



Self-Harm Policy

1. Introduction

Recent research indicates that increasing numbers of young people in the UK are engaging in self-harming behaviours. School staff can play an important role in both identifying and preventing self-harm and also in supporting students, peers and their parents / carers.

2. Scope

This document describes the Academy'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:

- 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

5. Risk Factors

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

Individual Factors:

Depression and anxiety, Poor communication skills, Low self-esteem, Poor problem-solving skills, Feelings of 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

Social Factors:

Difficulty in making relationships / loneliness, being bullied or rejected by peers / fears arising from interactions on Social Networking sites

6. Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to self-harm or suicidal ideation. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further advice from one of the Designated

Persons for Safeguarding Children: Gareth Thomas (Lead for Safeguarding, Sarah Osborne or Julie Green(Senior and Sixth Form) or Silvana Quay (Primary).

- 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

Self-harm can be a transient behaviour in young people that is triggered by particular stresses and which resolves fairly quickly or it may be part of a longer term pattern of behaviour that is associated with more serious emotional / mental health difficulties. Where there are a number of underlying risk factors the risk of further self-harm is greater.

Some young people get caught in mild, repetitive self-harm such as scratching which is often done in a peer group. In this case, it may be helpful to take a low key approach, avoiding escalation, although at the same time being vigilant for signs of more serious self-harm.

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

Students may choose to confide in a member of 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, helplessness and disgust. 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 – listen to them.

Students need to be made aware that it is not possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality and that concerns will be passed on. 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 student engaging in or suspected of being at risk of engaging in self-harm should consult one of the nurses or Designated Persons for Safeguarding children. They will decide on the appropriate course of action and keep records. Where possible, telephone calls home should be made within the young persons hearing.

Actions:

- ❖ Always call an ambulance in the event of an overdose
- ❖ Treat any wounds as necessary
- ❖ Where possible remove the item used to cause the harm
- ❖ Contact parents / carers by telephone and send a -
- ❖ Follow up letter advising parents of the self harm and suggesting that they may wish to consider a GP appointment or that their young person have access to the support that is offered in school eg: Listening Ears or a referral to Time 2 Talk (at the Abbey Centre).
- ❖ Return the student to lessons as soon as possible to try to maintain a degree of normality
- ❖ Find a quiet, supervised place for students who present as distressed

8. Further Considerations

Each case of concern should be raised at the next DSLV Amber meeting and it may be deemed necessary to consider contacting other agencies such as Social Services or CAMHS (where there is previous history) or consider a CAF as part of a team around the family approach.

Any meetings with a student, their parents / carers 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 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 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 Persons for Safeguarding children. When a young person is self-harming it is important to be vigilant for cluster cases which research indicates are known to happen.

Developing Resilience

The Academy nurses have undertaken training in self harm and working with the Safeguarding team will strive to offer support strategies to students to enable them to build greater resilience and better coping skills.

NB: Where there is doubt about severity of the self-harm always advise that the Young person is taken to their GP.

National Advice & Helplines

Child line 0800 111111 www.childline.org.uk

(offers a confidential 24hr helpline for young people under 18years)

National Selfharm Network www.nshn.co.uk

(offers support for those who experience self-harm)

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk

(offers information on a range of subjects relevant to young people)

See also Appendix 1 – Guidance for staff on issues around self-harm

Please also refer to the academy's Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy.

The Self Harm Policy will be reviewed on a two yearly cycle.

Appendix 1

Guidance for staff on issues around self-harm

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Academy staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to self-harm or suicidal thoughts. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further advice either from

Possible warning signs include:

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