



The Birtenshaw Group

Transforming Lives

Birtenshaw Education Services Health and Wellbeing Policy

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Rationale:

The aim of Birtenshaw is “*transforming lives*”. In order to achieve this, we aim to promote positive mental health for every pupil/learner and every member staff. All members of the Birtenshaw community have a responsibility to ensure that the school is a supportive and caring environment in which steps are taken to promote the welfare and happiness using whole school approaches as well as specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils/learners and staff.

All children and adults at Birtenshaw have Special Educational Needs and/or Disability; primarily autism. Studies show that 70% of autistic people suffer from anxiety, depression, ADHD or OCD. We recognise that, statistically, children and adults with additional needs are most vulnerable to suffering from mental health and are often unable, or find it difficult to express their anxieties or worries in the real and virtual world.

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

Key leaders:

School, Bolton:

Mark Foster – Temporary Head of School

Leah Kemp – Deputy Head of School

Caroline Turner – Deputy Head of School

Emily Bishop – Head of Department (EYFS/Route One)

Leanne Taylor – Head of Department (Route Two)

Richard Bannister – Head of Department (Sixth Form)

Class teachers – All pastoral leads

Designated First Aiders

Designated Mental Health First Aiders

School, Merseyside:

Amy Standish – Part-Time Head of School

Rachel Mathews – Part-Time Head of School/Part-Time Deputy Head

Louise Kiernan – Part-Time Deputy Head

Beth Roberts – Head of Department (Pathway One/Pathway Two)

Bex Dennehy – Head of Department (Pathway Three)

Class teachers – All pastoral leads

Designated First Aiders

Designated Mental Health First Aiders

College, Bolton:

Clare Foster – Head of College

Marcus Trent – Deputy Head

Lis Muse – Head of Department

Malcolm Leahair – Head of Department

Class teachers – All pastoral leads

Designated First Aiders

Designated Mental Health First Aiders

Aims:

Birtenshaw aims to provide a safe environment in which the learning, physical, social and care needs of all pupil/learner/learners and staff are met in a supportive environment. We recognise that everyone experiences life challenges and unexpected

Birtenshaw Education Services Health and Wellbeing Policy

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changes that can make people feel vulnerable and lead to an increased need for additional emotional support. Promoting positive mental health is everybody's responsibility and everybody has a role to play.

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.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and pupils/learners
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues
- Provide support to pupils/learners suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

We aim to create a mentally healthy environment by:

- Creating a clean, safe and tidy school environment that is conducive to learning
- Providing open communication to ensure everyone feels comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- Promoting the Birtenshaw vision and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting pupil/learner/learner voice and staff council to provide opportunities for pupil/learner/learners and staff to participate in decision-making
- Celebrating all academic and non-academic achievements, no matter how small
- Ensuring pupils/learners develop the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe. These are included as part of the PSHE curriculum.

Definition:

Mental illnesses are diagnosed conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behaviour, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Such conditions may be occasional or long-lasting (chronic) and affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day.

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how people think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how people handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

There is no single cause for mental illness or mental health. A number of factors can contribute, such as

- Early adverse life experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse (for example, child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.)
- Experiences related to other ongoing medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes.
- Biological factors, such as genes or chemical imbalances in the brain
- Use of alcohol or recreational drugs
- Having few friends
- Having feeling of loneliness or isolation

Early warning signs:

One or two symptoms alone can't diagnose a mental illness or predict a mental health concern but they may indicate that there is a need for further evaluation:

- **Sleep or appetite changes** - Dramatic sleep and appetite changes or decline in personal care
- **Mood changes** - Rapid or dramatic shifts in emotions or depressed feelings
- **Withdrawal** - Recent social withdrawal and loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- **Drop in functioning** - An unusual drop in functioning, at school, work or social activities, such as refusing to engage or difficulty performing familiar tasks
- **Problems thinking** - Problems with concentration, memory or logical thought and communication that are hard to explain
- **Increased sensitivity** - Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells or touch; avoidance of over-stimulating situations
- **Apathy** - Loss of initiative or desire to participate in any activity
- **Feeling disconnected** - A vague feeling of being disconnected from oneself or one's surroundings; a sense of unreality
- **Illogical thinking** - Unusual or exaggerated beliefs about personal powers to understand meanings or influence events; illogical or "magical" thinking typical of childhood in an adult
- **Nervousness** - Fear or suspiciousness of others or a strong nervous feeling
- **Unusual behaviour** - Odd, uncharacteristic, peculiar behaviour

Actions

At Birtenshaw it is vital that staff are vigilant in recognising changes to pupil/learner's presentation and behaviour as many are unable to recognise their own emotions and / or struggle with barriers to their communication and their ability to express their feelings.

If a pupil/learner/ is experiencing symptoms of mental health or mental illness and the symptoms are causing problems for them then these need to be recorded and shared with the relevant people; parents / carers, social worker and associated professionals. The pupil/learner should be referred to the GP or learning disability nursing team.

From here, it may be that a referral to CAMHs is made.

Some pupil/learners may be assessed to be at risk of self-harm, may present with suicidal behaviours or regularly express thoughts or harming themselves or others. This information should be highlighted in their individual risk assessment and behaviour plan. However, if these behaviours are seen for the first time or the behaviours change in any way, staff need to seek immediate attention.

The same early warning signs are applicable for staff. Working within a small, consistent team allows the development of strong relationships and staff very quickly pick up others personality traits and behaviours. It is the responsibility of everyone to share any concerns they have with their line manager or senior leader. All staff have access to the employee assist programme; Unum LifeWorks. Unum is a toolkit or personal and professional resources that provides personal support, referrals and confidential consultation which is accessed via phone, online or via an app. Teachers and senior leaders are accountable for meeting with their direct reports at least each half term through supervisions and ensuring that the wellbeing and welfare of staff is at the centre of these conversations.

Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupil/learners to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are embedded throughout the school/college day. Promoting a positive sense of wellbeing and development self-esteem and confidence is featured implicitly in everything that we do. Classes start every morning with an open session / morning routine which celebrates their worth and provides an opportunity to reflect on the previous day and prepare for the day ahead. Classes participate in shake awake, relaxation, therapeutic swim or social interaction sessions to get them ready for the day. More focused teaching on Mental Health and Wellbeing is delivered through regular PSHE lessons and one to one sessions.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of pupil/learners in each class however the consistent theme places emphasis on enabling pupil/learners to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

Birtenshaw uses the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure the content is appropriate, in line with government and WHO guidelines and emotional wellbeing issues are covered in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our targeted provision Birtenshaw works with other agencies to support Pupil/learner's emotional health and wellbeing including:

- Paediatric School/college Nursing team
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Educational psychology services

- Paediatricians
- CAMHS
- Family support workers
- Social service
- Learning disability team

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding and child protection training. All staff complete a standardised refresher course annual alongside regular bespoke sessions throughout the year.

All teachers complete the High Speed Mental Health Training for Teachers course.

The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more pupil/learners.

Equal Opportunities:

Birtenshaw supports the rights of all pupil/learners/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.