

Who we are

Pine Green Academy

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September 2023-4

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Pine Green Academy is a SEMH school for pupils aged 7-16 that serves the community of Wolverhampton and the surrounding areas.

What is SEMH?

(‘Social, Emotional and Mental Health’ (SEMH) is a category of Special Education Need that was formally recognised by the Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice in 2014. Students who experience SEMH difficulties may display atypical or adverse behaviour and may do so for a number of reasons.

At Pine Green, we regard normative and atypical behaviour as a form of communication; quite often our students will struggle to tell us that they have difficulties or are able to say what those difficulties are. With this approach we seek to understand the nature of atypical behaviour, seek to remove barriers for learning and develop an education that meets students at the point of need. This is at the core of everything we do at Pine Green.

It must also be recognised that the category of SEMH includes ‘Mental Health’. Although the use of this term needs to be carefully managed (not least with the young people themselves) it includes a vast range of conditions and difficulties that students may be experiencing or coming to terms with.

How is SEMH expressed by our pupils?

Our pupils may have difficulties with their emotional and social development. This may include immature social skills and our students might find it difficult to make and sustain healthy relationships. Our students are likely to demonstrate behaviours characteristic of ‘fight or flight’ responses; where the young person may become withdrawn or isolated or display challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour.

SEMH can manifest as difficulties relating to problems of mood (anxiety or depression), problems of conduct (oppositional defiance and more severe conduct problems including aggression), self-harming, substance abuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained.

Some children and young people may have recognised disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), pervasive development disorder, an anxiety disorder, or, more rarely, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Our students may also display difficulties with attachment and may have experienced early childhood trauma which may inform the atypical or challenging behaviours that they might display.

We also offer provision to some students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder who have accompanying behavioural challenges that mean placements in other special settings are not suitable.

Increasingly, since covid, students are presenting with cognition and learning difficulties as well as SEMH difficulties

Behaviours that may indicate underlying difficulties include:

Active behaviours

- *Non-compliance*
- *Mood swings*
- *Impulsivity*
- *Perceived injustices*
- *Physical aggression*
- *Verbal aggression*

Passive behaviours

- *Anxiety*
- *Low mood*
- *Being withdrawn*
- *Poor personal presentation*
- *Refusal to accept praise*
- *Avoiding risks*
- *Failure to engage*
- *Lethargy/apathy*
- *Task avoidance*
- *Speech anxiety/reluctance to speak*

Currently, the school population is largely characterised by students who are male and predominantly (although not exclusively) display 'active behaviours'. We have sought to build a school that is truly inclusive and for a full range of 'Social, Emotional & Mental Health' needs. As such we are support students students with eating disorders, attachment difficulties, anxiety difficulties and those with ASD. Typically, students access Pine Green with multiple conditions.

Additionally, many students – if not all – have had substantive difficulties accessing education and have extensive gaps in knowledge and skills which enact further barriers to education.

Causes of SEMH

The causes of these difficulties are vast and complex. Some mental health difficulties will be experienced over a long period of time, other difficulties will be more transitory in nature. Some students will experience difficulties caused by their biology; others will experience cognitive difficulties. Our students may also have experienced adverse childhood experiences; traumatic events or have experienced neglect. We recognise in line with a biopsychosocial approach, that these experiences and difficulties interact with each other and may contribute to more pronounced difficulties. Biology may predispose individuals to a particular behaviour and affect the way we think. The way we think affects the way we act. These actions, if ingrained in our behaviour will affect the neurological development and functioning of the brain.

Nevertheless, we are particularly sensitive to the most common causes of SEMH are believed to include the following: Attachment history (lack of acceptance /needs being met /emotional warmth / positive feedback / managing emotional response by caregiver); Trauma history (domestic violence, abuse, neglect, bullying, violent crime, social exclusion, hate prejudice, loss); Current family dynamics; Other systems around the child (school, community, society).

How students deal with difficulties

The behaviour of our students is different from the behaviour you would see in a mainstream environment. At times, behaviour can be challenging. Nevertheless, with our awareness that 'all behaviour is communication', we are able to support students in verbalising the difficulties that are causing behaviours.

All students have personalised ways of dealing with these difficulties. Some students will seek out members of staff for individualised support, some need space to self-regulate and many others need support. Students may need space away from others or outside the building where they will be monitored appropriately.

Where students are not able to independently regulate our Behaviour Team assist in supporting students who are dealing with emotional difficulties as well as proactively building resilience and support.

Pine Green Cohort Analysis

Difficulties

Incidences of Difficulty	Count of SEN Need Type
Cognition and Learning	20
Hearing Impairment	1
Moderate Learning Difficulty	18
Multi-Sensory Impairment	13
No second need	39
Other Difficulty/Disability	1
Physical Disability	1
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	121
Specific Learning Difficulty	1
Speech, Language or Communication Need	37
Grand Total	252

Formal Diagnoses

Incidences of Difficulty	Count of Diagnosis
Asperger Syndrome	2
Attachment Disorder	3
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	59
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	21
Dyslexic	1
Dyspraxia	7
None	140
Oppositional Defiant Disorder	7
Other	1
Pathological Demand Avoidance	1
Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome	1
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	1
Sensory Processing Disorder	6
Tourette's	3
Grand Total	253