



Social, Emotional & Mental Health Policy

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Statement of intent

This policy outlines the framework for The Shrubbery School to meet its duty in providing and ensuring a high quality of education to all of its pupils, including pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties, and to do everything it can to meet the needs of pupils with SEMH difficulties.

Through the successful implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Promote a positive outlook regarding pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Eliminate prejudice towards pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Promote equal opportunities for pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Ensure all pupils with SEMH difficulties are identified and appropriately supported – minimising the risk of SEMH difficulties escalating into physical harm.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2002
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Children Act 1989

This policy has been created with regard to the following DfE guidance:

- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2016) 'Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future'
- DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disabilities code of practice: 0 to 25'

This policy also has due regard to the school's policies including, but not limited to, the following:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Exclusion Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The school's leadership as a whole is responsible for:

- Using a preventative approach to create a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely to occur, in order to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the school community and instil resilience in pupils. A preventative approach includes teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing these messages in our activities and ethos.

- Ensuring that only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of how potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences (ACE), including abuse and neglect, can impact on a pupil's mental health, behaviour and education.
- Equipping staff with the knowledge required to identify pupils whose behaviour suggests they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.
- Raising awareness and employing efficient referral processes in order to help pupils access evidence-based early support and interventions.
- Working effectively with external agencies to ensure the school can provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.
- Identifying and supporting pupils with SEND, and considering how to use some of the SEND resources to provide support for pupils with mental health difficulties that amount to SEND.
- Identifying where wellbeing concerns represent safeguarding concerns, and ensuring that appropriate safeguarding referrals are made in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The proprietor is responsible for:

- Ensuring provision is in place for all pupils with SEMH difficulties, whether or not they have an EHC plan.
- Taking all necessary steps to ensure that pupils with SEMH difficulties are not discriminated against, harassed or victimised.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that those teaching or working with pupils with SEMH difficulties are aware of their needs and have arrangements in place to meet them.
- Ensuring that teachers monitor and review pupils' academic and emotional progress during the course of the academic year.
- On an annual basis, carefully reviewing the quality of teaching for pupils at risk of underachievement, as a core part of the school's performance management arrangements.
- Overseeing the whole-school approach to mental health, including how this is reflected in policies, the curriculum and pastoral support, how staff are supported with their own mental health, and how the school engages pupils and parents with regards to pupils' mental health and awareness.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Collaborating with the headteacher, as part of the SLT, to determine the strategic development of SEMH policies and provisions in the school.
- Undertaking day-to-day responsibilities for the successful operation of the SEMH Policy.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Acting as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff.
- Liaising with staff on matters of safety, safeguarding and welfare.

All staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of the signs of SEMH difficulties.
- Being aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a pupil has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- Being aware of the needs, outcomes sought and support provided to any pupils with SEMH difficulties.

Teaching staff are responsible for:

- Planning and reviewing support for their pupils with SEMH difficulties in collaboration with parents, the SENCO and, where appropriate, the pupils themselves.
- Setting high expectations for every pupil and aiming to teach them the full curriculum, whatever their prior attainment.
- Planning lessons to address potential areas of difficulty to ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving their full potential, and that every pupil with SEMH difficulties will be able to study the full national curriculum.
- Being responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class.

The school will work in collaboration with mental health support workers who are trained professionals who act as a bridge between schools and mental health agencies.

3. Creating a supportive whole-school culture

Senior leaders will clearly communicate their vision for good mental health and wellbeing with the whole school community.

The school will utilise various strategies to support pupils who are experiencing high levels of psychological stress, or who are at risk of developing SEMH problems, including:

- Teaching about mental health and wellbeing through curriculum subjects such as:
 - PSHE.
 - RSHE.
 - Counselling.
 - Positive classroom management.
 - Developing pupils' social skills.
 - Working with parents.
 - Peer support.

The school's Behaviour Policy will include measures to prevent and tackle bullying, and contains an individualised, graduated response when behaviour may be the result of mental health needs or other vulnerabilities.

The SLT will ensure that there are clear policies and processes in place to reduce stigma and make pupils feel comfortable enough to discuss mental health concerns.

Pupils will know where to go for further information and support should they wish to talk about their mental health needs or concerns over a peer's or family member's mental health or wellbeing.

4. Staff training

The SLT will ensure that all teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with SEMH needs.

The SLT will promote CPD to ensure that staff can recognise common symptoms of mental health problems, understand what represents a concern, and know what to do if they believe they have spotted a developing problem.

Clear processes will be in place to help staff who identify SEMH problems in pupils escalate issues through clear referral and accountability systems.

Staff will receive training to ensure they:

- Promote good mental health and wellbeing throughout the school.
- Can quickly identify individual pupils who need support with their mental health.
- Know what support is available for pupils and how to refer pupils to such support where needed.
- Are aware of how abuse, neglect, and/or other traumatic adverse childhood experiences can have a lasting impact on a pupil's mental health, behaviour and education.

5. Identifying signs of SEMH difficulties

The school is committed to identifying pupils with SEMH difficulties at the earliest stage possible.

Staff are trained to know how to identify possible mental health problems and understand what to do if they spot signs of emerging difficulties.

Staff members are aware of the signs that may indicate if a pupil is struggling with their SEMH. The signs of SEMH difficulties may include, but are not limited to, the following list:

- Anxiety
- Low mood
- Being withdrawn
- Avoiding risks
- Unable to make choices
- Low self-worth
- Isolating themselves
- Refusing to accept praise
- Failure to engage
- Poor personal presentation
- Lethargy/apathy
- Daydreaming
- Unable to make and maintain friendships
- Speech anxiety/reluctance to speak
- Task avoidance
- Challenging behaviour
- Restlessness/over-activity
- Non-compliance
- Mood swings
- Impulsivity
- Physical aggression
- Verbal aggression
- Perceived injustices
- Disproportionate reactions to situations
- Difficulties with change/transitions
- Absconding
- Eating issues
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of personal boundaries
- Poor awareness of personal space

When the school suspects that a pupil is experiencing mental health difficulties, the following graduated response is employed:

- An assessment is undertaken to establish a clear analysis of the pupil's needs
- A plan is set out to determine how the pupil will be supported
- Action is taken to provide that support
- Regular reviews are undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the provision, and changes are made as necessary

Where appropriate, the headteacher asks parents to give consent to their child's GP to share relevant information regarding SEMH with the school.

Staff members will discuss concerns regarding SEMH difficulties with the parents of pupils who have SEMH difficulties, and take any concerns expressed by parents, other pupils, colleagues and the pupil in question seriously. Staff will consider all previous assessments and progress over time, and then refer the pupil to the appropriate services.

Staff members are aware of the following:

- Factors that put pupils at risk of SEMH difficulties, such as low self-esteem, physical illnesses, academic difficulties and family problems
- The fact that risks are cumulative and that exposure to multiple risk factors can increase the risk of SEMH difficulties

Staff members understand the following:

- Familial loss or separation, significant changes in a pupil's life or traumatic events are likely to cause SEMH difficulties
- What indicators they should be aware of that may point to SEMH difficulties, such as behavioural problems, pupils distancing themselves from other pupils or changes in attitude
- Where SEMH difficulties may lead to a pupil developing SEND, it could result in a pupil requiring an EHC plan.
- Persistent mental health difficulties can lead to a pupil developing SEND. If this occurs, the headteacher ensures that correct provisions are implemented to provide the best learning conditions for the pupil, such as providing school counselling. Both the pupil and their parents are involved in any decision-making concerning what support the pupil needs.

The school will promote resilience to help encourage positive SEMH. Poor behaviour is managed in line with the school's Behaviour Policy. Staff members will observe, identify and monitor the behaviour of pupils potentially displaying signs of SEMH difficulties; however, only medical professionals will make a diagnosis of a mental health condition.

Pupils' data is reviewed on a termly basis by the SLT so that patterns of attainment, attendance or behaviour are noticed and can be acted upon if necessary.

An effective pastoral system is in place so that every pupil is well known by at least one member of staff, for example, a form tutor, who can spot where disruptive or unusual behaviour may need investigating and addressing.

Staff members are mindful that some groups of pupils are more vulnerable to mental health difficulties than others; these include LAC, pupils with SEND and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

6. Vulnerable groups

Some pupils are particularly vulnerable to SEMH difficulties. These 'vulnerable groups' are more likely to experience a range of adverse circumstances that increase the risk of mental health problems.

Staff are aware of the increased likelihood of SEMH difficulties in pupils in vulnerable groups and remain vigilant to early signs of difficulties.

Vulnerable groups include the following:

- Pupils who have experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation or other adverse contextual circumstances
- Children in need
- LAC and PLAC

These circumstances can have a far-reaching impact on behaviour and emotional states. These factors will be considered when discussing the possible exclusion of vulnerable pupils.

7. Children in need, LAC and PLAC

Children in need, LAC and PLAC are more likely to have SEND and experience mental health difficulties than their peers. Children in need, LAC and PLAC are more likely to struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings, sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with change.

Children in need may also be living in chaotic circumstances and be suffering, or at risk of, abuse, neglect and exploitation. They are also likely to have less support available outside of school than most pupils. School staff are aware of how these pupils' experiences and SEND can impact their behaviour and education. The impact of these pupils' experiences is reflected in the design and application of the school's Behaviour Policy, including through individualised graduated responses.

The school will use multi-agency working as an effective way to inform assessment procedures.

Where a pupil is being supported by LA children's social care services (CSCS), the school will work with their allocated social worker to better understand the pupil's wider needs and contextual circumstances. This collaborative working informs assessment of needs and enables prompt responses to safeguarding concerns.

8. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and other events that impact pupils' SEMH

The balance between risk and protective factors is disrupted when traumatic events happen in pupils' lives, such as the following:

- Loss or separation: This may include a death in the family, parental separation, divorce, hospitalisation, loss of friendships, family conflict, a family breakdown that displaces the pupil, being taken into care or adopted, or parents being deployed in the armed forces.
- Life changes: This may include the birth of a sibling, moving house, changing schools or transitioning between schools.
- Traumatic experiences: This may include abuse, neglect, domestic violence, bullying, violence, accidents or injuries.
- Other traumatic incidents: This may include natural disasters or terrorist attacks.

Some pupils may be susceptible to such incidents, even if they are not directly affected. For example, pupils with parents in the armed forces may find global disasters or terrorist incidents particularly traumatic. The school will support pupils when they have been through ACEs, even if they are not presenting any obvious signs of distress – early help is likely to prevent further problems. Support may come from the school's existing support systems or via specialist staff and support services.

9. SEND and SEMH

The school will recognise it is well-placed to identify SEND at an early stage and works with partner agencies to address these needs. The school's full SEND identification and support procedures are available in the SEND Policy.

Where pupils have certain types of SEND, there is an increased likelihood of mental health problems. For example, children with autism or learning difficulties are significantly more likely to experience anxiety. Early intervention to address the underlying causes of disruptive behaviour includes an assessment of whether appropriate support is in place to address the pupil's SEND.

The headteacher considers the use of a multi-agency assessment for pupils demonstrating persistently disruptive behaviour. These assessments are designed to identify unidentified SEND and mental health problems, and to discover whether there are housing or family problems that may be having an adverse effect on the pupil.

The school recognises that not all pupils with mental health difficulties have SEND.

The graduated response is used to determine the correct level of support to offer (this is used as good practice throughout the school, regardless of whether or not a pupil has SEND).

All staff understand their responsibilities to pupils with SEND, including pupils with persistent mental health difficulties.

The SENCO will ensure that staff understand how the school identifies and meets pupils' needs, provides advice and support as needed, and liaises with external SEND professionals as necessary.

10. Stress and mental health

The school recognises that short-term stress and worry is a normal part of life and that most pupils will face mild or transitory changes that induce short-term mental health effects. Staff are taught to differentiate between 'normal' stress and more persistent mental health problems.

11. SEMH intervention and support

The curriculum for PSHE and RSHE will focus on promoting pupils' resilience, confidence and ability to learn. Positive classroom management and working in small groups is utilised to promote positive behaviour, social development and high self-esteem.

School-based counselling will be offered to pupils who require it, and the relevant external services are utilised where appropriate

Where appropriate, parents will have a direct involvement in any intervention regarding their child. The school will support parents in the management and development of their child.

Interventions are structured in a way that addresses behavioural issues through education and training programmes. Small group sessions will take place and focus on developing cognitive skills and positive social behaviour. Well-established nurture groups are in place to address any emerging SEMH difficulties in pupils. Specific classroom management techniques for supporting pupils are in place. These techniques may include, for example, using a token system for rewards or changing seating arrangements.

For pupils with more complex problems, additional in-school support includes:

- Supporting the pupil's teacher to help them manage the pupil's behaviour.
- Additional educational one-to-one support for the pupil.
- One-to-one therapeutic work with the pupil delivered by mental health specialists.
- Family support and/or therapy, where recommended by mental health professionals.

12. Working with parents

The school will work with parents wherever possible to ensure that a collaborative approach is utilised which combines in-school support with at-home support.

The school will ensure that pupils and parents are aware of the mental health support services available from the school.

Parents and pupils are expected to seek and receive support elsewhere, including from their GP, NHS services, trained professionals, voluntary organisations and other sources.

13. Safeguarding

If a staff member has a SEMH concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will take immediate action in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and speak to the DSL or deputy DSL.

14. Monitoring and review

The policy is reviewed on an annual basis by the headteacher in conjunction with the proprietor.

This policy is reviewed in light of any serious SEMH-related incidents.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.