



The Birtenshaw Group

Transforming Lives

Birtenshaw Education Services Autism Policy

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The aim of Birtenshaw is 'Transforming Lives'. In order to achieve this aim, pupils/learners in the school/college need to feel safe, happy and supported in their learning. Staff need to have a clear understanding of Autism Spectrum Conditions and effective strategies for teaching and supporting young people on the spectrum.

Background

Autism is a pervasive, developmental disorder. Difficulties experienced by those diagnosed with autism can vary in severity. Current estimates state that approximately 1 in every 97 children now receive a formal diagnosis of autism.

In order to ensure that pupils/learners on the autistic spectrum are able to access a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, the additional difficulties characteristic of pupils/learners on the autistic spectrum need to be taken into account. Their needs should be taken into account in all aspects of their education, including the learning environment, planning, teaching and learning outcomes.

This policy has been written to supplement other current policies in the schools and college and should be considered alongside the existing policies.

Aims

To ensure the following key principles underpin our practice to enable us to provide the best possible education for pupils/learners with an autistic spectrum condition:

- knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum condition throughout Birtenshaw Education Services.
- knowledge, understanding and implementation of established interventions and approaches.
- knowledge and understanding of general and specific behaviours and behaviour management approaches.
- Education staff are kept up to date with current research relating to the education and well-being of pupils/learners with an autistic spectrum condition.
- provision of pupils/learners on the autistic spectrum is continuously monitored and evaluated as part of the self-evaluation process.

Birtenshaw Education Services aim to meet the needs of pupils/learners with an autistic spectrum condition by:

- offering a variety of consistent, high quality provision across both education and care
- ensuring that staff have access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and support
- collaborating with a range of professionals and parents / carers
- individualising planning to address the individual and specific needs of pupils/learners with autism
- delivering curriculum which balances social and academic needs

Placement / Provision

All pupils/learners who are placed within Birtenshaw Education Services will undergo a transition period where emphasis will be placed on individuals understanding, accepting and becoming comfortable within the schools and college and the routines in place.

Pupils/learners' levels will be baseline-assessed during this time so that a personalised curriculum can be created.

Pupils in school will meet with the occupational therapist (OT) and, if necessary, a sensory profile and diet identified.

Pupils in school will also have input from the Speech and Language Therapy team (SaLT). Pupils will be placed, with appropriate levels of support, in the class group most appropriate to their needs.

Learners in college will access therapeutic support and interventions in line with their individual Education Health and Care Plans.

Staffing

Each class is led by a classroom teacher, with support from one senior learning support assistant (SLSA). Pupils/learners also benefit from a high level of support from learning support assistants (LSAs). The number LSAs allocated to each class is dependent upon the assessed level of need of the pupils/learners within each class. Staff absences are covered from within the service to ensure consistency and familiarity.

Learning Environments

An organised and well-planned learning environment is essential for the holistic development of pupils/learners with an autistic spectrum condition. All learning environments within Birtenshaw Education Services will therefore provide:

- a high level of visual support – for example: schedules, symbols
- clear teaching areas and opportunities for interaction
- the necessary amount of structure to address the needs of pupils/learners with autism in each class
- opportunities to develop intended and spontaneous communication
- low arousal environments where necessary
- access to safe spaces, breakout rooms, soft play, dark room, sensory integration room, individual work room
- a Total Communication Approach

Curriculum

The curriculum is designed to be creative, broad and balanced taking into account the social and academic needs of pupils/learners with an autistic spectrum condition. The overall curriculum delivered by Birtenshaw Education Services includes opportunities to address the following:

- communication
- interaction
- flexibility of thought
- sensory sensitivity
- real life experiences outside of the school/college environment

Planning

Teachers' short-term planning follows the school and college's own schemes of work / Learning programmes. At school these are adapted from Wilson Stuart's P Steps, National Curriculum objectives, ASDAN Horizons, ASDAN PPQ, BTECs and Early Years Steps where appropriate. Teachers differentiate learning opportunities for autistic pupils/learners in a variety of ways. Each teacher writes plans for their class which give details of the opportunities for their pupils/learners to work in different settings, different learning styles and with differing levels of support, for example, in a group, 1:1 with an adult and independently.

Behaviour

The impact of autism on pupils/learners may cause high levels of frustration and/or anxiety resulting in challenging behaviour which presents a barrier to their learning. Within Birtenshaw we acknowledge that the following basic principles of good autism practice can reduce the incidence of such behaviour:

- ensuring all staff have an awareness of the strengths and difficulties associated with autism
- providing a structured and consistent approach which enhances predictability
- supporting pupils/learners' communication in order to reduce frustration
- an understanding that social interaction can place additional demands on pupils/learners over and above academic learning intentions
- addressing sensory needs throughout the day helps pupils/learners to remain calm and focused.

All pupils/learners with an autistic spectrum condition, within Birtenshaw Education Services, have a comprehensive behaviour plan; the purpose of these behaviour plans is to apply strategies to address undesirable behaviours and encourage positive behaviours. In order to do this, there needs to be an understanding of the causes for the undesirable behaviours such as anxiety, sensory needs and communication difficulty. Behaviour plans are working documents and aim to provide staff with a consistent holistic approach to reducing behaviour incidents.

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)

ILPs are written for all pupils/learners with an autistic spectrum condition. The targets within these ILPs are based on the areas of development as detailed in the Education, Health and Care Plan and broken down into attainable, termly targets. ILPS are reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. In addition, where appropriate, pupils/learners have specific targets around the triad of impairments to develop their skills in the areas of communication, interaction and flexibility of thought.

Collaboration

Autism can be a complex and challenging condition therefore we recognise the need to collaborate with a range of other people to provide a holistic and consistent environment. Birtenshaw collaborates on a regular basis with:

- Parents and carers
- Home managers
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapist
- Other professionals involved in the care of the individual person.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD):

All staff are provided with opportunities for professional development and training in line with the Service's Development Plan and the organisational training needs analysis and strategy. Training needs will be linked to the performance management process.

All staff have a range of CPD opportunities to enhance their understanding of autism and to develop their autism practice. Autism specific CPD is delivered to all staff and staff also have access to individualised and practical support from Head of Services, OT and SaLT.

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.