



Self-Harm Policy

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Priestnall School

Self-Harm Policy

1. 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. In order to raise awareness of this issue, all staff receive self-harm training as part of their annual safeguarding training.

2. 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.

3. 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 students who self-harm.
- To provide support to students who self-harm and their peers and parents/carers.

4. Definition of Self-Harm

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

- 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
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively
- Ligature strangulation

- Cyber self-harm/self-trolling. There is evidence to show that some young people are anonymously bullying themselves online or self-trolling. They may set up multiple on-line profiles and use them to post abusive messages about themselves. This form of emotional self-harm is psychologically very complex.

5. Risk Factors

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

Individual Factors

- Depression: anxiety: a sense of hopelessness: low self-esteem
- Poor communication skills; 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 or self-harm in the family

Social Factors

- Difficulty in making relationships / loneliness
- Being bullied or excluded from peer groups.

6. 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 any of the following:

- The child's Director of Studies,
- The child's Senior Learning Coordinator
- Jo Windsor, Designated Safeguarding Lead or Julie Gartside, Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Possible warning signs include:

- Cuts, bruises, scratches or burns to the head, wrists, arms, thighs and chest, and bald patches.
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits (e.g. student may appear overly tired, if they are 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.
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in styles of clothing or actively hiding parts of the body.

7. Staff Roles in working with students who self-harm.

Students 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 experience a range of feelings in response to self-harm in a student such as anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, guilt, helplessness, disgust and rejection.

However, in order to offer the best possible help to students it is important to try and maintain a supportive and open attitude – a student who has chosen to discuss their concerns with a member of school staff is showing a considerable amount of courage and trust. Students need to be made aware that it is not possible for staff to offer confidentiality.

Any member of staff who is aware of a student engaging in or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-harm should consult one of the following members of staff:

- The child's Director of Studies or Senior Learning Co-ordinator
- Jo Windsor, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Julie Gartside, the Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

Following the referral, the member of staff will decide on the appropriate course of action using the Stockport Self-Harm Policy:

- Do not leave the child alone.
- Decide if First Aid is needed or if an ambulance is required.
- In the case of an overdose, seek advice from the Duty Desk at Healthy Young Minds – 0161 4192062 or if in any doubt, call an ambulance immediately.
- Contact the parents or carers. Advise them about the incident and the injuries sustained, what school will do next and direct them to Stockport's Self-harm Policy on the school website.
- Advise parents/ carers to take the child to the GP for a referral to Healthy Young Minds or advise that the child should attend A&E.

- Arrange an appointment with school counselling services in the interim.
- If the child is going to remain in school for the day, arrange for the child to have 'time out' if they feel unable to return to lessons.
- Decide if the self-harm needs to be reported to the Duty Desk at Healthy Young Minds. Let parents/carers know you will be doing this.
- If the child is already known to Healthy Young Minds, update their HYMs worker via the duty desk. Let parents/carers know you will be doing this.
- Add the child to the Daily Attendance Checklist.
- Write a risk assessment if the self-harm is considered to be severe. This may include checking attendance at each lesson.
- Refer the child to the school's Suicide First Aider if discussion about self-harm leads to a disclosure about suicidal feelings.

8. Further Considerations

- It is important to encourage students to let you know if any member of their friendship 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 Jo Windsor, the Safeguarding Lead or Julie Gartside, Deputy Safeguarding Lead
- When a young person is self-harming, it is important to be vigilant in case friends of the individual are also self-harming. Occasionally schools discover that a number of students in the same peer group are harming themselves.

Sources of Help available. :

- Jo Windsor Designated Safeguarding Lead or Julie Gartside, Deputy Safeguarding Lead
- The child's Director of Studies or Senior Learning Coordinator
- School Nurse or a member of the First Aid Team
- School Counsellor

- The family doctor
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Young Minds](#)
- [42nd Street](#)

- [Healthy Young Minds](#)