



## 3.08

### Self-Harming – Policy and Procedures

This document describes the school's approach to self-harm. This policy and procedure is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and volunteers and should be read in conjunction with policy **3.01 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection**.

#### Aim

School staff can play an important role in preventing self-harm and also in supporting pupils, peers and parents of pupils currently engaging in self-harm. The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that staff are able to recognise and act swiftly and appropriately to all cases of pupil self-harm.

#### Objectives

- To increase understanding and awareness of self-harm
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with children who self-harm
- To provide support to the children who self-harm

#### 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
- 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
- Hopelessness
- 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
- Recent trauma e.g. death of a relative, parental divorce

**Social Factors:**

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

**Further help web sites:**

- POPYRUS 0800 068 4141 [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)  
Offers a helpline to give support, practical advice and information to anyone who is concerned that a young person may be suicidal
- National Self-Harm Network [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)  
Support for people who self-harm. Provides free information pack to service users.

**Suicide**

While self-harm and suicide are separate, those who self-harm are in emotional distress as are those who end their lives. It is vital that all emotional distress is taken seriously to minimise the chances of self-harm and suicide. All talk of suicide and warning signs must be taken extremely seriously. If a pupil expresses a wish to end their life or has suicidal thoughts the member of staff must:

- Accompany the pupil immediately to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Mrs Jo Cooke or Mrs Capper (Headmistress)
- The DSL will speak with the pupil about their suicidal thoughts and feelings
- The DSL will contact a parent/carer to inform them of the situation and ask that they collect the child and take them to the hospital. Onsite at the hospital is a Child Mental Health worker who will assess the child and deal with the matter.
- At no time should the child be left unsupervised and reassurance should be given that support will be put into place for them.
- At the school, close monitoring strategies should be put into place and teaching staff should be made aware of the situation.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Headmistress will:**

- Appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead to be responsible for self-harm matters and liaise with them.
- Ensure that both the Designated Safeguarding Lead and their Deputy receive appropriate training about self-harm and ensure that the Self-Harm Policy is followed by all members of staff.

### **All staff and teachers are expected to:**

- Listen to pupils in emotional distress calmly and in a non-judgemental way
- Report self-harm to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Be clear of the timescale in which this is expected e.g. as quickly as possible
- Not make promises (e.g. assuring confidentiality) which cannot be kept
- Reassure pupils that in order to seek health and happiness people need to know about their problems so that they can help
- Guide pupils towards seeking health and happiness
- Promote problem-solving techniques and non-harmful ways to deal with emotional distress
- Enable pupils to find places for help and support
- Widen their own knowledge about self-harm and mental health disorders
- Be aware of health and safety issues such as first aid and cleaning up if a self-injury incident takes place at school.

### **The Designated Safeguarding Lead will:**

- Keep records of self-injury incidents and concerns
- Follow the procedures in place for a pupil who is expressing suicidal thoughts/feelings
- Keep up-to-date with information about self-harm
- Liaise with the Headmistress
- Contact the parent(s) and arrange a suitable meeting; involve the pupil in process where appropriate or beneficial
- Know when others e.g. Parents, social workers, Educational Psychologists need to be informed
- Inform the parent(s) about appropriate help and support available for their child
- Monitor the pupil's progress following an incident
- Know when to seek help to deal with their own feelings and distress

## **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 the designated safeguarding lead– Mrs Jo Cooke or Mrs Jenifer Capper (Headmistress).

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating / sleeping habits (e.g. student 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
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing e.g. unkempt appearance, long sleeves in summer

### **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 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 pupils it is important to try and maintain a supportive and open attitude – a child 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 child 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 the DSO or the Headmistress.

Following the report, the Headmistress 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 child is paramount and an adult should remain with them at all times
- If a pupil has self-harmed in school a first aider should be called for immediate help

### **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 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 the DSL.

When a young person is self-harming it is important to be vigilant in case close contacts with the individual are also self-harming. Occasionally schools discover that a number of pupils in the same peer group are harming themselves.

This policy was adopted by	Silverhill School & Day Nursery
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Name of signatory	Jenifer Capper
Role of signatory	Headmistress