Castle Hill Primary School
Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

Reviewed by: Head-teacher / Mental Health Lead / SENCo

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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 (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'

This Policy should be read alongside the schools following policies:

- Accessibility
- Anti-Bullying and Hate Incidents
- Behaviour
- Child Protection
- Confidentiality
- Cyberbullying
- PSHCE
- RSHE
- Safeguarding
- SEND and Inclusion
- SMSC

These are available from the school office or the school website.

2. Common SEMH difficulties

Anxiety: Anxiety refers to feeling fearful or panicked, breathless, tense, fidgety, sick, irritable, tearful or having difficulty sleeping. Anxiety can significantly

affect a pupil's ability to develop, learn and sustain and maintain friendships. Specialists reference the following diagnostic categories:

- **Generalised anxiety disorder:** This is a long-term condition which causes people to feel anxious about a wide range of situations and issues, rather than one specific event.
- **Panic disorder:** This is a condition in which people have recurring and regular panic attacks, often for no obvious reason.
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD):** This is a mental health condition where a person has obsessive thoughts (unwanted, unpleasant thoughts, images or urges that repeatedly enter their mind, causing them anxiety) and compulsions (repetitive behaviour or mental acts that they feel they must carry out to try to prevent an obsession coming true).
- **Specific phobias:** This is the excessive fear of an object or a situation, to the extent that it causes an anxious response such as a panic attack (e.g. school phobia).
- **Separation anxiety disorder:** This disorder involves worrying about being away from home, or about being far away from parents, at a level that is much more severe than normal for a pupil's age.
- **Social phobia:** This is an intense fear of social or performance situations.
- **Agoraphobia:** This refers to a fear of being in situations where escape might be difficult or help would be unavailable if things go wrong.

Depression: Depression refers to feeling excessively low or sad. Depression can significantly affect a pupil's ability to develop, learn or maintain and sustain friendships. Depression can often lead to other issues such as behavioural problems. Generally, a diagnosis of depression will refer to one of the following:

- **Major depressive disorder (MDD):** A pupil with MDD will show several depressive symptoms to the extent that they impair work, social or personal functioning.
- **Dysthymic disorder:** This is less severe than MDD and characterised by a pupil experiencing a daily depressed mood for at least two years.

Hyperkinetic disorders: Hyperkinetic disorders refer to a pupil who is excessively easily distracted, impulsive or inattentive. If a pupil is diagnosed with a hyperkinetic disorder, it will be one of the following:

- **Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD):** This has three characteristic types of behaviour: inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. While some children show the signs of all three

characteristics, which is called 'combined type ADHD', other children diagnosed show signs of only inattention, hyperactivity or impulsiveness.

- **Hyperkinetic disorder:** This is a more restrictive diagnosis but is broadly similar to severe combined type ADHD, in that signs of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness must all be present. The core symptoms must also have been present from before the age of seven, and must be evident in two or more settings, e.g. at school and home.

Attachment disorders: Attachment disorders refer to the excessive distress experienced when a child is separated from a special person in their life, like a parent. Pupils suffering from attachment disorders can struggle to make secure attachments with peers. Researchers generally agree that there are four main factors that influence attachment disorders, these are:

- Opportunity to establish a close relationship with a primary caregiver.
- The quality of caregiving.
- The child's characteristics.
- Family context.

Eating disorders: Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses which affect an individual's relationship with food. Eating disorders often emerge when worries about weight begin to dominate a person's life.

Substance misuse: Substance misuse is the use of harmful substances, e.g. drugs and alcohol.

Deliberate self-harm: Deliberate self-harm is a person intentionally inflicting physical pain upon themselves.

Post-traumatic stress: Post-traumatic stress is recurring trauma due to experiencing or witnessing something deeply shocking or disturbing. If symptoms persist, a person can develop post-traumatic stress disorder.

3. Roles and responsibilities

All school staff work together to be responsible for:

Preventing mental health and wellbeing difficulties: By creating a safe and calm environment, where mental health problems are less likely to occur, the school can improve the mental health and wellbeing of the 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.

Identifying mental health and wellbeing difficulties: When leadership equip staff with the knowledge required, early and accurate identification of emerging problems is enabled.

Providing early support for pupils experiencing mental health and wellbeing difficulties: By raising awareness and employing efficient referral processes, the SENCo/InCo can help pupils access evidence-based early support and interventions.

Accessing specialist support to assist pupils with mental health and wellbeing difficulties: By working effectively with external agencies, the school can provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.

Identifying and supporting pupils with SEND: As part of this duty, the school considers how to use SEND resources to provide support for pupils with mental health difficulties that amount to SEND.

Identifying where wellbeing concerns represent safeguarding concerns: Where mental health and wellbeing concerns could be an indicator of abuse, neglect or exploitation, the school will ensure that appropriate safeguarding referrals are made in line with the Child Protection Procedures Policy.

Taking all necessary steps to ensure that pupils with SEMH difficulties are not discriminated against, harassed or victimised.

Establishing and maintaining a culture of high expectations and including pupils with SEMH difficulties in all opportunities that are available to other pupils.

Leadership is responsible for:

Fully engaging pupils with SEMH difficulties and their parents when drawing up policies that affect them.

Designating an appropriate member of staff to be the SENCO and coordinating provisions for pupils with SEMH difficulties.

Appointing an individual governor or sub-committee to oversee the school's arrangements for SEMH.

Ensuring there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible SEMH problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.

The headteacher is responsible for:

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.

On an annual basis, carefully reviewing the quality of teaching for pupils at risk of underachievement, as 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.

The **mental health lead** is responsible for:

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.

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 board 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.

Providing professional guidance to colleagues about mental health and working closely with staff members, parents and other agencies, including SEMH charities.

Leading mental health CPD.

The SENCO is responsible for:

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.

Providing professional guidance to colleagues about mental health and working closely with staff members, parents and other agencies, including SEMH charities.

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.

Endeavouring to secure the special educational provision called for by a pupil's SEMH difficulties.

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.

Collaborating with the governing board, headteacher and the mental health **lead** to determine the strategic development of SEMH policies and provisions in the school.

Ensuring that those teaching or working with pupils with SEMH difficulties are aware of their needs and have arrangements in place to meet them.

Undertaking day-to-day responsibilities for the successful operation of the SEMH Policy.

Ensuring arrangements are in place to support pupils with SEMH difficulties.

Teaching staff are responsible for:

Identifying, assessing and organising provision for all pupils with SEMH difficulties, whether or not they have an EHC plan.

Being aware of the signs of SEMH difficulties.

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.

Being aware of the needs, outcomes sought and support provided to any pupils with SEMH difficulties.

Keeping the SenCo or Headteacher up-to-date with any changes in behaviour, academic developments and causes of concern.

4. <u>Creating a supportive whole-school culture</u>

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

The school utilises various strategies to support pupils who are at risk of developing SEMH problems, including:

- Teaching about mental health and wellbeing through curriculum subjects such as PSHCE and RSHE
- Learning Mentor
- Green Room
- Positive classroom management
- Developing pupils' social skills
- Working with parents
- Peer support

The school's Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying and Hate Policy include measures to prevent and tackle bullying. The school ensures that there are clear policies and processes in place to reduce stigma and make pupils feel comfortable enough to discuss mental health concerns.

5. <u>Staff training</u>

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

The headteacher promotes 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 are in place to help staff who identify SEMH problems in pupils escalate issues through clear referral and accountability systems.

Staff receive training to ensure they know what support is available for pupils and how to refer pupils to such support where needed.

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

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

All assessments are in line with the provisions outlined in the school's **SEND Policy**.

Staff members understand that persistent mental health difficulties can lead to a pupil developing SEND. If this occurs, the SENCo ensures that correct provisions are implemented to provide the best learning conditions for the pupil, such as providing school counselling. Parents are involved in any decision-making concerning what support the pupil needs.

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:

- discuss concerns regarding SEMH difficulties with the parents of pupils who have SEMH difficulties.
- consider all previous assessments and progress over time, and then refer the pupil to the appropriate services.
- take any concerns expressed by parents, other pupils, colleagues and the pupil in question seriously.
- are aware of factors that put pupils at risk of SEMH difficulties, such as low self-esteem, physical illnesses, academic difficulties and family problems.
- are aware that risks are cumulative and that exposure to multiple risk factors can increase the risk of SEMH difficulties.
- promote resilience to help encourage positive SEMH.
- understand that familial loss or separation, significant changes in a pupil's life or traumatic events are likely to cause SEMH difficulties.
- understand 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.
- understand that where SEMH difficulties may lead to a pupil developing SEND, it could result in a pupil requiring an EHC plan.
- Manage poor behaviour is managed in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.
- 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.
- 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.

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, usually their class teacher, who can spot where disruptive or unusual behaviour may need investigating and addressing.

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

7. 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
- Previously LAC (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.

8. 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
In the pupil	Genetic influences Low IQ and learning disabilities Specific development delay or neuro-diversity 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 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	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
In the school	Bullying including online (cyber bullying)	Clear policies on behaviour and bullying

	Discrimination Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships Deviant peer influences Peer pressure Peer-on-peer abuse Poor pupil-to-teacher/school staff relationships	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
In the community	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	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:

Speech	Behaviour	Mood
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	

9. 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.

10. SEMH intervention and support

The curriculum for PSHE focusses 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 is offered to pupils who require it.

Relevant external services are utilised where appropriate, e.g. MindEd, Rethink or ThinkTwice.

The school develops and maintains pupils' social skills, for example, in the Green Room.

Where appropriate, the school supports parents in the management and development of their child.

When in-school intervention is not appropriate, referrals and commissioning support will take the place of in-school interventions. The school will continue to support the pupil as much as possible throughout the process.

Serious cases of SEMH difficulties are referred to CAMHS. To ensure referring pupils to CAMHS is effective, staff 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 CAMHS specialist to make the referral process as quick and efficient as possible
- Understand the criteria that are used by CAMHS in determining whether a pupil needs their services
- 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

The school commissions individual health and support services directly for pupils who require additional help. The services commissioned are suitably accredited and are able to demonstrate that they will improve outcomes for pupils.

The school implements the following approach to interventions:

- Interventions are structured in a way that addresses behavioural issues through education and training programmes.
- Parental training programmes are, where appropriate, combined with the pupil's intervention to promote problem-solving skills and positive social behaviours.
- 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 sticker system for rewards or changing seating arrangements.

Through the curriculum, pupils are taught how to:

- Build self-esteem and a positive self-image.
- Foster the ability to self-reflect and problem-solve.
- Protect against self-criticism and social perfectionism.
- Foster self-reliance and the ability to act and think independently.
- Create opportunities for positive interaction with others.
- Get involved in school life and related decision-making.

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.
- The creation of an IHP – a statutory duty for schools when caring for pupils with complex medical needs.
- Seeking professional mental health recommendations regarding medication.
- Family support and/or therapy where recommended by mental health professionals.

11. Suicide concern intervention and support

Where a pupil discloses suicidal thoughts or a teacher has a concern about a pupil, teachers should:

- Listen carefully, remembering it can be difficult for the pupil to talk about their thoughts and feelings.
- Respect confidentiality, only disclosing information on a need-to-know basis.
- Be non-judgemental, making sure the pupil knows they are being taken seriously.
- Be open, providing the pupil a chance to be honest about their true intentions.
- Supervise the pupil closely whilst referring the pupil to the DSL for support.
- Record details of their observations or discussions and share them with the DSLand record on MyConcerns.

Once suicide concerns have been referred to the DSL, local safeguarding procedures are followed and the pupil's parents are contacted. Medical professionals, such as the pupil's GP, are notified as needed. The DSL and any other relevant staff members, alongside the pupil and their parents, work

together to create a safety plan outlining how the pupil is kept safe and the support available.

Safety plans are always created in accordance with advice from external services and the pupil themselves, and are reviewed regularly by the **DSL**.

12.Commissioning local services

The school commissions appropriately trained, supervised and insured external providers who work within agreed policy frameworks and are accountable to a professional body with a clear complaints procedure.

The LA has a multi-agency Local Transformation Plan setting out how children's mental health services are being improved. The school feeds into this to improve local provision.

13.Working with parents

The school works with parents wherever possible to ensure that a collaborative approach is utilised which combines in-school support with at-home support. The school ensures that pupils and parents are aware of the mental health support services available from the school. Parents and pupils may be expected to seek and receive support elsewhere, including from their GP, NHS services, trained professionals working in CAMHS, voluntary organisations and other sources.

14.Behaviour and exclusions

When exclusion is a possibility, the school considers contributing factors, which could include mental health difficulties. Where underlying factors are likely to have contributed to the pupil's behaviour, the school considers whether action can be taken to address the underlying causes of the disruptive behaviour, rather than issue an exclusion. If a pupil has SEND or is a looked-after child, permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort.

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

15.Safeguarding

All staff are aware that SEMH issues can, in some cases, be an indicator that a pupil has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

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