Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

November 2025

*WALKING IN LOVE,
INSPIRING TRANSFORMATION*

1. Vision & Aims

*At St Anne's, we **Walk in love** (Ephesians 5:2), nurturing **Compassion, Curiosity** and **Confidence** in our pupils and adults.*
*We create a **Community** of belonging in which each person can **Shine their Light** (Matthew 5:16).*

Rooted in Christ, we celebrate our rich diversity and inspire transformation through inclusive leadership and learning

Values Statement

At St Anne's, our approach to supporting social, emotional and mental health is guided by our core values of **Compassion, Curiosity and Confidence**. We act with **compassion** by ensuring that all children have fair access to opportunities, regardless of financial circumstances. We promote **curiosity** by supporting pupils to take part in a wide range of enriching experiences that inspire learning beyond the classroom. We nurture **confidence** by encouraging every child to participate fully, knowing that their school community values and supports them.

At St Anne's, we understand that school plays a significant role in supporting children's mental health and wellbeing. This policy outlines our commitment to recognising and meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all pupils. Through the successful implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Promote equal opportunities for pupils with SEMH needs.
- Ensure that pupils with SEMH needs are identified early and appropriately supported.
- Reduce the risk of SEMH needs escalating or leading to harm, through timely and effective intervention.
- Promote positive attitudes and understanding towards pupils with SEMH needs.
- Eliminate prejudice and stigma associated with SEMH needs.

This policy applies to all members of our school community: children, staff, governors, families and people within our local community, and should be read in conjunction with our SEND Policy and Behaviour Policy.

A primary aim of our school is that every member of the community is respected, supported and valued, and that good mental health and wellbeing is promoted by all. We aim to achieve this by creating a culture where:
- High expectations of positive behaviour, courtesy, mutual respect and consideration for others – within and beyond the school environment – are promoted.
- We provide a nurturing environment where children are safe and secure, enabling them to become positive, responsible and increasingly independent members of the school community, and ultimately of wider society.
- We help all children to understand, regulate and manage their emotions, and to increasingly show empathy and understanding towards others.
- We encourage and celebrate individual strengths and achievements of both children and staff.
- We know how to support staff, children and families who experience poor mental health.
- We aim to build a community that values kindness, care, respect and empathy for others, with all adults modelling these core values.

Written by:	Lauren Birch, Acting SENCo
Date written:	November 2025
Date agreed by Headteacher:	November 2025
Headteacher:	Elizabeth Hindmarsh
Date of next review:	November 2027

2. 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 (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- 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'

3. Roles & Responsibilities

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

- Using a preventative approach to create a safe, calm and supportive environment where mental health difficulties are less likely to develop. This includes actively promoting early intervention, reducing risks before problems escalate, and fostering a protective culture that builds pupils' resilience and supports the wellbeing of the whole school community. A preventative approach aligns with DfE guidance and encompasses teaching about mental wellbeing across the curriculum, as well as reinforcing these messages through our daily activities, routines and wider school ethos.
- Overseeing the whole-school approach to mental health, including how this is reflected in policies, the curriculum and support, how staff are supported with their own mental health, and how the school engages pupils and parents regarding pupils' mental health and awareness.
- Advising on the deployment of the school's budget and other resources in order to effectively meet the needs of pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Raising awareness and maintaining efficient referral processes so that pupils can access evidence-based early support and timely interventions.
- Working effectively with external agencies to ensure swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment when required.
- Identifying and supporting pupils with SEND and considering how SEND resources can be used to meet the needs of pupils whose mental health difficulties amount to SEND. This includes identifying when wellbeing concerns also represent safeguarding concerns and ensuring that appropriate safeguarding referrals are made in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The Headteacher and SENCO are responsible for:

- Being a key point of contact with external agencies, especially mental health support services and mental health support teams.
- Referring pupils with SEMH difficulties to external services, e.g. specialist children and young people's mental health services (CAMHS), 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 potential future providers of education, such as secondary school teachers, to ensure that pupils and their parents are informed about options and that a smooth transition is planned.

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.
- Keeping the relevant school leaders up to date with any changes in behaviour, academic developments or causes for concern. Relevant figures of authority include SLT, SENCO and the Pastoral Lead.

Teaching Staff are responsible for:
- Planning and reviewing support for pupils with SEMH difficulties in collaboration with parents, the SENCO and, where appropriate, the pupils themselves. This support may be delivered through ISPs and interventions.
- 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 every pupil achieves their full potential, and that every pupil with SEMH difficulties will be able to study the full curriculum.
- Being responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class.

The DSL Team 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 teachers and the Pastoral Lead, when safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health.
- Making safeguarding referrals to external agencies where necessary, in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff Training

The SLT ensures that all teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with SEMH needs, and promotes CPD so that staff can recognise common symptoms of mental health difficulties, understand what constitutes a concern, and know what to do if they believe they have identified a developing issue. Clear processes are in place to help staff who identify SEMH concerns in pupils to escalate issues through robust referral and accountability systems.

Staff receive training to ensure they:
- Know how to respond appropriately if they are concerned about a pupil's emotional wellbeing or safety, including concerns related to suicidal thoughts or behaviours.
- Are familiar with the internal and external support available to pupils and understand the school's referral pathways so they can access help quickly when needed.

Creating a Supportive Whole School Culture

The school is committed to creating a nurturing environment where all pupils feel safe, valued and supported. We use a range of strategies to help pupils who are experiencing psychological stress or who may be at risk of developing SEMH difficulties. These include:

- Teaching mental health and wellbeing through curriculum areas such as PSHE.
- Using positive classroom management techniques.
- Signposting families to appropriate external support agencies.
- Working closely with parents and carers.
- Providing additional adult support and therapeutic intervention when needed.

Identifying Signs of SEMH Difficulties

We are committed to identifying SEMH needs as early as possible. Staff are trained to recognise indicators of emerging mental health difficulties and understand how to respond appropriately. Signs that a pupil may be struggling can include, but are not limited to:

- Anxiety
- Low mood
- Withdrawing from friends or activities
- Avoiding risks or decision-making
- Low self-worth
- Isolating themselves
- Refusing praise
- Disengagement or lack of motivation
- Poor personal presentation
- Lethargy or apathy
- Daydreaming
- Difficulty forming or maintaining friendships
- Speech anxiety or reluctance to speak
- Avoiding tasks
- Challenging behaviour
- Restlessness or over-activity
- Non-compliance
- Mood swings
- Impulsivity
- Physical or verbal aggression
- Heightened sense of injustice
- Disproportionate reactions to situations
- Difficulty coping with change or transitions
- Absconding
- Eating difficulties
- Lack of empathy
- Poor personal boundaries

When concerns arise about a pupil's SEMH needs, staff follow the school's internal identification and support processes. This includes consultation with the SENCO and DSL, information gathering, observation and planning appropriate interventions. A formal mental health graduated response will be developed as part of our wider SEMH provision. Concerns will be recorded on CPOMS and followed up by a member of SLT or the DSL. Staff will observe and monitor pupils who present concerns; however, only qualified medical professionals can diagnose a mental health condition. Assessment tools such as the Valuing SEND tool and the Boxall Profile may be used to support planning and identify targeted provision.

SEND & SEMH

We work closely with partner agencies to identify SEND at the earliest stage. The school's SEND policy outlines our full identification and support procedures. Pupils with certain types of SEND may be more vulnerable to mental health difficulties, for example, children with autism or learning difficulties may be more likely to experience anxiety. Early intervention is key. When behaviour raises concerns, staff consider whether there may be an underlying need, such as undiagnosed SEND, speech and language needs, safeguarding issues or emerging SEMH difficulties. We use our graduated approach to determine the right level of support. All staff understand their responsibilities towards pupils with SEND, including those with persistent mental health difficulties. The SENCO ensures staff are supported, provides expert advice and liaises with external professionals where needed.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Other Influences on SEMH

Traumatic or significant life events can disrupt the balance between risk and protective factors for a child. These events may include:

- Loss or separation (e.g., bereavement, parental separation, a family breakdown, or being taken into care).
- Major life changes (e.g., the birth of a sibling, moving home, or changing schools).
- Traumatic experiences (e.g., abuse, neglect, domestic violence, bullying, or accidents).
- Other traumatic incidents (e.g., natural disasters or terrorist events).

We support pupils who have experienced ACEs even if outward signs of distress are not visible. Support may come from pastoral systems within school or from specialist services.

Vulnerable Groups

Some pupils are more vulnerable to SEMH difficulties because of external circumstances. Staff remain alert to early signs of difficulty in pupils belonging to the following groups:

- Pupils who have experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation or other contextual harm.
- Children in Need
- Looked After Children (LAC) and previously LAC (PLAC).
- Pupils experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, including those currently or previously eligible for pupil premium.

These circumstances can significantly affect emotional wellbeing and behaviour. They are always considered when decision-making around support, behaviour and exclusion.

Risk 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, known as protective factors.

The table below outlines common risk and protective factors for SEMH difficulties (as identified by the DfE). Staff remain vigilant for these risk factors and notice when protective factors may be missing for a pupil.

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the pupil	- Genetic influences - Low IQ and learning disabilities - Specific developmental delay or neurodiversity - Communication difficulties - Difficult temperament - Physical illness - Academic failure - Low self-esteem	- 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 - Faith or spirituality - Capacity to reflect
In the pupil's family	- Overt parental conflict, including domestic violence - Family breakdown, including where children are taken into care or adopted - Inconsistent or unclear discipline - Hostile or rejecting relationships - Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs - Physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect - Parental psychiatric illness - Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder - Death or loss, including loss of friendships	- At least one strong parent-child relationship (or another supportive adult) - Affection - Clear, consistent discipline - Support for education - Supportive, long-term relationships or absence of severe family discord

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In the school	- Bullying, including online/cyberbullying - Discrimination - Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships - Deviant peer influences - Peer pressure - Peer-on-peer abuse - Poor pupil-teacher or pupil-staff relationships	- Clear policies on behaviour and bullying - Staff behaviour policy (code of conduct) - An 'open door' policy for children to raise concerns - A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health - Strong pupil–teacher/pupil–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 - Staff who understand their role in, and contribute to, effective multi-agency working - Clear procedures ensuring staff feel confident raising concerns and trust that they will be addressed fairly and effectively
In the community	- Socio-economic disadvantage - Homelessness - Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events - Discrimination - Exploitation, including by criminal gangs, organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation, or the influence of extremism leading to radicalisation - Other significant life events	- 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 - Access to a range of sport/leisure activities

Building Positive Relationships

It is a professional responsibility for all staff to build positive and supportive relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues. Teachers and support staff are role models for children and adults, and understand the importance of fostering respectful, trusting and nurturing relationships with everyone.

We are committed to preparing good relationships by:
- Seeing each person as an individual with strengths, needs and different windows of tolerance.
- Understanding how the brain works, including the fight/flight response.
- Ensuring we have a secure understanding of children's social and emotional development and applying this to our relationship-led approach.
- Providing a physical environment that enables children to feel safe.

We commit to building and maintaining good relationships by:
- Meeting and greeting pupils at the door each morning and after key transitions such as playtime and PE.
- Preparing children in advance for changes (e.g. different teachers or timetable adjustments) using visual support (widgits) social stories or whole-class circle time.
- Using light-hearted, positive, joyful and kind tones of voice, body language and facial expressions. We avoid harsh voices, shouting or any form of shaming.
- Using words, tone, facial expressions and non-verbal communication in ways that soothe and calm. We apply the same approach when communicating with colleagues and parents, both in person and via email/messages.
- Being accepting of other people's views, opinions, feelings and practices.
- Being curious about other people's lives, behaviours and reactions, and noticing when something is different or has changed.
- Showing empathy and compassion by being as attuned as possible to others' moods.

- Ensuring consistency and fairness.
- Providing opportunities across the school day to help individuals develop the ability to see themselves, their relationships and the world more positively.
- Modelling the positive attitudes, values and behaviours expected of everyone in the community.

We commit to repairing relationships by:
- Using restorative conversations to repair and restore relationships. With children, we use age-appropriate resources to build trust and support learning from mistakes. In line with our Behaviour Policy, children may also complete reflection tasks.
- Apologising when we have made a mistake.

Working with Alternative Provision (AP)

When appropriate, the school works with Alternative Provision (AP) settings to develop clear and structured plans for pupils' reintegration back into school. The school shares relevant information with the AP setting to support the development of reintegration plans that allow progress to be monitored effectively. These plans align with any existing Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans for pupils with SEND and ensure continuity of support as pupils transition back into mainstream schooling.

Behaviour, Suspensions and Exclusions

When suspension or exclusion is being considered, the school reflects carefully on all contributing factors, including any underlying mental health difficulties. Where there are concerns about a pupil's behaviour, appropriate assessments or investigations are carried out to identify whether the behaviour may be linked to unmet needs such as speech and language needs, undiagnosed learning difficulties, safeguarding issues or mental health concerns (e.g. Welcomm, Summative Teacher Assessments, Boxall).

If underlying factors are likely to have contributed to the behaviour, the school considers what actions or interventions can be put in place to address these causes, rather than moving immediately to suspension exclusion.

Permanent exclusion is always a last resort. In every case, the school balances the needs and best interests of the pupil with the mental and physical health, safety and wellbeing of the wider school community.

Working with Parents

The school works closely with parents wherever possible to ensure a collaborative approach. Pupils and parents are made aware of the mental health support available within the school and are signposted to these through shared SEND and Pastoral Lead information and regular parental emails, meetings and newsletters. Parents and pupils are also encouraged to seek support from external services where appropriate, including their GP, NHS services, trained professionals within CAMHS, and other relevant agencies.

Safeguarding

All staff are aware that SEMH difficulties can, in some cases, be an indicator that a pupil has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse, neglect or exploitation. If a staff member has a concern about a pupil's SEMH that also raises safeguarding concerns, they take immediate action in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report the concern to the DSL.

Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the SENCo (and approved by the Headteacher) to ensure it reflects current legislation, guidance and best practice in supporting pupils' social, emotional and mental health. Where circumstances arise that are not covered within this policy, the Headteacher and the Local Governing Body will consider the matter and make decisions consistent with safeguarding procedures and the best interests of pupils.

Any questions or concerns regarding this policy should be made to:
Name: Lauren Birch, Acting SENCo
Date: November 2025