



North Yorkshire Inclusion Service

Quality First Teaching Approaches to Support SEMH Needs

Teachers are responsible for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils are supported by teaching assistants or specialist staff. Quality First Teaching is the best approach for *all* pupils, including those with **Social, Emotional and Mental Health** needs.

Identification

A pupil with SEMH needs *may*:

- Have attachment needs or find social interactions tricky
- Become withdrawn or isolated
- Display high levels of worry or low mood
- Display challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour
- Have difficulties attending to tasks or maintaining focus - and may have ADHD or other neurodevelopmental need

Guiding Principles

- Encourage **Pupil Voice**. Give pupils a say in how they are supported so they feel **safe**
- Start each day with a **clean slate**
- Adopt a **growth mindset** : normalise failures and encourage pupils to have a go
- **Use consistent** language, approaches & routines
- Promote **metacognition** to help pupils and staff understand and manage their responses

Strategies and Specific Approaches

QFT to support pupils who are anxious or present with challenging or disruptive behaviour

- Understand that behaviour is a method of communication. What is the pupil trying to communicate? Any triggers?
- Make instructions and expectations clear and explicit.
- Recruit a range of peers to support through example.
- Give the pupil ownership, control, choices and decision-making powers to promote responsibility and self-esteem.
- Shine a light on the behaviour and teach appropriate strategies for managing the emotions.
- Develop a collaborative relationship with parents/carers.
- Encourage pupils to identify triggers and physical symptoms that demonstrate escalating levels of arousal and provide opportunities for pupils to adopt coping strategies.
- Maintain close contact with home to track patterns of behaviour in other environments and successful strategies. How a pupil acts in school may not be indicative of how they are coping at home and vice versa.
- Start with a clean slate each session and don't take presenting behaviours personally.
- Identify any sensory difficulties impacting on behaviour.

QFT to support pupils who may be withdrawn, depressed or have difficulty with social interactions

- Provide opportunities to discuss emotions and feelings across the school day and systems that allow children to seek out adults to support them with difficult emotions.
- Promote a whole school strategy of looking out for each other's wellbeing and talking about feelings, e.g. using Compass Buzz
- Introduce a feelings box within the classroom. This can be filled with sensory objects and can help pupils regulate their feelings at challenging times. For older pupils, encourage journals, drawing or use of emojis to help self-expression.
- Start each day with a positive compliment session or use a check-in process that focuses on well-being.
- Learn each pupil's triggers, understand their lived experience and look beyond their behaviours. Often there are unresolved issues that sit beneath.
- Make time within each day for some high quality PHSE and incorporate SEAL resources into dedicated PSHE lessons.

QFT to support pupils to maintain attention and focus

- Make sure you have the pupil's full attention – use their name and gain eye contact.
- Place the pupil at the front of the class (or carpet) facing the direction in which you want them to focus.
- Cue the pupil into listening by using their name at the beginning of your instruction, sentence or question.
- Give the pupil time to process what you have said before giving another instruction or more information.
- Give praise to reinforce and encourage good listening and learning behaviour. Telling them what to do rather than what not to do! Use visual aids to support pupils remember what is expected or required.
- Use a timer to promote attention for a set amount of time.
- Use (but rotate) peer support and consider seating carefully.
- Actively teach listening skills at an age-appropriate level, e.g. look at the speaker, sit nicely, don't interrupt. Try passing an object around the group to indicate who is speaking.
- Ensure instructions are short and clear. Ask the pupil to repeat instructions back to you to confirm understanding.
- Instructions and tasks should be clear, brief, concise and in the correct order where possible. Some pupils may benefit from them being written down and broken into simple steps.
- Use visual support (e.g. gesture, signs, pictures) when giving information or instructions.

Quality First Teaching will be most effective when professionals are mindful of their own SEMH needs. For five practical ideas to boost and maintain your mental health, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-ways-to-mental-wellbeing>

Positive Approaches = Positive Outcomes