

	Self Harm Policy	Author:	Vivien Sharples
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RATIONALE

We regard self injury as a response of young people who are attempting to cope with high levels of distress and emotional pain. It is any deliberate, non suicidal behaviour which causes physical pain or injury and is aimed at reducing the emotional pain and distress of the young person involved.

These behaviours may include deliberate bone breaking, cutting, bruising, banging, punching, pulling out of hair and non-suicidal overdosing. The behaviours are usually chronic, repetitive and habitual. Young people who self harm will generally attempt to hide any scarring or cuts and can find it extremely difficult to discuss their behaviour. It is often not about attention seeking but about seeking relief and release from emotional stress. Emotional distress causes these behaviours and it can lead to suicidal thinking and actions. Consequently we must take ALL incidents of self harm seriously and attempt to provide the most appropriate support. Social Studies scheme of work in Year 8 covers self harm.

AIMS

Our academy team is dedicated to ensuring the emotional, physical and mental well being of all students. We consequently aim to:

- recognise any warning signs that one of our students may be engaging in self harming behaviours
- understand the risk factors associated with these behaviours including low self-esteem, perfectionism, mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, home or academy problems, social isolation, emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- be proactive in discussing the topic with students we might feel are deliberately harming themselves
- know how to respond to students who wish to discuss these behaviours with us and take them seriously at all times
- be able to produce and manage short and long term care plans for students, in conjunction with external agencies if necessary
- provide the appropriate level of support for staff dealing with young people who self harm and ensure appropriate training is available to all staff.

Recognising warning signs

Some young people will not show any specific warning signs. For some, the following are indicators:

- risky behaviours e.g. drug and alcohol abuse
- lack of self-esteem/being overly negative
- bullying of others
- social withdrawal
- significant change in friendships
- regularly bandaged wrists and arms
- obvious cuts, burns or scratches
- reluctance to participate in PE or change clothes
- frequent accidents that cause physical injuries
- wearing long sleeved tops even in very hot weather

What to do

Dos

- Stay calm – do not show anxiety, disapproval or disgust. You may be shocked, but ...
- Listen – just being listened to can be a brilliant support and bring great relief to someone: particularly if they have never spoken to anyone about their self harming before.

Don'ts

- Don't panic – unfortunately, many young people self harm – it is a complex issue and each young person will have a different reason or story behind their behaviour – panicking will not help the young person feel safe and contained.
- Don't send the young person away – make some time for them to share their concerns in an environment that is appropriate and sensitive (e.g. not around other students). It is impossible to give time there and then, please take them in a matter-of-fact way to First Aid/the Student Support Centre or Student and Parent Services or their Progress Leader who will help.
- Don't be judgemental – keep an open mind about the behaviour and don't refer to it as "attention seeking/needing".
- Don't over personalise the issue – it is more appropriate and professional for you to pass the information to the Child Protection lead – they will help the young person to identify their supportive network. Don't take this upon yourself. Self harming behaviours can be extremely concerning, but you cannot offer objective support if you become caught up in the young person's difficulty.

Some final thoughts

Students may choose to confide in a member of academy staff if they are concerned about their own welfare, or that of a peer. Academy staff may experience a range of feelings in response to self harm in a student such as anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, guilt, helplessness and disgust. However, in order to offer the best possible help to students it is important to try to maintain a supportive and open attitude – a student who has chosen to discuss their concerns with an academy staff member is showing a considerable amount of courage and trust.

Students need to be made aware that staff will not be able to offer confidentiality. It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept even if a student puts pressure on you to do so.

Self Harm Care Pathway

See Appendix 1

All incidents to be recorded – see Appendix 2

Appendix 1

What You Should Do If You Discover A Young Person Is Self-Harming



Appendix 2

Incident form to be used when a young person self-harms

Young person's name:		Date of report:
Age:	Gender:	Year Group:
Special needs:		
Staff member:		Position:
Date and time of occurrence:		
Details of the incident:		
Action taken by person completing this form:		
Decision made with respect to contacting parents and reasons for this decision (SWA/MHU/MHA/SH):		
Follow-up (SWA/MHU/MHA/SH):		
Signature:		

Please issue a copy to: DSL, Assistant Principal attached to year group, Head of Student & Parent Services, Student Welfare Officer, Progress Leader

Key responsibilities

Everyone in the academy community, including governors, the Principal, support staff, teachers, students, parents and carers has responsibility to promote and adhere to this policy to help to ensure the well being of all. These are outlined as follows:

- Governing body:
 - monitor the arrangements and support for students who self harm
 - ensure that all students are aware of the behaviours that will not be tolerated and that they understand key rules. For example, no self harm in front of others, no attempts to manipulate others with the threat of self harm.
- Teaching and support staff:
 - act in an empathetic manner, assuring the student that they are available to listen in a calm and non-judgemental manner
 - will not devalue any student's concerns or emotional distress
 - know the available support and referral routes
 - ensure that they know they cannot make any promises to keep things confidential if they feel that the student is at risk
 - adhere to our duty of care and health and safety policies
 - ask for help if they feel a situation falls outside of their emotional competency skills or knowledge base.
- Principal:
 - appoint a designated member of staff to be responsible for all incidents of self harm and for monitoring that the policy is adhered to by all members of the academy community
 - be ultimately responsible for ensuring that designated staff receive appropriate training and supervision
 - ensure that all staff in academy are fully conversant with and adhere to our self harm policy.
- Designated staff – DSL, Assistant Principal attached to the year group, Student Welfare Officer, Head of Student & Parent Services and Head of Student Support:
 - ensure that the policy is disseminated and implemented appropriately, providing regular feedback and updates to the Principal and governing body
 - develop a system for recording such incidents and ensure that this is kept up to date.
 - ensure that regular reports are provided to the Principal
 - liaise with external agencies e.g. academy nurse, CAMHS.
 - liaise with parents/carers as appropriate in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young person
 - report on suicidal intent or feelings promptly, referring to other professional bodies as appropriate.
- Parents and carers:
 - find out about self harm, making use of academy based and external resources and discuss your findings with the child
 - ensure that academy staff are kept informed of any incidents that occur outside of academy that you feel may impact on the behaviour and wellbeing of your child
 - work with designated staff in order to help us develop the best ways of supporting you and your child
 - know that you may also need emotional support and find out where this is available.

- Students:
 - will take care of any wounds appropriately and not display them
 - ensure that they do not engage in conversations about self harm with students that sensationalise the behaviour
 - never encourage others to participate in self harm
 - ensure that they know who they can talk to in both the immediate and longer term
 - alert a member of staff if they are concerned about a student who may be at risk.

Our self harm policy has direct links to (and should be read in conjunction with) the following policies:

- Health and Safety policy
- Attendance and Punctuality policy
- Pastoral Care: Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare Policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- SEND Information & policy
- Child Protection/Safeguarding policy
- Guidance on staff conduct
- Health Education policy
- Confidentiality and Handling Sensitive Issues policy
- Equality and Diversity policy.