

RESPONSIBILITY PLUS



A piece on education published by the BBC this week made sober reading.

As the bell rings at St Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy in Boston, Lincolnshire, head teacher Mrs Booth spots a little boy coming through the gates with his hood pulled up, crying. "Are you OK?" she asks in a soft voice, taking him to one side. He tells her he's been hit around the head by an adult at home. Domestic violence is not the only issue teachers here are dealing with. Four families at the school are currently homeless. Many are in severe debt.

The school prepares bags of emergency supplies for children who suddenly become homeless, a dozen pre-prepared bags, full of items a child might need if their family is in crisis, hang on pegs near the stationery cupboard. There is a teddy with the school's crest on it, a bedtime story and a school uniform. But the school helps with a wide range of other things too - from electricity meter cards to blankets and pyjamas.

A teacher at the school describes the huge changes since she started. "When I first started working in schools the children were dropped off, we taught them, and they went home", she says. "Now we help them with their food, we help them brush their teeth, we help them with behaviour, we help them with general life. How can we not help a child who is hungry or doesn't have clothes?"



"You know you'll be loved, you'll be fed,
watered, and you'll get a hug on the gate."

Head teacher Mrs Booth says her primary school has become "a sanctuary, the safe place, the haven" for many pupils. When she joined St Nicholas as head teacher in 2019, the school was rated Inadequate by the school's inspectors at Ofsted. Morale was low and the school was failing children and staff. Five years on, St Nicholas is rated as Good and is part of the Infinity Academies Trust.

Mrs Booth took on responsibility - and some.