



## SELF-HARM Policy

**Next to be reviewed: September 2022**

## Introduction

It is almost impossible to say how many young people are self-harming. This is because very few teenagers tell anyone what is going on, so keeping records or having an accurate idea of scale is difficult. It is thought that around 13% of young people may try to hurt themselves on purpose at some point between the ages of 11 and 16, but the actual figure could be much higher (Selfharm.co.uk, 2020<sup>1</sup>).

School staff can play an important role in preventing self-harm and in supporting pupils, peers and parents of pupils currently engaging in self-harm.

## Scope

This document describes the school's approach to self-harm. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

## Aims

- To increase understanding and awareness of self-harm
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with pupils who self-harm
- To provide support to pupils who self-harm and their peers and parents/carers

## Definition of Self-Harm

Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to deliberately cause harm to one's own body, for example:

- Cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin;
- Swallowing inedible objects;
- Taking an overdose of prescription or non-prescription drugs;
- Swallowing hazardous materials or substances;
- Burning or scalding;
- Hair-pulling;

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<sup>1</sup> Selfharm (2020) <https://selfharm.co.uk/get-information/the-facts/self-harm-statistics>

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- Banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body;
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively.

### **Risk Factors**

The following risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a young person particularly vulnerable to self-harm.

#### Individual Factors:

- Depression / anxiety
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Impulsivity
- Drug or alcohol abuse

#### Family Factors

- Unreasonable expectations
- Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Poor parental relationships and arguments
- Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family

#### Social Factors

- Difficulty in making relationships / loneliness
- Being bullied or rejected by peers

### **Warning Signs**

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further advice from either Mr Mellor, designated Safeguarding Lead, Ms Hudson-Frost, deputy DSL or Mrs Del-Grande, a whole school SEMH Co-ordinator.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating / sleeping habits (e.g. pupil may appear overly tired if not sleeping well);
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn;
- Changes in activity and mood e.g. more aggressive or introverted than usual;
- Lowering of academic achievement;
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide;
- Abusing drugs or alcohol;

### **Staff Roles in working with pupils who self-harm**

Pupils may choose to confide in a member of school staff if they are concerned about their own welfare, or that of a peer. It is important to try and maintain a supportive and open attitude – a pupil who has chosen to discuss their concerns with a member of school staff is showing a considerable amount of courage and trust.

Pupils need to be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality. If you consider a pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves then confidentiality cannot be kept. It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept even if a pupil puts pressure on you to do so.

Any member of staff who is aware of a pupil engaging in or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-harm should consult one of the designated safeguarding personnel- Mr Mellor, Ms Hudson-Frost or the designated governor for safeguarding children – Mrs Barr.

Following the report, the designated teacher / governor will decide on the appropriate course of action. This may include:

- Contacting parents / carers;
- Arranging professional assistance e;
- SEMH request for support;
- Immediately removing the pupil from lessons if their remaining in class is likely to cause further distress to themselves or their peers;
- **In the case of an acutely distressed pupil, the immediate safety of the pupil is paramount and an adult should remain with the pupil at all times;**
- **If a pupil has self-harmed in school a First Aider should be called for immediate help.**

### **Further Consideration**

Any meetings with a pupil, their parents or their peers regarding self-harm should be recorded on CPOMS.

This information should be stored in the pupil's child protection file.

It is important to encourage pupils to let you know if one of their group is in trouble, upset or showing signs of self-harming. Friends can worry about betraying confidences so they need to know that self-harm can be very dangerous and that by seeking help and advice for a friend they are taking responsible action and are being a good friend. They should also be aware that their friend will be treated in a caring and supportive manner.

### **Responsibilities**

It is schools responsibility to ensure staff are made aware of self-harm risk factors and warning signs. This will be done through ongoing staff training.

It is also our responsibility to ensure children know how to access support. This will be done through:

- PSHE
- Assemblies
- Posters/ leaflets and promotion of self-help
- Social media
- Pastoral/ SEMH support