

Barford St. Peter's C.E. (V.A.) Primary School

Together we love; together we learn



Self-Harm Policy

Date adopted: 22ND April 2026

Review date: 26th April 2028

This policy forms an essential part of the school's safeguarding group of policies. It should be viewed in conjunction with these, in particular the Safeguarding Policy.

Aim

The 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 or pupils who may be at risk of self-harm.

Objectives

- To recognise pupils at risk of self-harm
- To recognise any form of self-harm
- To understand that self-harming is almost always a symptom of some underlying emotional or psychological issue
 - To put in place a framework for intervention
 - To be alert to the possibility that self-harm may arise from a history of abuse

What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is any deliberate behaviour that inflicts physical harm on someone's own body and is aimed at relieving emotional distress. Self-harm can include:

- cutting themselves
- scratching themselves
- burning or scalding themselves
- banging and bruising;
- scrubbing or scouring their body;
- deliberate bone-breaking;
- punching themselves;
- sticking things into their body;
- swallowing inappropriate objects or liquids;
- taking too many tablets (overdose);
- biting themselves;
- pulling their hair or eye lashes out;

Less obvious self-harm behaviours also include:

- controlled eating patterns – anorexia, bulimia, over-eating;
- indulging in risky behaviour / risky sexual behaviour destructive use of drugs or alcohol;
- an unhealthy lifestyle;
- getting into fights.

Warning Signs

Self-harm may present as visible or invisible signs. The latter can include ingested materials or cuts or bruises under the clothing.

Staff, parents and fellow students may become aware of warning signs that might indicate that a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to self-harm or suicide. These can

include decreased school attendance and the giving away of possessions. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and anyone observing any of these should seek further advice from a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Warning signs may include:

- visible signs of injury (e.g. scarring)
- a change in dress habit that may be intended to disguise injuries, for example change to wearing long sleeved tops
- changes in eating or sleeping habits
- increased isolation from friends or family; becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity or mood (e.g. becoming more introverted or withdrawn)
- 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

Links to Emotional Distress (including abuse)

Those who self-harm are usually suffering emotional or psychological distress and it is vital that all such distress is taken seriously to provide mental health support for the child and ensure that children and their families are signposted to medical support and advice.

Any young person who suggests they are experiencing suicidal feelings must be taken extremely seriously and safeguarding procedures put in place immediately; a young person showing this level of distress must NOT be left unattended.

Emotional/Psychological Risk Factors Associated with Self-Harm can be:

- recent trauma e.g. death of a friend or relative, parental divorce
- negative thought patterns and low self-esteem
- bullying
- abuse – sexual, physical, emotional or through neglect
- relationship difficulties (with family or friends)
- learning difficulties
- pressure to achieve (from teachers or parents)
- substance abuse (including tobacco, alcohol or drugs)
- issues around sexuality
- medical condition

Other causal or risk factors

- media influence, for example inappropriate exposure online via websites or chat-rooms
- experimentation, 'dares' or bravado, 'copycat behaviour'
- a history of abuse of self-harming in the family
- domestic abuse and/or substance misuse in the home
- issues surrounding religious or cultural identity

Reporting Concerns

Any member of staff, visitors, governors or other students concerned about a student must report their concerns immediately to one of the designated safeguarding leads:

Mary Baker
Lucy Rose
Michelle Bunn
Aisha Richards

The designated safeguarding lead will follow up immediately with sensitivity, discretion and in line with the Safeguarding Policy (see 'responding to concerns' below)

Prevention

An estimated 1 in 12 children self-harm at some point. The risk of self-harm can be significantly reduced by the creation of a supportive environment in which individual's self-esteem is raised and healthy peer relationships are fostered.

This can be achieved through development of good relationships by all members of the school community and in particular through the PHSE programme in which peer reporting is included. Staff awareness of issues leading to self-harm is increased through training and the production of comprehensive policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, Anti-bullying, appropriate medical polices and a full and informative policy on self-harming. This policy is posted on the School's website to achieve the widest circulation, including parents.

School Procedures for Dealing with Self-Harm / Mutilation

If there is concern that a student may be self-harming or is thinking of self-harming, this should immediately be reported to a designated safeguarding lead who will arrange to discuss the concerns with parents at the earliest opportunity.

If physical harm has occurred the pupil should be taken by a parent or carer to the GP or A&E for medical assessment and care. (In an emergency an ambulance must be called).

Following medical advice, the designated safeguarding lead will arrange to meet with the student's parent or carer to put in place a support plan for the student's mental health. This may include counselling. In some cases self-harm may raise safeguarding issues in which case the procedures laid down in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy must be followed. In relation to confidentiality, where there is no child protection issue raised, although it is better if parents were involved to support the young person, each individual case and approach needs to be handled carefully and sympathetically to support the wellbeing of the young person. The decision about involving parents/guardians should be taken in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

In the case of severe self-harm requiring medical intervention/A&E, parents will be informed immediately. In a situation in which it is disclosed that self-harm is symptomatic of

abuse in the home, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may take the decision to make a referral directly to the appropriate authority without informing the parents.

Where parents are informed, they will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school in supporting the young person through this difficult time.

As stated in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, staff must not promise confidentiality, but reassure the child that only those people who need to know will be informed for their safety.

If a pupil suggests that there is evidence of self-harm beneath his/her clothing, a member of staff should accept such statements and not ask the pupil to remove clothing to reveal wounds/bruises etc. If the event of any self-harm incident in school, the Safeguarding governor will be informed.

The following are linked to this policy and should be noted when dealing with cases or suspected cases of self-harm:

- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Mental Health & Well-Being Policy
- Medical Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Sex & Relationships Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy

Useful Resources and Helplines

Childline – 24 helpline for children and young people
0800 1111 (free phone from landlines) or 0800 400 222 – text phone.

www.childline.org.uk

Young Minds – national charity committed to improving the mental health of children and young people. Interactive website for advice and information.

www.youngminds.org.uk

Recover Your Life – Self-harm support community providing support and advice to those seeking to recover from self-harm.

www.recoveryourlife.com

National self-harm network – support for individuals who self-harm, friends and family.
0800 622 6000 (Thursday – Saturday 7 p.m. – 11 p.m., Sunday 6.30 p.m. – 10.30 p.m.)

www.nshn.co.uk