



Martin Primary School

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

Reviewed and updated: spring 2024

Reviewed every three years

Statement of intent

At our school, we believe mental health is about respecting and caring for ourselves and others. Looking after our mental health enables us to cope with ever-changing emotions and to deal with challenges in everyday life. It is essential that we have the confidence to share our thoughts and feelings and to develop the strategies to cope when difficulties arise as this is key to maintaining good mental health. We all make mistakes in work and life and having the resilience and safe environment to learn from these mistakes, allows us to develop and grow as human beings.

This policy outlines the framework for Martin Primary 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.

We will work with the LA with regards to the following:

- The involvement of pupils and their parents in decision-making
- The early identification of pupils' needs
- Collaboration between education, health and social care services to provide support when required
- Greater choice and control for pupils and their parents over their support

UN Rights of the Child

Article 13

Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 23

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence, and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide support to disabled children.

Article 28

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free.

Article 31

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

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
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Administering Medication Policy
- Suspension and 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 Governing Body is responsible for:

- Fully engaging pupils with SEMH difficulties and their parents when drawing up policies that affect them.
- Ensuring provision is in place for all pupils with SEMH difficulties, whether or not they have an EHC plan.
- Endeavouring to secure the special educational provision called for by a pupil's SEMH difficulties.
- Designating an appropriate member of staff to be the SENCO ensuring they coordinate provisions for pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Taking all necessary steps to ensure that pupils with SEMH difficulties are not discriminated against, harassed or victimised.
- Ensuring arrangements are in place to support pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Ensuring there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible SEMH problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.
- Identifying an appropriate staff member to act as the senior mental health lead, with sufficient authority to develop and oversee the school's approach to mental health and wellbeing.

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.
- Ensuring that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out their functions, in a similar way to other important strategic roles within the school.
- Carefully reviewing the quality of teaching for pupils at risk of underachievement, as a core part of the school's performance management arrangements.

- Ensuring that staff members understand the strategies used to identify and support pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Ensuring that procedures and policies for the day-to-day running of the school do not directly or indirectly discriminate against pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Establishing and maintaining a culture of high expectations and including pupils with SEMH difficulties in all opportunities that are available to other pupils.
- Consulting health and social care professionals, pupils and parents to ensure the needs of pupils with SEMH difficulties are effectively supported.
- Keeping parents and relevant staff up-to-date with any changes or concerns involving pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Ensuring staff members have a good understanding of the mental health support services that are available in their local area, both through the NHS and voluntary sector organisations.

The senior mental health lead is responsible for:

- 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.
- Collaborating with the SENCO, headteacher and Governing Body, as part of the SLT, to outline and strategically develop SEMH policies and provisions for the school.
- Coordinating with the SENCO and mental health support teams to provide a high standard of care to pupils who have SEMH difficulties.
- Advising on the deployment of the school's budget and other resources in order to effectively meet the needs of pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Being a key point of contact with external agencies, especially the mental health support services, the LA, LA support services and mental health support teams.
- Providing professional guidance to colleagues about mental health and working closely with staff members, parents and other agencies, including SEMH charities.
- Referring pupils with SEMH difficulties to external services, e.g. specialist children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS), to receive additional support where required.
- Overseeing the outcomes of interventions on pupils' education and wellbeing.
- Liaising with parents of pupils with SEMH difficulties, where appropriate.
- Liaising with other schools, educational psychologists, health and social care professionals, and independent or voluntary bodies.
- Liaising with the potential future providers of education, such as secondary school teachers, to ensure that pupils and their parents are informed about options and a smooth transition is planned.
- Leading mental health CPD.
- Undertaking senior mental health lead training.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Collaborating with the Governing Body, headteacher and the senior mental health lead, 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.
- Supporting the subject teachers in the further assessment of a pupil's particular strengths and areas for improvement, and advising on the effective implementation of support.

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.
- Liaising with the senior mental health lead and, where available, the Mental Health Support Team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health.

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.
- Understanding how potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences can impact a pupil's mental health, behaviour and education.
- Being aware of the needs, outcomes sought and support provided to any pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Keeping the relevant figures of authority up-to-date with any changes in behaviour, academic developments and causes of concern.

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.
- Learning Mentor support.
- 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.

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.
- Understand what to do if they have concerns about a pupil
- 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 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.

Where possible, the school is aware of any support programmes GPs are offering to pupils who are diagnosed with SEMH difficulties, especially when these may impact the pupil's behaviour and attainment at 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.

The assessment, intervention and support processes available from the LA are in line with the local offer. All assessments are in line with the provisions outlined in the school's SEND Policy.

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 class teacher, 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
- Socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, including those in receipt of, or previously in receipt of, free school meals and the pupil premium

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.

When the school has concerns about a looked-after child's behaviour, the designated teacher and virtual school head (VSH) will be informed at the earliest opportunity so they can help to determine the best way to support the pupil.

When the school has concerns about a previously looked-after child's behaviour, the pupil's parents/carers or the designated teacher will seek advice from the VSH to determine the best way to support the pupil.

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. Risk factors and protective factors

There are a number of risk factors beyond being part of a vulnerable group that are associated with an increased likelihood of SEMH difficulties, these are known as risk factors. There are also factors associated with a decreased likelihood of SEMH difficulties, these are known as protective factors.

The table below displays common risk factors for SEMH difficulties (as outlined by the DfE) that staff remain vigilant of, and the protective factors that staff look for and notice when missing from a pupil:

	Risk factors	Protective factors
<u>In the pupil</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic influences • Low IQ and learning disabilities • Specific development delay or neuro-diversity • Communication difficulties • Difficult temperament • Physical illness • Academic failure • Low self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure attachment experience • Outgoing temperament as an infant • Good communication skills and sociability • Being a planner and having a belief in control • Humour • A positive attitude • Experiences of success and achievement

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith or spirituality • Capacity to reflect
<p><u>In the pupil's family</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt parental conflict including domestic violence • Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) • Inconsistent or unclear discipline • Hostile and rejecting relationships • Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect • Parental psychiatric illness • Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder • Death and loss – including loss of friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) • Affection • Clear, consistent discipline • Support for education • Supportive long-term relationships or the absence of severe discord
<p><u>In the school</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying including online (cyber bullying) • Discrimination • Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships • Deviant peer influences • Peer pressure • Child-on-child abuse • Poor pupil-to-teacher/school staff relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policies on behaviour and bullying • Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct) • 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems • A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Good pupil-to-teacher/school staff relationships • Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging • Positive peer influences • Positive friendships • Effective safeguarding and child protection policies. • An effective early help process • Understand their role in, and are part of, effective multi-agency working • Appropriate procedures in place to ensure staff are confident enough to raise concerns about policies

		and processes and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively
<u>In the community</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic disadvantage • Homelessness • Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events • Discrimination • Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation • Other significant life events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider supportive network • Good housing • High standard of living • High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying • Opportunities for valued social roles • Range of sport/leisure activities

The following table contains common warning signs for suicidal behaviour:

<u>Speech</u>	<u>Behaviour</u>	<u>Mood</u>
The pupil has mentioned the following:	The pupil displays the following behaviour:	The pupil often displays the following moods:
Killing themselves	Increased use of alcohol or drugs	Depression
Feeling hopeless	Looking for ways to end their lives, such as searching suicide online	Anxiety
Having no reason to live	Withdrawing from activities	Loss of interest
Being a burden to others	Isolating themselves from family and friends	Irritability
Feeling trapped	Sleeping too much or too little	Humiliation and shame
Unbearable pain	Visiting or calling people to say goodbye	Agitation and anger
	Giving away possessions	Relief or sudden improvement, e.g. through self-harm activities
	Aggression	
	Fatigue	
	Self-harm	

11. 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.

12. 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.

Learning mentor support will be offered to pupils who require it, and the relevant external services are utilised where appropriate. The school also pays for the services of a child psychologist for a limited number of children.

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.

Serious cases of SEMH difficulties are usually referred to CAMHS.

To ensure referring pupils to CAMHS is effective, staff will follow the process below:

- Use a clear, approved process for identifying pupils in need of further support
- Document evidence of their SEMH difficulties
- Encourage the pupil and their parents to speak to the pupil's GP
- Work with local specialist CAMHS to make the referral process as quick and efficient as possible
- Understand the criteria that are used by specialist CAMHS in determining whether a pupil needs their services
- Have a close working relationship with the local CAMHS specialist
- Consult CAMHS about the most effective things the school can do to support pupils whose needs aren't so severe that they require specialist CAMHS

13. Administering medication

The full arrangements in place to support pupils with medical conditions requiring medication can be found in the school's Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy and the Administering Medication Policy.

The Governing Body will ensure that medication is included in a pupil's IHP, where recommended by health professionals.

Staff know what medication pupils are taking, and how it should be stored and administered.

14. Misbehaviour, suspensions and exclusions

When suspension or exclusion is a possibility, the school will consider contributing factors, which could include mental health difficulties. All decisions to suspend or exclude a pupil will be taken in line with the relevant policies.

Where there are concerns over behaviour, the school will carry out an assessment to determine whether the behaviour is a result of underlying factors such as undiagnosed learning difficulties, child protection concerns or mental health problems, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

Where underlying factors are likely to have contributed to the pupil's behaviour, the school will consider whether action can be taken to address the underlying causes of the disruptive behaviour, rather than issue a suspension or exclusion. If a pupil has SEND or is a looked-after child, exclusion will only be used as a last resort.

In all cases, the school will balance the interests of the pupil against the mental and physical health of the whole school community.

15. 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.