

# Blackthorn Primary School's Early Help

## What is Early Help?

Early help, also known as early intervention, is support given to a family when a problem first emerges. It can be provided at any stage in a child or young person's life. Providing timely support is vital. Addressing a child or family's needs early on can reduce risk factors and increase protective factors in a child's life (Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), 2018). Early help services can be delivered to parents, children or whole families, but their main focus is to improve outcomes for children.

Early help services can be delivered to parents, children or whole families, but their main focus is to improve outcomes for children. For example, services may help parents who are living in challenging circumstances provide a safe and loving environment for their child. Or, if a child is displaying risk-taking behaviour, early help practitioners might work with the child and their parents to find out the reasons for the child's behaviour and put strategies in place to help keep them safe.

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Staff at Blackthorn Primary School recognise their crucial role in offering and delivering effective early help as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018). This is done through whole school support and interventions, as well as identifying children and families using Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board's Threshold Guidance.

## Early Help at Blackthorn

At Blackthorn Primary our values are the foundations of our school community. We aim to provide a safe, happy and caring environment where children learn the importance of values that will support them to develop a positive attitude towards themselves, their friendships and their learning. The following are examples of Early Help support offered at Blackthorn.

**Family Support Team:** Miss Hillyard (Lead Family Support Worker) and Mrs Heath (Family Worker) work directly with families to offer support and advice in order to ensure the best outcomes for all of the students at Blackthorn Primary. They can support with access to additional services and can also provide practical support with things such as completing forms and other paperwork.

**Mental Health First Aid:** At Blackthorn we have members of staff who are trained Mental Health First Aiders, these are Miss Calcott, Mr Chambers and Miss Hillyard. This means, they are trained to spot some of the key signs of mental health concerns in children, provide support and signpost to relevant agencies and external support where required. They can also provide support for children in the form of well-being check ins and 1:1 pastoral support where required.

**Speech and Language Therapy:** We have Speech and Language support at Blackthorn and provide support to individual children, as well as offering therapeutic advice for staff to implement in class. Mrs Foster is able to deliver SALT intervention and will also work closely with parents to offer support and advice.

**Community Links:** It is a high priority for Blackthorn Primary School to be involved in supporting the community. We are involved in the FISH (Fun and Food in the School Holidays) events and also have regular meetings with the local PCSO. A representative also attends Community First Meetings to represent the current picture for children and families from Blackthorn Primary. We also have links with the local Food Bank for families who are in need of support.

**Attendance:** Attendance meetings are arranged for children struggling to maintain their attendance at school. Staff can offer advice and strategies for supporting parents with ensuring excellent school attendance and these are individualised to each student. Mrs Chambers is our Attendance Lead. We also offer breakfast club for £1 to support with attendance, food is provided and there are activities during the morning. This supports our strategy of ensuring all children are in school and on time, providing an alternative for parents who may find it difficult to get children into school for 8.40am.

**Inclusion:** Blackthorn has a dedicated Inclusion Manager Mrs Smith, who ensures students with additional needs are recognised and supported. As part of this, we have the Woodland Room which provides a Nurture Class for identified students. We also run a number of clubs including coding and multi-sports clubs. Homework is now provided online and so we now offer a homework club, open to all children, but allows those who do not have access to a computer/internet at home to complete their homework.

*All staff at Blackthorn understand their role in providing Early Help, but key staff as detailed above are:*



Miss Hillyard  
(LFSW)



Mrs Heath  
(FW)



Miss Calcott  
(Nurture Lead)



Mr Chambers  
(Pastoral Mentor)



Mrs Foster (Speech  
and Language  
Therapy Support)



Mrs Chambers  
(Office Manager)



Mrs Smith  
(Inclusion Manager)

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## Early Help Assessments (EHA's):

Our Family Support Team can also initiate Early Help Assessments (EHA) to offer an additional layer of support for our children and families. This enables for support to be identified early and is therefore more effective in promoting the welfare and positive outcomes for children.

The below diagram indicates the Continuum of Need. This highlights levels of support children and families may require and shows that Early Help fits within Level 2 of this continuum.



The EHA is a simple way to help identify the needs of children and families and make a plan to meet those needs. Its purpose is to provide a co-ordinated response so no-one misses out on the support they need. It is used by all agencies in Northamptonshire who are delivering early help to the families they work with. The EHA can be used to support children and young people between 0 to 19 years, including unborn babies, and can also be used with consent up to the age of 24 (where a young person has a learning difficulty or disability).

## EHA Process:

### 1. Completing an Initial Assessment

Either Miss Hillyard or Mrs Parkin will meet with you to complete an initial assessment for the EHA. This assessment will look at five different areas (home, education, social/community, health and well-being and work) and within those areas discussions will take place around what is working well, what we are worried about and what needs to happen next. You will be given a copy of what is discussed and then asked to sign a consent form for this to be submitted.

### 2. Identifying Actions

The initial assessment will highlight areas of need and the EHA will then look for ways to meet these needs. This will generate an Action Plan which will then be used to inform further intervention/support required.

### 3. Team Around the Family (TAF) Meetings

Regular (usually every six to eight weeks) TAF meetings will take place where the needs and actions on the EHA can be discussed. This provides parents with an opportunity to inform professionals on how things are going and what still needs to be done to offer support. Key points to remember with these meetings are that working together is one of the main aims of the process, positives will be highlighted and celebrated and they should always be transparent (with all parties being honest and open).

### 4. External Agency Input

There may be occasions where it is felt additional support is required to meet the needs of the child or family as discussed in the EHA. In these cases there may be opportunity for involvement from the Strengthening Families Team, however this will be discussed with the Partnership Coordinator at Northamptonshire Children's Trust first.

### 5. Action Plan Complete

The EHA can close when the Action Plan is complete and parents are happy they no longer need any additional support. It is also important to note that parents are able to close an EHA at any time, it is a completely voluntary process which requires parents to consent and be engaged with the process.