

# Our Graduated Response to

## Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Provision

Updated December 2025

### How we identify and assess pupils with SEMH needs:

Resource/s	Details
Teacher/staff observations, parent information	Changing circumstances for a pupil may highlight a need for teachers to make adjustments or seek further support through the Assess Plan Do Review process. Changed behaviours may alert teachers to the need for further observations, adjustments or investigations, which may proceed to discussions with senior leaders or SENCO.
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	Completed by class teachers, reflecting on how well a child is coping. Results are broken down into the following focus areas: emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and prosocial.
Boxall profile	Completed by class teachers, SENCO and/or ELSA to identify and monitor observed behaviours in order to optimise specific individual support, particularly where attachment difficulties may be a concern.
Observation and behaviour logs	Completed by staff to identify patterns and trends in behaviour in order to plan specific support with SENCO advice.
ELSA assessments	Focussed assessments used to explore needs, plan and monitor 1:1 ELSA interventions, completed by the ELSA with input from relevant staff and parent/carers.
Thrive Assessment	Detailed development assessment completed by a Thrive practitioner to inform a therapeutic intervention approach, which involves relevant members of staff, and is also used to monitor outcomes.
External Assessment	Follows referral to an external agency when there is clear evidence that the Graduated Response has been fully implemented without the desired impact for the pupil.

# Universal Provision:

Support	How we do this
<p>Ensure secure emotional foundations for learning and life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child is made to feel welcome, greeted by adults, showing that they are valued.</li> <li>• Adults show empathy, validate emotions and feelings, help to develop emotional vocabulary by helping pupils to label them (I wonder if you are feeling...?)</li> <li>• PSHE includes opportunities to talk explicitly about feelings and emotions, including relationship to bodily sensations.</li> <li>• Recognition that fear and anxiety act as barriers to learning and support the child to feel more secure.</li> <li>• Blob Tree People or a feelings chart used as an emotional check in with children.</li> <li>• Adults actively seek to build trusting relationships with children, particularly vulnerable children.</li> <li>• Class routines are clear and consistent.</li> <li>• New learning is placed in context of the bigger picture – what we know already, the next step, what it looks like when we get there, how it feels to be learning</li> <li>• Learning is chunked into small achievable steps</li> <li>• Children struggling to understand the learning receive timely support to help them keep up within the lesson</li> <li>• Appropriate reference resources are available in the classroom for children, including additional visual support.</li> <li>• Teachers talk explicitly about how we learn, including that learning involves effort and mistakes, both of which are important.</li> <li>• Growth Mindset approach and the power of “yet”, e.g. can’t do it –YET, not there YET</li> <li>• Teachers talk about and model learning behaviours they want to see and set clear learning objectives.</li> <li>• Teachers talk positively about learning differences and encourage pupils to think about how they learn best, what their strengths are and where they may need to improve.</li> <li>• Staff use praise to tell a child what they are doing well and ensure every child has opportunities to be successful.</li> <li>• Awards nominated by staff or peers.</li> <li>• Pre-teaching of new learning is used to build confidence and knowledge enabling better access to learning for some children.</li> <li>• Explicit and visually supported procedures for children to follow when they are stuck with their learning, to encourage development of confidence and independence.</li> <li>• Collaborative learning opportunities including partner work, small group tasks and learning buddies.</li> <li>• Pupils are involved in identifying their own progress.</li> <li>• All children have access to varied and rich curriculum experiences that are memorable and promote a sense of belonging, e.g. special visitors, special activity days and outings, performances, music lessons, welly walks, Forest School, residential visits, after school clubs and sporting events.</li> <li>• Children have opportunities to represent others on the school council, act as a peer supporter, or contribute views in relation to curriculum development activities.</li> <li>• Children have opportunities to be physically active regularly every day.</li> <li>• School access PHSE resources to support health, wellbeing and safety.</li> <li>• Wellbeing surveys.</li> </ul>
<p>Support development of social communication, including understanding about</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circle time discussions</li> <li>• Explicit teaching about bullying and peer conflicts</li> <li>• Buddies and Year 6 Leaders use assembly time to discuss bullying, peer conflicts and their role with their peers</li> <li>• Buddies and Year 6 Leaders support other children in the playground</li> <li>• Structured partner and group work in class to support good communication with peers</li> </ul>

<p>friendships, conflicts and bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Golden Time may be used to model different types of shared play</li> <li>• Playground buddies</li> <li>• Consistent boundaries with visually supported reminders about playground behaviour and rules</li> <li>• Lunchtime staff have information about potentially vulnerable pupils and how to support them</li> <li>• Quiet space available in the gazebo.</li> </ul>
<p>Support for transitions and managing change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual timetable referred to by the teacher regularly</li> <li>• Use of a now/next board for children who need it</li> <li>• Prior warning is given about changes to staff, planned activities, timetable, routines etc, in the form of social stories with visual reminders</li> <li>• Prior warning is given that an activity is coming to an end</li> <li>• Breathing/calming tools are easily accessible on class tool stations</li> <li>• Planned transition activities when moving to a new class or teacher</li> <li>• Planned transition programme when moving to another school, as far as possible</li> <li>• Welcome and support for new children moving into the school</li> </ul>
<p>Support for self-regulation of behaviour and anxiety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building secure relationships with adults in school, combined with clear boundaries and consistent approaches</li> <li>• Recognise that some learners need extra help and may have additional or different arrangements relating to behaviour and treat this as any other learning difference</li> <li>• Regular check-ins with an adult</li> <li>• Modified task length</li> <li>• Use of varied teaching and learning styles</li> <li>• Clear routines and expectations linked to Behaviour Policy</li> <li>• Use of distraction</li> <li>• Use of visual support, e.g. to help a child understand a parent will be returning, steps in a task</li> <li>• Safe spaces for children to withdraw to</li> <li>• Tool stations available in all classrooms, providing a range of self-regulation tools</li> <li>• Use by child of visual symbols to express confusion, need for support, need to withdraw</li> <li>• Support children to express anxiety or frustration in appropriate ways and help them to find their own strategies to manage it, e.g. breathing exercises, physical activity, movement breaks</li> <li>• Provide low distraction learning spaces for children who need them</li> <li>• Use careful positioning in the classroom for optimal learning</li> </ul>
<p>Support for trauma and significant life events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential background information is shared by those who need to know</li> <li>• Consistent and 'normal' routines are followed</li> <li>• Teachers give special attention to their relationship with the pupil, give empathy, validate their feelings, ensure they have access to a trusted adult, use a nurturing approach linked to additional advice where appropriate</li> <li>• Plan for adults in class to give additional brief episodes of 1:1 attention if appropriate</li> <li>• In class children are positioned carefully, particularly considering where they will feel safe</li> <li>• Access to special 'connection' objects where needed</li> <li>• There is access to books and stories linked to specialist themes when appropriate</li> <li>• Changes in behaviour are monitored and reported as necessary</li> <li>• Emotional check ins with pupil when appropriate</li> <li>• Safeguarding procedures are applied when appropriate</li> <li>• EPAC reviews (for adopted children)</li> </ul>

## Targeted Support: Some children requiring specific additional or different support, small group interventions or brief 1:1 interventions

Support	How we do this
Ensure secure emotional foundations for learning and life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an identified adult for the child to talk to</li> <li>• ELSA group or 1:1 interventions, on average 6 x 30 min sessions focusing on a wide range of topics e.g. Emotions and Feelings, Self Esteem, Worries, etc.</li> <li>• Time limited and focussed keep up/catch up interventions</li> <li>• Worry Dolls, Worry box</li> <li>• Forest School sessions</li> </ul>
Support development of social communication, including understanding about friendships, conflicts and bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELSA group or 1:1 interventions, on average 6 x 30 min sessions focusing on a wide range of topics e.g. Friendships, Bullying, etc.</li> <li>• Buddy/ leadership training</li> <li>• Lego Therapy Club</li> <li>• Talkabout for kids</li> <li>• Forest School sessions</li> <li>• Playground observation and review</li> <li>• Guided playground games</li> <li>• Comic strip conversations</li> <li>• Social stories</li> </ul>
Support for transitions and managing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELSA managed transition group for pupils moving to Secondary Schools</li> <li>• Internal additional transition planning for a pupil</li> <li>• Personalised visual timetable</li> <li>• Photo transition books</li> <li>• Social stories</li> </ul>
Support for self-regulation of behaviour and anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on the functions of behaviours and what is effective in managing them leading to an agreed Behaviour Support Plan used consistently by all</li> <li>• Safe place to withdraw to, which may be out of class, is agreed with pupil</li> <li>• Either/or choices</li> <li>• Movement breaks / sensory breaks</li> <li>• Forest School sessions</li> <li>• Agree with child socially appropriate ways of managing anxiety or attempting to regulate behaviour, and reward attempts to do so positively</li> <li>• Gentle on the child, hard on the behaviour</li> </ul>
Support for trauma and significant life events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek out general advice in relation to the situation – e.g. SEMH resource folder, consult SENCO</li> <li>• Small world play</li> <li>• Let the pupil find their safe space</li> <li>• Adjust expectations if it is agreed to be appropriate</li> <li>• Key adult supports the child if appropriate</li> </ul>

## Higher Needs Support: Children with ongoing and significant additional and different needs that may be complex and require a degree of 1:1 support and intervention over a longer period of time

- ELSA 1:1 therapeutic interventions which may be ongoing or extended in duration
- Forest school may be ongoing or extended in duration
- Thrive derived therapeutic interventions
- Key person builds a relationship with the pupil
- Highly individualised support plan that identifies specific strategies and support, often in conjunction with external advice
- STARR behaviour monitoring charts used to inform development of support
- TEAM Teach
- Worry Monster
- Personalised workstation in the classroom
- Alternative lunchtime routines
- Circle of Friends
- Social Stories
- Pre School Entry plan meetings
- Secondary School Entry Plan meetings and individually planned additional visits
- Completion of an EHA Referral to PFSA Family Support
- Practitioner Parenting course
- Educational Psychologist
- GP/ Paediatrician
- CAMHS

This document was created in line with recommendations from the Somerset Graduated Response Toolkit, available here:

[Somerset's Graduated Response Tool](#)