BSquared

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Framework Guide

BSquared Ltd
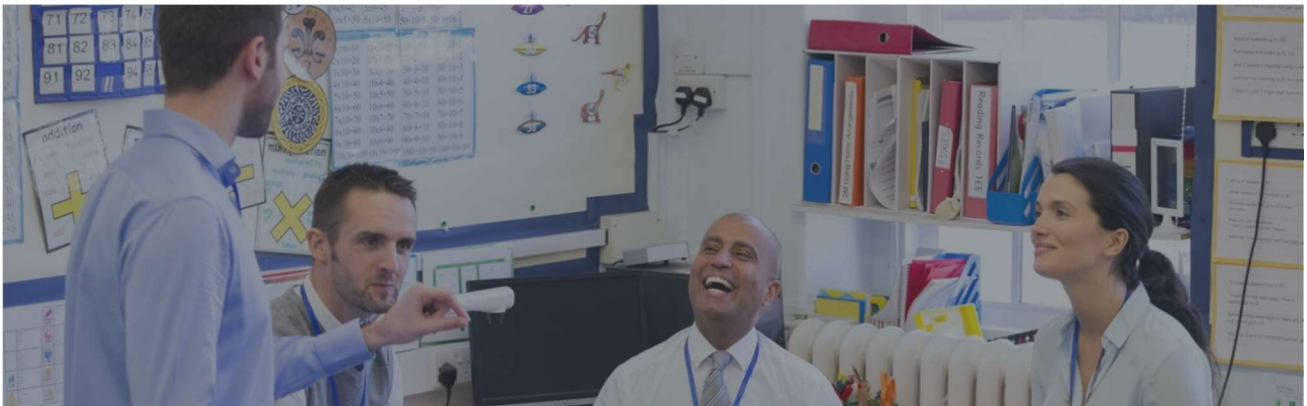
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Introduction

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs are a growing area of focus in education today. SEMH is complex. It covers everything from recognising and managing emotions, to building relationships, making decisions, and understanding the social world around us to solve social problems and achieve social goals.

SEMH is about how individuals understand themselves, manage their emotions, interact with others, and make positive choices.

Good SEMH skills are critical for learning, relationships, and overall wellbeing. We know that when students are emotionally regulated, socially aware, and confident, they are far more likely to engage in learning, build positive relationships, and thrive both inside and outside of school.

Unfortunately, a growing number of children and young people are struggling with their social, emotional, and mental health.

- In 2023, NHS Digital reported that **1 in 5** children and young people aged 8 to 25 in England had a **probable mental health disorder**.

- Children with SEND are at an even higher risk of experiencing poor mental health, difficulties with emotional regulation, and challenges with building and maintaining relationships.

- Emotional and social difficulties are now one of the most common reasons for **SEN Support** in schools.

Supporting SEMH isn't just about addressing difficulties once they arise. It's about **teaching children and young people the skills they need** to recognise their emotions, express themselves appropriately, regulate their feelings, empathise with others, and make positive social choices.

SEMH development touches every part of life:

- **Emotion Recognition** – noticing and understanding how we feel

- **Expression** – sharing our emotions in healthy ways

- **Regulation** – managing our feelings to stay calm and focused

- **Social Skills** – building friendships, communicating effectively, making decisions, and navigating social expectations

Just like with communication, SEMH skills can be taught, supported, and strengthened – but only if we notice where help is needed and put the right support in place.

This framework breaks SEMH down into clear areas, helping schools **assess**, **monitor**, and **support** pupils' development in a structured and meaningful way.

Working with Richard Daniel Curtis

When we developed our Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) framework, we worked closely with **Richard Daniel Curtis** to shape and refine it.

Richard is an internationally renowned social, emotional and behavioural expert, with a background in psychology and education. He has spent years working directly with children and young people, as well as supporting schools to improve their provision around emotional wellbeing and behaviour. His research interest is in social and emotional development across the lifespan and he has been involved in the development of several social and emotional measures. Richard was one of three mental health experts brought in by the Department for Education in England to support the development of mental wellbeing teaching resources for the statutory curriculum.

Richard provided clear guidance on how schools can use the SEMH framework effectively to support pupil development, and how it can strengthen early identification and intervention for those with emerging social, emotional or mental health needs.

Using Evisense to Support SEMH

The SEMH framework works seamlessly with our evidence platform, **Evisense**. Evisense is easy to use, with a social media-style interface that makes uploading and sharing evidence quick and intuitive.

Because Evisense allows **unlimited users**, you can give access to a pupil's support network — including teachers, support staff, and parents or carers — at no extra cost.

This means staff and families can work together, sharing the small but important moments that show emotional and social development, whether they happen at school or at home.

Regular communication is vital for supporting pupils' SEMH needs. It helps everyone understand how a pupil is feeling, what strategies are working, and what the next steps should be.

In reality, this communication isn't always easy — busy schedules, school transport, and limited pastoral support time can all get in the way. Evisense helps overcome these barriers.

- Staff and parents can upload photos, videos, and comments showing a pupil using emotional regulation strategies, building friendships, or coping with challenges.

- Quick selfie videos can be used to share updates, celebrate successes, or ask for help with difficulties.

- Everyone involved can see the full picture of the pupil's SEMH development — not just what happens in school hours.

By bringing together evidence from home and school, Evisense helps create a **more complete and holistic view** of each pupil's social, emotional and mental health journey, supporting more personalised and consistent support.

Summary of key benefits for SEMH with Evisense:

- **Stronger collaboration** between staff and parents/carers

- **Captures emotional and social "in the moment" achievements**

- **Builds a shared understanding** of triggers, strategies, and next steps

- **Gives pupils a consistent support system** across home and school

- **Makes invisible SEMH progress visible** through real-world evidence

Framework Structure

The SEMH framework is designed to sit alongside the other frameworks your school already uses to assess Cognition and Learning. Each of our frameworks has its own levelling structure, most are built around the relevant statutory guidance and any other departmental advice that applies, some we have free reign to choose a structure that makes sense in that context. The image on the next page shows how the SEMH framework compares to our other frameworks.

Framework Comparison Chart

B SQUARED STANDARD SCORE	B SQUARED ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS								P LEVELS AND NC LEVELS (COMPARISON)
	Early Steps (2022)	Engagement Steps	Progression Steps & Preparing for Adulthood	Primary Steps	Steps 4 Life	Autism Progress	SEMH	Communication & Interaction	
15 - 15.5									NC 7
14 - 15			Progression Step 10				SEMH Step 11	Level 16	
13 - 14					Level 2	Level 17			NC 6
12 - 13			Progression Step 9	Greater Depth & Breadth			SEMH Step 10	Level 15	
11 - 12						Level 16			NC 5
10 - 11			Progression Step 8	Year 6	Level 1	Level 15	SEMH Step 9	Level 14	NC 4
9 - 10				Year 5					NC 3
8 - 9			Progression Step 7	Year 4	Entry 3	Level 14	SEMH Step 8	Level 13	
7 - 8				Year 3					NC 2a / NC 2b
6 - 7			Progression Step 6 (PKS 6)	Year 2	Entry 2	Level 13	SEMH Step 7	Level 12	NC 2c / NC 1a
5 - 6			Progression Step 5 (PKS 5) / Progression Step 4 (PKS 4)	Year 1	Entry 1	Level 12	SEMH Step 6	Level 11	NC 1b / NC 1c
4 - 5	Early Learning Goals (ELG) / Children in Reception		Progression Step 3 (PKS 3)	Primary Step 3	Step 7	Level 11	SEMH Step 5	Level 10	P8
3 - 4	3 & 4 year olds		Progression Step 2 (PKS 2)	Primary Step 2		Level 10	SEMH Step 4	Level 9	P7
2 - 3	2½–3 years	Engagement Step 6			Step 6	Level 9	SEMH Step 3	Level 8	P6
	2–2½ years		Progression Step 1 (PKS 1)	Primary Step 1				Level 7	
						Level 8			P5
1 - 2	18–24 months						SEMH Step 2	Level 6	P4
		Engagement Step 5			Step 5	Level 7			
	12–18 months							Level 5	
						Level 6			P3(ii)
0 - 1	9–12 months	Engagement Step 4			Step 4	Level 5	SEMH Step 1	Level 4	P3(i)
	6–9 months					Level 4		Level 3	P2(ii)
	3–6 months	Engagement Step 3			Step 3	Level 3		Level 2	P2(i)
	0–3 months	Engagement Step 2			Step 2	Level 2		Level 1	P1(ii)
		Engagement Step 1			Step 1	Level 1			P1(i)

Framework Content

Emotion

Recognition

Recognition of emotion refers to the ability to identify and understand our own emotions. It involves being aware of our own emotional states, such as happiness, sadness, anger, or fear. It is being able to recognise and label our own emotions accurately, giving the ability to have a better understanding of internal experiences.

Expression

Expression of emotion encompasses how we communicate and outwardly display emotions to others. This can involve verbal and non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and gestures. Our ability to effectively express emotions allows us to convey feelings to others and seek support or understanding when needed.

Regulation

Emotional regulation refers to our capacity to manage and control emotions in a healthy and adaptive manner. It involves recognising the intensity and duration of our emotions and implementing strategies to modulate or adjust emotional responses appropriately. Effective emotional regulation skills enable us to cope with stress, frustration, or other emotional challenges in a constructive way, minimizing disruptions to well-being and learning.

Recognition in others

Recognising emotions in others involves the ability to understand and empathise with the emotions expressed by others in the social environment. It includes perceiving and interpreting non-verbal cues and social signals that indicate another person's emotional state. Being able to recognise and empathise with others' emotions allows us to navigate social interactions, respond appropriately, and develop positive relationships.

Social

Developing and Maintaining Relationships/Friendships

Sociability involves the ability to initiate and develop relationships with peers and maintain positive friendships. This includes a capacity to approach others, engage in reciprocal interactions, and demonstrate appropriate social behaviours. Those with strong sociability skills may actively seek out opportunities for social connection, show interest in others, and engage in cooperative play or shared activities.

Communicating with Others

Whilst separated from the ability to communicate, social competence is closely linked to effective communication skills; the need to express ourselves clearly, listen actively, and understand the verbal and non-verbal cues of their others. Social communication involves both expressive and receptive abilities. Expressive skills allow us to share thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others, while receptive skills enable us to comprehend and interpret the messages conveyed by others during social interactions.

Social & Emotional Cognition

Social Decision Making

Social and emotional competence also encompasses the ability to engage in purposeful social decision-making. This involves both setting meaningful social goals and navigating the challenges that arise in interactions with others. Pupils with strong social decision-making skills can identify areas for improvement, formulate goals to enhance their relationships and communication, and develop strategies to achieve them. They are also able to recognise and respond to social challenges, resolve conflicts constructively, and consider the perspectives of others. These combined skills support assertiveness, cooperation, and the ability to manage social situations effectively.

Moral Reasoning

Social and emotional cognition also involves the development of moral reasoning — the ability to make ethical decisions while understanding the perspectives of others. This includes distinguishing right from wrong, empathising with others, and recognising that people may hold different beliefs, intentions, and emotions. Those with well-developed moral reasoning can make fair and responsible judgments, consider the impact of their actions on others, and engage in thoughtful perspective-taking. These skills support empathy, ethical behaviour, and positive social interactions.

Attention and Social Expectations

Social and emotional competence includes the awareness of social expectations and the ability to focus attention on relevant social cues. It involves understanding and adhering to social norms, cues, rules, and expectations in different contexts. Those with strong attention to social expectations can adapt their behaviour accordingly and navigate social situations effectively.

Social Awareness

Social and emotional competence also encompasses social awareness — the ability to understand both oneself and others. This includes recognising one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and identity, as well as perceiving and interpreting the emotions, thoughts, and perspectives of others. Those with strong social awareness demonstrate self-confidence, self-esteem, and emotional insight, alongside the ability to read facial expressions, body language, and social cues. These combined skills enable individuals to respond empathetically and appropriately, supporting positive relationships and effective social interactions.

Using the SEMH Framework with Other Frameworks

The SEMH framework is designed to work seamlessly alongside our other assessment frameworks. When we created it, we carefully included relevant content from our existing frameworks to ensure everything connects and supports a whole-child view.

This brings several benefits:

- **Pre-populated skills:** When you start using the SEMH framework, it will already include any skills a pupil has previously achieved or is working towards in other frameworks.

- **Skills syncing:** As pupils achieve skills within the SEMH framework, these will automatically update in the other frameworks – and vice versa. This helps teachers, pastoral teams, and external professionals collaborate more effectively.

- **Evidence sharing:** Any evidence or comments linked to skills that appear in multiple frameworks will sync across them, so everyone can easily view updates, whether they're focused on academic, social, emotional, or wider development.

This all helps create a **more holistic picture** of each pupil's progress and achievements — with every professional able to view the pupil's development through their own specialist lens.

Connecting Steps: Simple, Powerful Assessment

All of our frameworks — including SEMH — are delivered through **Connecting Steps**, our intuitive online assessment system. Connecting Steps is designed to be **simple to use**, even for staff who are new to assessment or not that tech savvy.

The system uses a clear, user-friendly layout with simple navigation, making it quick to record what a pupil has achieved, and see the next steps.

Teachers, support staff, therapists, and senior leaders can all access the information they need without complex training — Connecting Steps does the hard work behind the scenes, letting you focus on supporting pupils rather than battling software.

Showing Progress in Different Ways

Connecting Steps doesn't just record a single measure of success — it shows **progress in a variety of ways**, helping you see the bigger picture for each pupil. The system tracks:

- **Small steps of progress** — even where full achievement hasn't yet been reached
- **Depth of learning** — If they are working towards achieving a skill, they may have just encountered it, they need physical support or just prompting. If they have achieved the skill, how confident are they and can they apply those skills in different ways?
- **Lateral progress** — showing where pupils are broadening and strengthening their skills within or across different areas
- **Non-linear progress** — recognising that progress is spikey and uneven. Spikes in development can be celebrated, skills that might otherwise be missed.

Whether you're tracking academic milestones, social development, life skills, or communication needs, Connecting Steps gives you the tools to show how every pupil is growing — even when that growth doesn't fit a straight line.

It ensures that **all progress is visible**, celebrated, and used to inform next steps in a meaningful way.

For more information about Connecting Steps or any of our frameworks, please visit the link below, to book a FREE online meeting at a time that works for you.

www.bsquared.co.uk/meeting