

SENbetweeners Hub UK: Standardised Support Framework

For Parents, Carers & Educators Supporting Undiagnosed SEMH & Learning Differences

Purpose & Definition

This framework establishes a formal protocol for supporting "SENbetweeners"—children and young people who demonstrate persistent patterns of Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) challenges or cognitive/communication learning differences, yet currently lack a formal medical diagnosis or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

This framework is fully aligned with UK statutory guidance to ensure rights-based, evidence-led support is accessible from Early Years through to Post-16 education.

Core Legal Principles

The Primary Directive: Diagnosis is NOT a prerequisite for support.

- **Children and Families Act 2014:** Section 21 defines special educational provision as support that is "additional to or different from" standard arrangements. Schools are legally mandated to use their "best endeavours" to provide this support.
- **SEND Code of Practice 2015:** This statutory guidance mandates the "Graduated Approach" (Assess, Plan, Do, Review) for all pupils with Special Educational Needs, irrespective of a formal diagnosis.
- **Equality Act 2010:** Schools have an "anticipatory duty" to make reasonable adjustments for any pupil whose impairment has a substantial, long-term adverse effect on daily activities. This applies regardless of whether a diagnostic label is present.

- **Access Rights:** The absence of a diagnosis or EHCP must never act as a barrier to SEN Support, reasonable adjustments, examination access arrangements, or the initiation of a statutory EHC needs assessment.

Step 1: Identification & Evidence Gathering

Recognition Criteria

Evidence should be gathered based on consistent patterns observed over time (typically six weeks or more) across multiple settings.

- **Learning:** Uneven academic performance, gaps in working memory, slow processing speeds, or difficulty following multi-step instructions.
- **Emotional/Behavioural:** "Masking" (where a child appears regulated at school but experiences "meltdowns" at home), heightened anxiety, avoidance, withdrawal, or perfectionism.
- **Social:** Difficulty interpreting social cues, isolation, challenges with peer integration, or rigid thinking patterns.
- **Physical/Sensory:** Chronic fatigue, hypersensitivity to noise/light/touch, restlessness, or coordination difficulties.

Evidence-Gathering Toolkit

1. **Observation Logs:** Record dates, times, settings, triggers, and successful interventions. These must remain factual and non-judgemental.
2. **Pupil Voice:** Direct accounts from the child regarding what makes learning difficult and what environmental factors increase their anxiety.
3. **Parental Reports:** Documentation of patterns observed outside the educational setting, including sleep, diet, and transitional challenges.
4. **Work Samples:** Reviewing marked work, assessments, and homework to identify cognitive discrepancies.

Step 2: The Graduated Approach

Assess

Involve the Class Teacher, SENCo, parents/carers, and the young person. Map needs across the four broad areas of the SEND Code of Practice:

- Communication & Interaction
- Cognition & Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)
- Sensory and/or Physical Needs

Plan

Develop SMART outcomes (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). Formally document reasonable adjustments such as quiet workspaces, visual timetables, and "chunked" tasks in an Individual Support Plan (ISP) or Provision Map.

Do

Implement agreed support consistently across all settings. Focus on "Quality First Teaching" supplemented by targeted small-group or 1:1 work. Actively reduce the need for "masking" by allowing sensory breaks and movement opportunities.

Review

Conduct formal reviews at least three times per academic year. Evaluate progress against SMART outcomes and refine strategies accordingly. If progress remains insufficient despite evidence-based support, escalation should be considered.

Step 3: Targeted Strategies by Need Type

Category	Primary Strategies
SEMH & Anxiety	Emotional literacy tools, visual emotion scales, co-regulation techniques, and EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) prevention.
Learning Differences	Coloured overlays, sans-serif fonts, speech-to-text tools, visual aids, and chunked instructions.
ADHD & Language	Frequent breaks, active learning, simplified language, and "thinking time" (5–10 seconds).

Transitions & Key Stages

- **Early Years / KS1:** Focus on separation anxiety and sensory routines.
- **KS2:** Focus on organisational tools and social stories for friendship complexity.
- **KS3:** Implement "Transition Passports" and self-advocacy training for secondary environments.
- **KS4:** Evidence gathering for JCQ exam access arrangements and revision planning.

Step 4: Escalation & Next Steps

1. **Formal SEN Support:** Transition to a more rigorously documented and resourced SEN Support stage if standard adjustments are insufficient.

2. **Request Statutory Assessment:** Apply for an EHC needs assessment based on patterns and impact. A diagnosis is not required for this application.
3. **Independent Advice:** Contact **SENDIASS** for free, confidential, and impartial support for families (birth to 25 years).
4. **The Local Offer:** Consult the Local Authority's "Local Offer" website to identify available education, health, and social care services.

Step 5: Rights & Resolution

If support is refused, stakeholders should cite the Anticipatory Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

- **Resolution Path:** School Complaints Procedure → Local Authority Stage → SEND Tribunal (if necessary).
- **Documentation:** Maintain a comprehensive file of all correspondence, meeting notes, and evidence logs.

Implementation Checklist

- ☐ Identify consistent patterns across home and school environments.
- ☐ Gather evidence immediately without waiting for a clinical diagnosis.
- ☐ Initiate the **Assess → Plan → Do → Review** cycle.
- ☐ Formally document reasonable adjustments in a Support Plan.
- ☐ Schedule termly reviews with pupil and family participation.
- ☐ Contact the SENCo and SENDIASS if progress stalls.

Legal Statement

This framework is founded on and fully compliant with English law and statutory guidance:

- **Equality Act 2010:** Section 6 (Definition of Disability) and Sections 20-21 (Duty to make Reasonable Adjustments).
- **Children and Families Act 2014:** Section 21 (Special Educational Provision).

- **SEND Code of Practice 2015:** Statutory requirements for early identification and the graduated approach.

Clarification: A formal medical diagnosis or EHCP is not a legal prerequisite for SEN recognition or entitlement to support. Rights are based on identified need and evidence of disadvantage. This document is for guidance and does not constitute legal advice.

Authorised by:  Person

Date of Issue:  Date

© SENbetweeners Hub UK LTD – Supporting undiagnosed needs, right now.