

SEMH definition

Unresolved trauma or unmet emotional needs, affecting the child's internal view of themselves and/or others, which adversely impacts on self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills and the ability to empathise with another. They have difficulties making and maintaining relationships and recognising and engaging in socially acceptable behaviour.

May be as a result of: abuse, neglect, exploitation, unidentified or unaddressed additional need, unmet Parental needs, complicated bereavement or loss, exposure to criminal activity.

Resulting in: insecure attachment; mental health need such as anxiety, conduct disorder, depression; issues with executive function, hormone regulation, sensory processing, motor skills, sleep, digestion, heart rate.

We may see: low level of resilience, inability to trust self and others, feeling emotionally and physically unsafe, low self esteem, lack of confidence (often masked by outward appearances), seeking relationships (often described as attention seeking).

As a result of feelings of: insecurity, frustration, fear.

Leading to anxiety.

Presenting behaviours can be:

Anger/acting out	fight
Withdrawal	flight
dissociative	freeze

May manifest in: isolation, self harm, substance misuse, eating disorders, physical symptoms, toileting issues, "challenging, disruptive or disturbing" behaviour, sexualised behaviour.

What this may look like in school: defiance, fear of failure, reluctance to engage in work activities, lack of engagement with people and curriculum, verbal and/or physical aggression, work avoidance, off task or out of seat, leaving class and school.

What is NOT a primary SEMH need?

Speech and Language or Communication difficulty
Sensory impairment eg hearing, sight
Dyslexia, learning needs
Developmental Delay, failure to thrive
Social care or Parenting need
Side effects of medication
Issues around identity or self image
ASC
medical need

This is an SEN need when the SEMH means that the pupil "has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age" (SBC Guidance Criteria for Statutory Assessment 2014).