



**ADCOTE
SCHOOL**

SELF HARM POLICY

Reviewed by: J Greenwood

Date: Feb 2022

Next review: Sept 2024

Introduction

Recent research indicates that up to one in ten young people in the UK engage in self-harming behaviours, and that this figure is higher amongst specific populations, including young people with special educational needs. School staff can play an important role in preventing self-harm and also in supporting students, peers and parents of students currently engaging in self-harm. Four times as many girls as boys self-harm up to the age of 16, although this ratio reduces to twice as many among 18-19 year olds (Shropshire Safeguard Partnership, 2019)

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 risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with students who self-harm
- To provide support to students who self-harm and their peers and parents/ carers.

Definition of Self-harm

Self-harm is a wide definition. It is any behaviour where the intent is to harm 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
- Banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body

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
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity
- Bereavement
- Perfectionism
- Exam pressure

- 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

- Being Bullied or rejected by peers
- Difficulty in making relationships/ loneliness
- Easy access to drugs, medications or other methods of self-harm
- Copied self-harm behaviour
- Difficult times of year e.g. anniversaries
- Criminal behaviour
- Accessing or difficulties within school

Warning signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 one of the members of the Adcote School safeguarding team

Possible warning signs include:

1. Changes in eating / sleeping habits (e.g. student may appear overly tired if not sleeping well)
2. Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
3. Changes in activity and mood e.g. more aggressive or introverted than usual
4. Lowering of academic achievement
5. Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
6. Abusing drugs or alcohol
7. Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
8. Reluctance to change in front of people
9. Frequent injuries (i.e. cuts, bruises and burns) with suspicious explanations.
10. Wearing trousers and long sleeves in warm weather (boarders)
11. Low self-esteem or an increase in negative self-talk.
12. Difficulty handling emotions or easily overwhelmed.
13. Extremely sensitive to rejection.
14. Self-defeating comments and attitudes.
15. Avoiding sports or other activities that would require showing more of one's body.
16. Bloodied wads of toilet paper or tissue, blood on clothing.
17. Withdrawing from activities once enjoyed.
18. Rubbing of arm, especially wrist, through sleeves (cuts often itch when they are healing)
19. Increased time alone
20. Increased time with peers who self-harm

Staff roles in working with students 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. School staff may feel a range of feelings in response to self-harm such as anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, guilt, helplessness, disgust and rejection. Try to remain calm, give reassurance and follow the first aid guidelines. In the case of an overdose of tablets, however small, advice must be obtained from a medical practitioner (Accident and Emergency or the GP).

However, in order to offer the best possible help to students 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 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 student 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 team.

Following the report, the designated staff member will decide on the appropriate course of action.

This may include:

- Contacting parents / carers
- Arranging professional assistance e.g. doctor, nurse, social services
- Arranging an appointment with a counsellor
- 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 student at all times
- If a pupil has engaged in self-harm, it may be necessary to administer First Aid

Further Considerations

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

- Dates and times
- An action plan
- Concerns raised
- Details of anyone else who has been informed

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 & 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 one of the designated teachers for safeguarding children (Miss Louise Hudson, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Miss Sally Roberts (Deputy Head of Prep School), Miss Nikki Jones (Head of boarding) and Mrs Jackie Greenwood (Head of Student Services).

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)

Date of Policy: February 2022

Review date: September 2024

Appendix 1: Self-Harm Pathway Information, Advice and Guidance fro Practitioners (Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership)

Appendix 2: Self-Harm Risk Assessment (this includes the form which must be completed)

Appendix 3: Self Harm: Information and Advice 'My friend has a problem, how can I help?'
SSCB Shropshire Council