



DANESHOLME JUNIOR ACADEMY

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) at Danesholme Junior Academy

What should I do if my child has social, emotional or behavioural difficulties?

Children's well-being is extremely important to us at Danesholme and we spend a lot of time trying to ensure that they feel happy, relaxed and safe at school.

If you are concerned about your child's happiness, well-being or behaviour, either at school or at home, the first person to talk to is probably the class teacher, but any member of staff in school can be spoken to.

Explain what you are worried about and anything you think might be affecting their well-being.

The class teacher may ask one of the following people to attend the meeting or to talk to you:

- Tricia Docherty – our Pastoral Manager, who provides behaviour support and mentoring for children struggling with behaviour or with other aspects of their well-being at school.
- Dawn Reynolds – Special Educational Needs Coordinator, who can refer to outside agencies, such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service).
- Karen Rolf, Becky Bond or Sean Pettit – Principal and Deputy Principals.

If the school has concerns about your child's happiness, well-being or behaviour, they will discuss this with you, either at parents' evening or by asking you for a meeting.

The types of difficulties that parents or teachers might be concerned about may include:

- Children finding it difficult to make or maintain friendships
- Children who appear disengaged or withdrawn in school
- Children who appear to have emotional difficulties, such as crying easily or losing their temper
- Children who find it hard to settle in class and are constantly talking, shouting out or fidgeting
- Children who are overly dependent on some adults or peers
- Children who find it difficult to adhere to the school's behavioural expectations
- Children who are hungry or tired and lethargic

In school we take the view that a child's behaviour is always trying to communicate something to us and that we need to explore and understand what it is they are trying to communicate.

What happens if my child has a social, emotional or behavioural difficulty?

The school has a wide-variety of strategies that can be used to help children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Social difficulties

If your child has difficulty with friendships or other social aspects of school the following strategies may be discussed with you:

- The class teacher may try to help your child make an appropriate friend by sitting them with a particular child, giving them a job to do together or making them talk partners.
- Teaching assistants or dinner supervisors may be asked to look out for your child on the playground and help them to get involved in the games and activities that are on offer.
- A dinner time or after school club might be suggested for your child, to bring them into contact with other children with similar interests.
- A social skills intervention to help your child to develop skills such as sharing, talking and listening to others and playing together, might be set up.
- Our Lunch Club provision might be offered, where children have a supervised and safe place to play at lunchtime, closely supervised by adults.
- Referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) might also be suggested.

Emotional difficulties

If your child is experiencing emotional difficulties the following strategies might be offered:

- The class teacher and teaching assistants may make time to talk to the child individually to discuss what they are finding difficult and to work out any ways that they can be helped to feel happier at school.
- The Pastoral Manager may talk to the child individually and check up with them regularly so that they know they have someone they can talk about their difficulties.
- The Pastoral manager may run some 1:1 sessions with them to look at the links between their thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- A group may be set up to tackle a particular set of needs. At various times we have had an anger management Group, an anxiety group, self-esteem and confidence building group.
- We have some staff who use Drawing and Talking techniques, which are a way of tackling children's emotional difficulties through drawing and talking activities.
- For severe emotional difficulties, referral to an outside agency such as the Community Paediatrician or CAMHS (the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) might be discussed with parents.

Behavioural difficulties

Some children need more help than others to achieve the behavioural expectations of the school. We have a clear Behaviour Policy (see the Policy section on the website), which children are well aware of and all staff adhere to. Rewards and sanctions are administered as fairly and calmly as possible. Children's successes are celebrated (through rewards such as house points and the weekly Assembly) and a clear set of sanctions is imposed if a child's behaviour doesn't meet our standards.

Teachers have a wide range of behavioural techniques to encourage children to behave appropriately, with an emphasis on positive behaviour management strategies such as: praising a child nearby who is doing the right thing; setting small achievable goals (such as not calling out for five minutes) and rewarding the achievement of them; reward charts for specific behaviours and keeping children active and interested in lessons.

Some children need more individualised support strategies, such as visual timetables, visual choice boards, reward and countdown charts, fiddle toys, sensory breaks, sitting spots for the carpet and work stations (closed working areas to minimise distractions).

A few children may need 1:1 adult support in the classroom or playground to administer these strategies and to help them to follow the behavioural rules.

Children who are going through a phase of frequently being in trouble for low-level disruptive behaviour in class and are triggering a number of sanctions may be placed on an Individual Behaviour Plan.

This involves a meeting with all staff involved and often the parents, to identify the triggers for inappropriate behaviour and draw up a plan for how to respond to these behaviours.

Referral to CAMHS or a specialist outreach teacher from local behavioural specialist provision might be suggested if the child's behaviour does not improve with the use of these strategies. This referral will be discussed with the child's parents first.

Schools also have access to the SEMH panel. This is a panel of professions who meet and listen to the background of the child's difficulties presented by school. In some cases the SEMH panel are able to offer support in the form of periods of time in specialist nurture provision or in school support.