of pupils. Vital information about how to identify young carers is made available to all school staff, and noticeboards and the school webpage let students and their families know where to go for help”.

The programme is open to all schools in England and to sign up schools just need to visit www.youngcarersinschools.com

Giles Meyer, Chief Executive of Carers Trust, today congratulated Award-winning schools, saying: “The Young Carers in Schools programme is helping to transform schools and support staff across England. Schools play a vital role in a young carer’s life, as many care for relatives without their teachers even knowing what they do. On average young carers will miss a day of school each month as a result of their caring role, so the steps schools take to identify and support them can have a huge impact on their learning, wellbeing and life chances.”

Helen Leadbitter, national young carers lead at The Children’s Society, is delighted that the Young Carers in Schools Programme is bringing about national change. “Hundreds of schools across England are participating in the Young Carers in Schools programme, using the tools and resources to improve their support systems, and ensuring that no child need miss out on educational opportunities because they are a carer. 74% of schools who have achieved a Young Carers in Schools Award have noticed improved attendance among their young carers, and 94% have noticed improvements in their wellbeing and confidence.”