

Three stylized flowers in orange, blue, and red are positioned in the top-left corner of the page.

## **Supporting Young People with Special Guardianship Orders at School**


During the October School Holiday, 3 young people with a SGO joined members of the Participation Team for a small focus group and activity afternoon at Lower Grange Farm Scout Centre. They discussed their experiences of school and how teachers and other school staff can support them. They were supported by two members of the Special Guardianship and Therapeutic Fostering Team.

### **Experiences of School – the Young People Identified:**

#### **Positive Aspects of School**

- Having a big / good friendship group
- Having good workers supporting them
- Schools championing their interests
- Having options to learn and do something they enjoy i.e. play the piano
- Things been put in place to help individuals deal with stress or pressure
- Timeout cards or quiet spaces pupils can go to when they feel they need it
- One consistent, reliable person pupils know they can go to for help

#### **Difficulties or Challenges of School**

- Poor communication sharing between teachers and with home
  - Teachers not showing understanding of the possible reasons for young people's actions and behaviour
  - A lack of understanding of what a Special Guardianship Order is and what this might mean for a young person compared to children in care / the difference in status and support between the different cohorts even though experiences and the support needed may be very similar
  - Not knowing who or where to go for help
  - A lack of mental health support at school
  - Ill thought out lessons with little consideration given to triggers e.g. in PSHE, domestic abuse
  - Social Media, gossip, friendship issues
  - Teachers who are too busy or stressed to help
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- A decorative illustration in the bottom-left corner shows a green stem with two flowers, one yellow and one red, and a patch of green grass at the bottom.

- A lack of faith in schools

### **In their Own Words:**

“It’s important teachers know a bit about your life so they can help you better...and so I am not forced to explain it myself”

“They don’t care **WHY** I’m misbehaving”

“No one understands me living with my nan; people joke and laugh...I don’t think teachers understand it either; they haven’t been taught enough about it. (They) need help to help pupils”

“I don’t think schools would do (EPPLAC) meetings for us”.

“Sometimes, I need to let myself out and just take myself away, I need time to calm down away from the class”

## **Supporting Young People with Special Guardianship Orders at School**

### **The ‘Perfect’ Teacher**

- is not scared to apologise
- is respectful of young people
- offers help
- is kind, fun and bubbly
- listens to us and what we think works for us
- plans fun lessons
- is understanding
- is open
- is reflective
- treats information about children sensitively and only shares what is necessary with those who actually need to know
- is honest
- is creative
- let’s us express our identity
- encourages extra curriculums i.e. music, art



In summary, the young people told us 'good' support at school is:

- Talking one on one with pupils
- Supporting friendships
- Focusing on young people's individual "development"
- True care - not just "I give a damn because I am paid"
- Gentle teachers who try to understand the difficulties pupils may face and work to earn their trust

"If I had support at the beginning, and extra support when things got tough, rather than just now at crisis, I would probably still be in school and not need as much support as I do right now"

### Additional Thoughts and Images of Young People's Work

What lifts Us Up and Weighs Us Down:



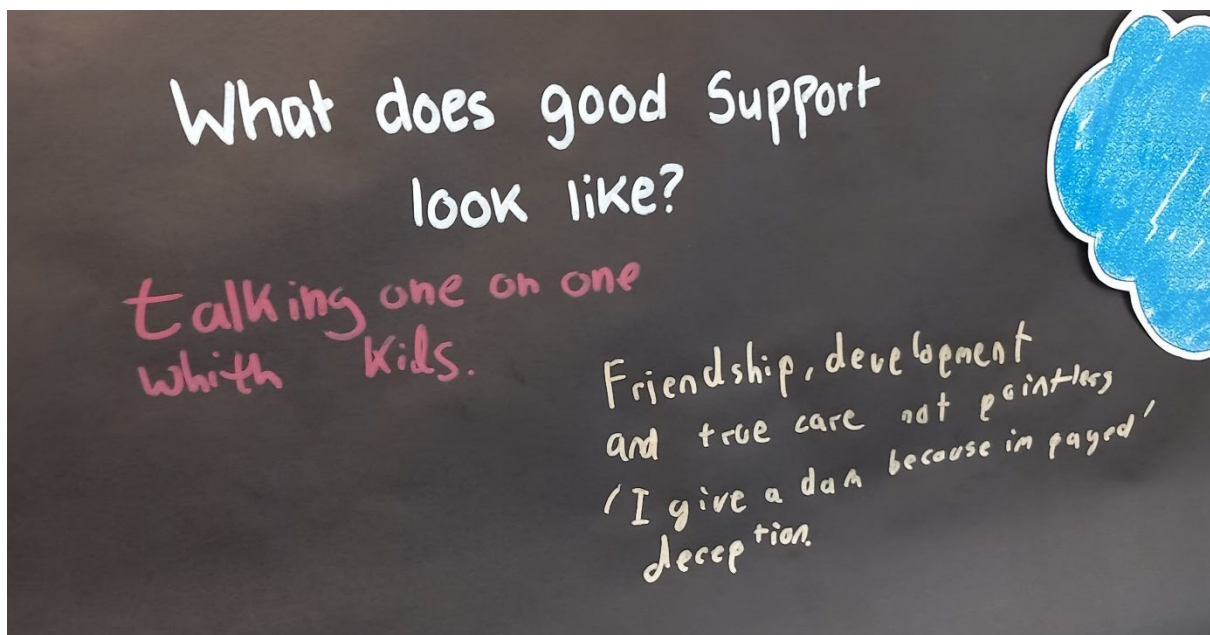
What I Wish School Knew:

They need to earn my trust  
NOT expect it.

School's could train their staff to be more gentle

I wish school understood difficulties.

**What Good Support Looks Like:**



For further information about the continuing work of the Participation Team with children and young people in Kinship Care, please email [VSK\\_Participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk)