



# The Birtenshaw Group

## Transforming Lives

### Birtenshaw Education Services

### Counter-bullying Policy

Document Title	Counter-bullying Policy
Reference Number	ED15
Version Number	Version 1
Date of Issue	Sept 2018
Latest Revision	Sept 2023
Distribution	Education staff
Owner	Chief Executive
Policy Lead(s)	Head of Service: Head of School
Department	Education

### Rationale:

The aim of Birtenshaw is 'Transforming Lives'. In order to achieve this aim, children and adults need to be safe and feel safe from bullying. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. All members of the Birtenshaw community have a responsibility to ensure that it is a supportive and caring environment in which steps are taken to ensure that bullying does not take place and that if it does it is tackled appropriately and sensitively providing appropriate support and guidance to the victim and bully.

All pupils/learners accessing Birtenshaw Education Services have Special Educational Needs and/or Disability. We recognise that, statistically, children and adults with additional needs are most vulnerable to bullying in the real and virtual world and less able to keep themselves safe or be aware of the bullying behaviours of others.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Birtenshaw Safeguarding Policy, Education Behaviour Policy and E-Safety Policy.

### Aims:

Birtenshaw aims to provide a safe environment in which the learning, physical, social and care needs of all pupils/learners are met in a supportive environment and where all staff understand their role in ensuring that pupils/learners are protected from bullying and that it is their responsibility to report any concerns to the Head of Service.

Birtenshaw aims to promote a culture of mutual respect and unconditional positive regard, modelled by staff and taught via the curriculum and opportunities for social interaction and sharing.

### **Definition:**

Bullying is a "wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim". Bullying can be:

- Physical - pushing, kicking, punching, pinching, any form of violence;
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing;
- Cyber bullying - sending harmful or cruel text or images using any area of the internet, social networking sites or mobile phones;
- Emotional - tormenting, making fun of someone, humiliation, isolation by groups of pupils from groups or activities, destroying or spoiling work, dirty looks, spreading rumours, demanding money;
- Homophobic - unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, particularly related to sexuality;
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, particularly of an inappropriate sexual nature, sexting;
- Racist abuse - racial taunts or "jokes," graffiti, gestures, making fun of customs, music, accents. Refusing to work with someone of a different cultural background.

### **What constitutes Bullying?**

We recognise that bullying can often be characterised by a series of apparently minor incidents, and that whilst some children and adults can be sensitive to these others may not be. If a child or adult feels bullied then their concerns must always be taken seriously. Tackling these minor incidents will reduce the occurrence of more major or persistent bullying. Incidents may include:

- name calling;
- looks;
- 'borrowing' equipment;
- one pupil/learner intimidating another in order to copy homework;
- spoiling another pupil/learner's work;
- pushing in at the dinner queue;
- groups of pupils/learners isolating another by not letting him or her join in;
- forcing pupil/learner to give up their place at a computer
- negative social media interactions.

Peer on peer abuse can take many forms and is never acceptable or to be downplayed as "banter" or "having a laugh". This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.

Bullying behaviour is not always pupil/learner to pupil/learner. Derogatory comments to or about a pupil/learner by a staff or other adult would also constitute bullying behaviour and is always unacceptable.

### **Signs of bullying:**

There are a number of possible signs and behaviours which might indicate a pupil/learner is being bullied.

- withdrawn, isolated behaviour
- appears distracted/cautious around others;
- unwillingness to come to school;
- stops eating;
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone;
- complaining about missing possessions;
- begins to truant;
- feels ill in the morning;
- standard of work begins to deteriorate;
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- starts to bully other pupils/learners;
- refusal to talk about the problem;
- easily distressed;
- damaged or incomplete work;
- refusing to work in a group or with another pupil/learner

Non-intervention by staff or down-playing concerns condones the bullying and allows it to continue. Staff have a responsibility to intervene.

### **Action**

Pupils/learners must know who they can approach staff for support at any time during the day.

If a member of staff becomes aware of bullying, the following applies:

- the priority is to give protection and support to the victim;
- staff must make it clear that the bully's behaviour is totally unacceptable - it is important that disapproval is explained in a calm and rational way and with the understanding that bullying behaviour may be a symptom of their own distress about something;
- it is vital that alternative behaviour is discussed with the bully in order that long-term behaviour can be improved;
- appropriate follow-up work, should be carried out to help pupils see things from the others point of view and bring about resolution;
- victims of bullying may end up believing that they deserve to be bullied - they feel powerless and vulnerable - self-esteem can be badly damaged and so it is essential that self-confidence is re-established;
- investigations into bullying incidents will be thorough and involve both the bully the victim and any witnesses;
- the bully will be supported in recognising their unsociable behaviour and offering support to modify that behaviour;
- Parents/carers will always be informed of the incident and the outcome;

- After the incident has been dealt with each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

## **Cyber-bullying**

Birtenshaw recognises that cyber-bullying differs from other forms of bullying

The key differences are:

- Impact: the scale and scope of cyber-bullying can be greater than other forms of bullying.
- Targets and perpetrators: the people involved may have a different profile to traditional bullies and their targets.
- Location: the 24/7 and anywhere nature of cyber-bullying.
- Anonymity: the person being bullied will not always know who is bullying them.
- Motivation: some pupils/learners may not be aware that behaviour online can constitute bullying.

## **Procedure when an instance of cyber-bullying occurs**

It is the responsibility of staff members to ensure that pupil/learner at Birtenshaw is safeguarded whilst using the internet. This includes ensuring that pupils/learners are not subjected to cyber-bullying. If there is a concern that a pupil/learner is being bullied on the internet, this should be taken seriously.

A member of staff will make a written record of what the pupil/learner has communicated to them and any relevant information about what they have witnessed. Evidence can be gathered by saving texts, printing out emails and taking screen shots of social network activity.

It is the responsibility of staff members at Birtenshaw to make sure that pupils/learners are able to recognise cyber-bullying. Staff should encourage pupils/learners not to reply to anyone bullying, and communicate to them that by deciding not to reply they are making an active choice not to give power to the bully.

Pupils/learners should be shown how to use the built-in tools on social networks and mobile services to block anyone who is cyber-bullying. That might mean removing them from a 'friends' list or blocking their calls or messages.

The teacher will consult with the Head of Service to decide what additional action is to be taken, if any.

Staff members may conclude that a pupil/learner's use of the technology needs to be moderated in order to keep them safe. Birtenshaw recognises that one of the main reasons that pupils/learners don't report cyber-bullying is because they're worried that their devices could be taken away from them. If a decision to moderate a pupil/learner's use of a device is taken, this should be carefully planned, taking into account the pupil/learner's right to privacy and their need to develop personal relationships. Any moderation of technology should be reviewed regularly and ceased if it is considered that the pupil/learner understands how to stay safe. Any decision will

be made in consultation with parents and social worker and discussed in full with the pupil/learner.

### **Monitoring**

- A central record on all incidents and types of bullying shall be kept.
- Patterns and levels of bullying shall be considered on a regular basis.

### **Equal Opportunities:**

Birtenshaw supports the rights of all pupils/learners to equal access and opportunities regardless of age, culture, religion, gender, ability, disability or sexuality.

Birtenshaw promotes an ethos of respect for everyone.

### **Continuing Professional Development:**

A programme of ongoing CPD is in place to ensure that our staff are fully able to respond to and meet the needs of each pupil/learner. E-learning packages covering bullying from a SEND perspective and E-safety training is completed by all staff.