



## STRATFORD RURAL SCHOOLS FEDERATION

LOXLEY C OF E COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

SNITTERFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

WILMCOTE C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Small schools, big ambitions...*

# FEDERATION POLICY FOR THE IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SELF-HARMING

Version 1	April 2022
Adopted by the Governing Body	13/05/2022
Review date	January 2024
Adopted by the Governing Body	29/01/2024

#### Related policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Emotional Regulation and Positive Behaviour Policies
- PHSE

## Introduction

Recent research indicated a sharp rise in the numbers of young people in the UK who engage in self-harming behaviours, and that this figure is higher amongst specific populations, including girls, and young people with special educational needs. In particular, a high number of children and young people on the autistic spectrum self-harm.

School staff can play an important role in preventing self-harm and also in supporting pupils and parents and carers of pupils who are engaging in self-harm.

This policy has been put in place to ensure that we have a consistent approach from staff who deal with pupils who self-harm. It is designed so that pupils seeking help will feel secure in knowing how we can help them, and to give staff a structure for dealing with self-harm.

## Aims of the policy

- To increase understanding and awareness of self-harm
- To understand that self-harming is almost always a symptom of some underlying emotional or psychological issue
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to children who self-harm, their peers and families
- To provide support to staff dealing with children and adults who self-harm

## 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 or scratching themselves;
- burning or scalding their body;
- banging and bruising themselves;
- scrubbing or scouring their body;
- swallowing inappropriate objects or liquids;
- taking too many tablets (overdose);
- biting themselves
- pulling out their hair or eyelashes
- controlled eating patterns
- taking part in risky behaviours

## Risk Factors – what makes a child self-harm?

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

### Individual Factors:

- Depression / anxiety
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem or self-worth
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity

- Drug or alcohol abuse
- The need for some control in their life

#### **Family Factors:**

- Unreasonable expectations
- Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Poor parental relationships and arguments
- Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family
- Family breakdown

#### **Social Factors:**

- Loneliness or social isolation
- Difficulties in making relationships with others
- Being bullied or rejected by peers
- Feeling under pressure at school

Self-harming can make the child or young person concerned feel more in control and can reduce their feelings of tension and distress. If they feel guilty it can be a way of punishing themselves and relieving their guilt. Some young people feel better immediately after self-harming and then feel guilty about what they have done.

### **Warning Signs**

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate that a child or young person is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff who observe any of these warning signs must share their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and complete a Green Form.

#### **Warning signs may include:**

- visible signs of injury (e.g. scarring)
- a change in dress habit that may be intended to disguise injuries
- 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)
- decline in academic achievement
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- abusing drugs or alcohol
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope

### **Responding to concerns**

Any concerns that a child may be self-harming or is thinking of self-harming should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

In order to offer the best possible help to children it is important that staff try to 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.

*‘Children and young people benefit from a non-judgemental approach from a person who is able to listen to them, foster a good relationship with them, and encourage them to establish positive relationships with services’. (Royal College of Psychiatrists)*

Children 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 child puts pressure on you to do so.

Following the reporting of concerns via a green form, the DSL will decide on the appropriate course of action. This may include:

- Contacting parents/carers
- Arranging professional assistance e.g. medical professional, children’s services
- Arranging an appointment with a counsellor or other appropriate professional
- Immediately removing the child from lessons if remaining in class is likely to cause further distress to themselves or their peers

**In the case of an acutely distressed child, the immediate safety of the child is paramount and an adult should remain with the child at all times. If a child has self-harmed in school a first aider should be called for immediate help.**

## Supporting families

Any meetings with a child, their families or member of staff regarding self-harm should be recorded in writing including:

- Dates and times
- Concerns raised and by who
- An action plan – this may be an Early Help assessment
- Review meeting notes

School staff should endeavour to provide support to families where possible, including signposting to the Family Information Service, or to various websites.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm/>

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/self-harm/>