

Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award (BPTAA)

Reassessment Report

School name:	Birtenshaw School
School address and postcode:	Darwen Road, Bolton BL7 9AB
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Head teacher:	Kaylie Crompton
Award coordinator:	Kaylie Crompton
Award verifier:	Maureen Nash
Date of reassessment:	21 st March 2022

Commentary on the evidence:

The BPTAA Reassessment at Birtenshaw School was carried out through a virtual visit. A range of evidence was available to show that the school should be re-awarded the Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award. Evidence was presented mainly through a well prepared presentation by the BPTAA coordinator (Head of School), with further discussions providing information about the context of the school, journey to meeting the objectives and impact. An e-portfolio was provided in a timely manner before the visit and a school tour was pre-recorded. Written stakeholder feedback was very evident and meetings held with stakeholder groups provided additional valuable evidence, insight and value placed on the LSA role across the school. The evidence viewed shows that the school is still meeting the Objectives and Key Performance Indicators of BPTAA and that Birtenshaw School very much values the work of LSAs.

Commentary on the tour of the school:

The pre-recorded tour of the school with informative sub-titles provided a very thoughtfully prepared opportunity to see the practice of LSAs across the school. It very much helped the verifier to capture the work and ethos of Birtenshaw, showing strategies and facilities used throughout the school to meet the individual learning and development needs of the pupils. The school environment is light and bright and modern. The tour very much showed how LSAs play an integral role in their range of their roles and responsibilities in meeting the needs of pupils, for example with individual pupil targets, one page profiles and advice from therapists appropriately displayed for all to see and easily use. The displays were presented extremely attractively and appropriately showing

children's work and the life of the school and safeguarding information was provided in a very pupil –friendly format. The work of Communication Assistants was shown, demonstrating their work across the school, for example through pictorial timetables and information. The school is very well resourced and the tour showed how LSAs can support pupils using wonderful facilities such as the soft play room and immersive room, sensory integration room and a hydro-pool. The website additionally showed thoughtfully designed external spaces and resources and facilities for older pupils to develop life skills. There are immediate plans to add a new building at Birtenshaw to facilitate provision for new pupils.

Commentary on discussions with stakeholders:

Governor:

The governor explained how governors have knowledge of the work and value of LSAs throughout the school. Their work is included in the School Development Plan and the Head of School provides regular updates on their work.

When restrictions allow, governors visit classes and can see the interactions between teachers and LSAs working together to meet the individual needs of pupils, 'It has a really good atmosphere'. The governor values the strong induction process and how progression routes are available for staff, 'They are an integral part of our school'.

Teachers and LSAs:

The LSAs and teachers provided their perceptions through discussions and written responses. The sense of 'team' was a theme, with strong communications being valued and they discussed how day to day communications worked well and teachers agreed, 'We work together consistently, it's amazing'. LSAs told of how they love their role at Birtenshaw, for example, 'I love having that relationship with each and every child and that you are having such an impact on them' and 'We help them fulfil their day calmly, fun and with as much experience as possible'.

Pupils:

The responses of pupils explained how they are supported by LSAs in both big ways and in the little ways that matter to them. All agreed that LSAs help them with work, for example through providing equipment and help with reading, but also through encouragement. Comments included, 'They give me high fives' and 'They help me with things I find tough and help me with managing my behaviour'. Pupils valued support offered in many different ways, such as 'Motivating me to smash the gym every day' and helping them wash and dry their hair.

Strengths identified during reassessment:

A strategic approach by the Head of School (BPTAA coordinator) has continued to drive forward the development of LSA practice at Birtenshaw School in order to promote high quality teaching and learning throughout the school. This strategic approach is very evident through, for example, being part of the School Development Plan, discussions at governor's meetings and governors having knowledge of the work of LSAs through class visits.

The BPTAA has been a positive framework for change, both as a celebration of existing practice and as a framework to enhance this even further. There is a clear commitment to maximise the impact of the valued LSAs.

Whilst the learning and progress of all children is recognised as the overall responsibility of the teacher, the LSAs are an integral part of driving teaching and learning throughout the school, with the role of LSAs being thoughtfully promoted to ensure effective classroom practice, 'They underpin everything we do' (coordinator).

LSAs are well prepared for their classroom practice and their significant contribution to pupil progress is very much recognised. Systems are in place to ensure LSAs know the individual needs of pupils. They use the whole school system of SOLAR alongside teachers, so have accessible information on, for example, the curriculum and targets and contribute to on-going assessments and recording as part of their daily classroom practice. Targets and pupil profiles are very accessible within the classroom to promote a working knowledge for the staff team and pupils.

There have been changes to the curriculum and classes, with the individual needs of pupils determining their pathways and LSAs have very much supported these changes with feedback from LSAs showing, 'an increased knowledge and purpose' and 'a new energy in the school' (coordinator).

Personal and professional development is strongly encouraged and supported. There has been considerable investment in training and time by leaders to provide LSAs with the necessary skills to support pupils. Designated time on Wednesdays after school facilitates availability of training and information sharing for all LSAs, for example through drop-ins, time for on-line training and face to face training. Staff greatly value career progression opportunities with many of the teachers employed by the school starting their careers as LSAs and Communication LSAs have additional training to enhance their role. Level 3 Diplomas are currently being studied and individual support through new software is being trialled.

Birtenshaw has listened to the views of LSAs. For example feedback from discussions contributed to curriculum changes and a different focus on ways of learning and assessment. The role of LSAs at and their expertise has been particularly valued by the school as classes changed due to recent changes.

There is a strong induction process for TAs new to the school which has a clear structure. Strengths and interests are identified at the application/interview stage and the probation document is a supportive tool. New LSAs are expected to complete on-line training and there is an LSA Handbook ensuring that expectations of the LSA role are clear.

A strong sense of 'team' within a strong school community is very evident and LSAs are clearly valued members of the school team. This shone through in discussions with staff, with comments including, 'Staff work together and feel valued' (LSA), 'The LSAs bring with them a wealth of different experience to the school and their skills are utilised with the children' (governor), 'They bring 'a beautiful whirlwind of energy' (teacher) and 'They want the best for my son' (parent).

The pupils value that LSAs are there both for learning and pastoral support and their responses very much highlighted the daily, valued, on-going support that LSAs provide in different ways. Comments included, 'They are there to help me find solutions to my problems', and 'They help us with our work every day and put a smile on our faces', 'Helped me mend my bracelet', 'They are nice and firm' and 'They are brilliant because they understand me'.

Impact:

The school considers that the impact of the award is:

The timing of this reassessment has been perfect with the opening of our new building. We can ensure that the new staff have clear and established systems in place for sharing information. We will have consistency in the quality of our provision as LSAs underpin everything we do.

Areas for development:

The following areas were agreed between the Verifier and Head of School (BPTAA coordinator):

To ensure consistency of LSA provision for pupils in the new building

To re-structure the supervision document to provide further opportunities for reflection on the practice of LSAs

Verifier recommendation:

That Birtenshaw School is re-awarded the Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award for a further period of three years.

Head teacher comments:

Once again, I am really proud that we have been re-accredited for the BPTAA. Providing an outstanding education for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability requires outstanding Learning Support Assistants (LSA) and in turn those LSAs require outstanding support, guidance, motivation and recognition.

A parent once said “the staff at Birtenshaw should be on the New Years Honours List” and I completely agree. They are integral to the work that we do at Birtenshaw School and their dedication, hardwork and willingness to go above and beyond each and every day is clearly evident in the feedback from all stakeholders.

The BPTAA provides a really clear set of objectives that we can use to ensure that we are doing everything that we can to equip LSAs with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed... and to make sure that they enter and leave work with a smile on their faces each day; because they know they are making a positive different to children’s lives.

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