



SELF HARM POLICY

Reviewed by: A Jacobs	Date: Sept 2026	Next review: Sept 2027
Approved by: N Tribe	Date: 07 October 2027	

Introduction

Self-harm is an important safeguarding and wellbeing issue for children and young people. Evidence indicates that self-harm occurs among children and young people in the UK, although prevalence estimates vary according to age, definition and methodology. Some groups of children and young people may experience additional vulnerabilities and barriers to accessing support. School staff have an important role in recognising possible self-harm, responding appropriately to concerns, supporting pupils and their families, and ensuring that safeguarding procedures are followed. Schools should also consider the impact of self-harm on peers and provide appropriate support.

Scope

This policy outlines Adcote's approach to self-harm and serves as guidance for all staff, including non-teaching staff and advisory board members.

Aims:

- To provide staff with clear guidance on recognising, responding to and appropriately supporting pupils who may be self-harming, in accordance with the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- To ensure that pupils who may be self-harming, their peers and their parents or carers receive appropriate, timely and compassionate support, with appropriate involvement of external services where required.

Definition of self-harm

For the purposes of this policy, the school adopts the NICE definition:

Self-harm is intentional self-poisoning or injury, irrespective of the apparent purpose.

Self-harm may include, but is not limited to:

- cutting, scratching, scraping or picking the skin
- biting or deliberately injuring the body
- taking an overdose or misusing medication
- swallowing hazardous substances or objects
- burning or scalding
- pulling out hair or eyelashes
- deliberately hitting or banging the body.

This list is not exhaustive. Self-harm does not necessarily indicate suicidal intent, but any concern about self-harm should be taken seriously and staff should consider whether there is an immediate risk to the pupil, including suicidal thoughts, plans or intent.

Repetitive or stereotypical behaviours such as head banging should also be taken seriously and addressed through appropriate safeguarding, health or SEND procedures, although these are not included within the NICE definition of self-harm.

Risk Factors

The following factors, particularly when occurring in combination, may increase a young person's vulnerability to self-harm. The presence of one or more factors does not mean that a young person will self-harm.

Individual factors:

- Depression, anxiety or other mental health difficulties
- Low self-esteem or feelings of hopelessness
- Difficulties with communication, emotional regulation, coping or problem-solving
- Impulsivity
- Bereavement, loss or other significant life events
- Perfectionism or significant academic pressure
- Alcohol or substance misuse

Family factors:

- Family conflict or disrupted relationships
- High levels of family pressure or expectations
- Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Depression, self-harm or suicide within the family

Social and school factors:

- Bullying, peer rejection or social isolation
- Difficulties forming or maintaining relationships
- Exposure to self-harm or suicide among peers, family, or through social media and online content
- School-related stress, attendance difficulties or significant transitions
- Significant dates, anniversaries or anticipated events
- Safeguarding concerns, including abuse, neglect, exploitation or other adverse experiences
- Access to substances or medication that could be misused.

Risk factors should be considered alongside the young person's individual circumstances, strengths and protective factors.

Warning Signs

School staff may notice changes indicating that a pupil is experiencing difficulties. These should be taken seriously, particularly where several occur together or represent a significant change from the pupil's usual behaviour.

Possible warning signs include:

- changes in mood, behaviour, sleep or eating
- withdrawal, isolation or loss of interest in activities
- changes in friendships or relationships
- difficulty managing emotions or appearing overwhelmed
- low self-esteem, negative self-talk or feelings of hopelessness
- talking or joking about self-harm, suicide or not wanting to be alive

- unexplained injuries or changes in clothing that may conceal injuries
- changes in attendance, engagement or academic performance
- increased use of alcohol or substances
- exposure to self-harm or suicide through peers, family, social media or online content
- significant changes in circumstances, including bullying, bereavement or relationship difficulties.

These signs are not exhaustive and do not necessarily indicate self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities in Responding to Self-Harm

Any disclosure or concern about self-harm must be taken seriously and responded to calmly, compassionately and without judgement. Staff should listen, reassure the pupil and avoid expressing shock or criticism.

Staff must not promise confidentiality. Pupils should be told that information may need to be shared where there is a concern for their safety, and this should be explained sensitively.

Any member of staff who becomes aware of self-harm, or a risk of self-harm, must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay and follow safeguarding procedures.

Where there is an immediate safety concern, an adult should remain with the pupil and ensure appropriate supervision. Serious injury, suspected poisoning or overdose, or any need for urgent medical attention requires immediate medical assistance, including 999 where necessary.

The DSL will determine the appropriate response, which may include:

- speaking with the pupil and, where appropriate and safe, their parent/carers
- considering wider safeguarding concerns and making appropriate referrals
- seeking advice from or referring to health or mental health services
- agreeing an individual support or safety plan
- providing pastoral or counselling support
- arranging appropriate follow-up and review.

Pupils should remain in education wherever safely possible. A supervised safe space may be used where a pupil is acutely distressed.

All concerns, actions and decisions must be recorded in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Self-harm should be addressed through appropriate PSHE and wider wellbeing provision, promoting healthy coping strategies, help-seeking and access to support without providing unnecessary detail about methods

Further Considerations

Any meetings with a student, their parents/carers or their peers regarding self-harm should be recorded in writing including:

- Dates and times
- Concerns raised
- An Action Plan

- Details of anyone else who has been informed

This information should be stored in the student's child protection file. It is important to encourage students to let you know if one of their group is in trouble, upset or showing signs of self-harming. Friends can worry about betraying confidence 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 being a good friend. They should also be aware that their friend will be treated in a caring and supportive manner.

The peer group of a young person who self-harms may value the opportunity to talk to a member of staff either individually or in a small group. Any member of staff wishing for further advice on this should consult the DSL or Medical Officer.

Links with other policies

1. Safeguarding and Child Protection
2. Medical Policy
3. PSHE Policy
4. Anti-Bullying Policy
5. Equal Opportunities Policy
6. Staff behaviour and Code of Conduct (in the staff handbook)

Resources for support for students, parents/guardians:

- Self-Harm Pathway Information, Advice and Guidance for Practitioners (Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership):
[Self-Harm Pathway](#)
- Shropshire Family Information Services and Resource pack:
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/2587/self-harming.pdf>
- Mind:
[Understanding self-harm - for 11-18 year olds | Mind](#)
- Young Minds:
[Self-harm | Advice for young people | Get help](#)