

**ST MARY MAGDALENE CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

OFFER OF EARLY HELP



'Growing Together in Faith & Love'

January 2023

Providing extra help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.

Being a parent is one of the most important jobs there is – it is also one of the hardest. Parents are the key to giving children a happy and stable childhood.

There is no such thing as the perfect family. Every family is unique with its own combination of strengths and weaknesses. Any family can get overwhelmed by what seems like endless challenge when it comes to juggling money, school and each other's needs. And sometimes families are disrupted by an upheaval such as mental or physical illness, bereavement, a job loss or an addiction. Even "joyful" events such as weddings or a new job can bring unexpected problems.

Every family is different; each needs options from which to choose to find an early solution to challenges as they arise. This solution could be as simple, for example, as talking with staff in school, with a voluntary worker, a faith worker, a GP, a health visitor, meeting with the Family Support Worker or using a self-help checklist.

The Early Help Offer (the Offer) is an approach not a service. It respects every family's right to access information to help manage their own lives successfully, whilst guiding them to seek support from appropriate sources. Help can then be agreed as soon as concerns start to emerge. The 'Offer' is for all children, as issues may arise at any point in a child or young person's life. It includes both universal and targeted/specialist services, to reduce or prevent concerns from growing or becoming entrenched.

Early help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care. Effective early help relies upon local agencies working together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from early help;
- Undertake an assessment of the need for early help; and
- Provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child. Local authorities, under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency cooperation to improve the welfare of children

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each Local Authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the well-being of all children in the authority's area, which includes protection from harm and neglect.

Professionals should, in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- Is disabled and has specific additional needs;
- Has special educational needs;
- Is a young carer;
- Is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour;
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems and domestic violence;
- Has returned home to their family from care; and/or
- Is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect

At St Mary Magdalene School we provide:

- A culture of respect exemplified by the relationships between staff and with children and parents
- Close relationships and knowledge of families and pupils developed and maintained – open door policy for all staff and parents
- Trained Designated Safeguarding Leads (Mrs Jones, Headteacher/Mrs Williams, Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Howell, Senior Leader, Mrs Ledger, Early Years and Mrs Lighthill, Family Support Worker)
- Clear policy which outlines expectation and practice that is safeguarding everyone's business and responsibility
- Effective PSHE curriculum to develop social and emotional skills, teaching children about keeping safe, enabling concerns to be shared and giving opportunities for staff to monitor vulnerable children
- Identification and monitoring of vulnerable pupils, (SEND, Young Carer children, attendance, lateness, behaviour, appearance, engagement, attitude and disposition)
- Maintaining good records of communication eg incidents of bullying, concerns raised by parents or staff – identifying the need of the child from these. All causes for concern are reviewed by designated safeguarding leads
- Regular staff training to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities on safeguarding, Prevent, FGM, CSE and E Safety
- Learning from Serious Case reviews
- Engagement with other professionals – health, social, police and other agencies to support pupils
- Anti-bullying policy/Behaviour policy
- E-Safety policy and Acceptable Use agreement for staff, volunteers and children
- Dedicated time at every staff meeting to discuss children of concern
- In-house full-time Family Support Worker
- In-house Pyramid of Need system established

Effective assessment of the need for early help

- Local agencies should work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from early help services
- Children and families may need support from a wide range of local agencies. Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency (eg education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments, such as the Common Assessment Framework, should identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989
- The early help assessment should be undertaken by a lead professional who should provide support to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and coordinate the delivery of support services. The lead professional role could be undertaken by a General Practitioner (GP), family support worker, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs coordinator. Decisions about who should be the lead professional should be taken on a case by case basis and should be informed by the child and their family

For an early help assessment to be effective:

- The assessment should be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents or carers. It should involve the child and family as well as all the professionals who are working with them
- A teacher, GP, health visitor, early years' worker or other professional should be able to discuss concerns they may have about a child and family with a social worker in the local authority. Local authority children's social care should set out the process for how this will happen; and

- If parents and/or the child do not consent to an early help assessment, then the lead professional should make a judgement as to whether, without help, the needs of the child will escalate. If so, a referral into local authority children's social care may be necessary

If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need as defined in the Children Act 1989, or that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, a referral would be made immediately to local authority children's social care. This referral can be made by any professional.

Useful contacts for parents/pupils

Citizen's Advice Bureau

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/early-help

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/Change4Life

www.childline.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/Livewell

www.2gether.nhs.uk

www.eric.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.ncdv.org.uk

www.barnardos.org.uk

FGM Helpline 0800 0283550

Milton Keynes Early Help and Targeted Support

Parents can access information for the Milton Keynes Strengthening Families Project – leaflet attached and Children and Families Practices Plan – leaflet attached from:

MK Strengthening Families Team on
01908 253519 (until March 2022)

Children and Family Practice
Central on 01908 252696
North on 01908 253712
South on 01908 657800

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on
01908 253169/01908 253170