



# NINE ACRES COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL


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We are *Articulate* We are *Passionate* We are *Persuasive* We are *Positively Influencing The World Around Us*

*'Striving for Excellence'*

## Self-Harm policy

### Nine Acres Primary School

Approved by	
Approval Date	17-01-2022
Review Frequency	Every Three Years
Next Review Date	January 2025



## **Related Policies**

- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Special Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

## **Background and rationale**

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure they have clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021)

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 and those with Mental Health struggles. Self-harming can be prevalent in friendship groups, and in some social sub cultures.

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 students, peers, and parents, carers and families of students who are engaging in self-harm.

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

## **Aims of the policy**

As a school, we have a responsibility to meet the needs of all of our students, and it is important that we all know how to best approach the issue of self-harm. This policy aims to:

- Increase understanding and awareness of self-harm
- Alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- Outline the ways in which we may provide support to students who self-harm, their peers and their parents or carers.

This policy must be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding policy and our Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

## Scope

The policy applies to all students, staff, parents carers and families; members of the Governing Body in addition to visiting professionals who work with students at Nine Acres.

## Definition of self-harm

Self-harm is a sign that a young person is experiencing significant emotional distress (see NICE guidelines). Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to deliberately cause harm to ones' own body, without causing death. Examples of self-harm can include:

- 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
- Pulling out hair or eyelashes
- Banging or hitting the head or others parts of the body
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively
- Biting parts of the body
- Under medicating (insulin)

Self-harm can also be linked to high-risk behaviours including:

- Controlled eating patterns such as anorexia, bulimia or over eating
- Indulging in high risk behaviours
- Indulging in high risk sexual behaviours
- Destructive use of alcohol or drugs
- Suicidal ideation or attempts

Unwanted emotions such as anger and frustration can be reasons for self-harm, which provides an unhealthy but often cathartic release for pent up feelings. In the autistic community self-harm can also become a fixed pattern of behaviour, or a way for a young person to show others how they feel.

Some young people plan to self-harm in advance, others do it suddenly. Some young people self-harm only a few times, but others do it regularly, and it can become an entrenched pattern of behaviour.

For many young people self-harming is very private and is a form of release that does not attract the attention of others. It can take place in private, be dealt with in private and then covered up with clothing.

Other terms that are used to describe self-harming are deliberate self-harm; self-inflicted harm; self-injury; deliberate self-injury.

It is important within the context of Nine Acres Primary School, that we use the term self-harm cautiously. Sometimes students within our cohort will engage in sensory seeking behaviours such as skin picking or scratching which are not a form of self-harm. It is important that staff use calm contained language with the students around these behaviours and that we do not mislabel sensory seeking behaviour as self-harm.

### **What can make a young person self-harm?**

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

#### **Individual factors**

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Impulsivity
- The need for control
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem or self-worth
- Poor problem solving skills
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Having a friend who self-harms
- Eating disorders
- Feeling powerless

#### **Family factors**

- Unreasonable expectations
- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Poor parenting
- Family arguments or poor family relationships
- Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family
- Family breakdown

#### **Social Factors**

- Loneliness or social isolation
- Difficulties in making relationships
- Being bullied
- Rejection by peers
- Feeling under pressure due to school or exams
- Feeling the need to socially conform
- Exposure to self-harm via social media

Self-harming can make the 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.

### **Potential warning signs**

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate that a student 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, one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads or the Designated Mental Health Lead

### **Possible warning signs include:**

- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Changes in behaviour
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming more socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood, for example becoming more aggressive or introverted
- Lower academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Evidence of abusing alcohol or drugs
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Not wearing weather appropriate clothing

### **What can I do if I know that someone is self-harming?**

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)

Students 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 the self-harm such as anger; sadness; shock; disbelief; guilt; hopelessness; disgust and rejection. However, in order to offer the best help to a student, it is important for staff to maintain a supportive, professional and open attitude. Students who talk to staff about their self-harm are showing a great deal of

courage and trust, and they should be reassured that they will be helped and supported without being judged.

If a young person self-harms in school then a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Beth Dyer, Sian Broome, Rachel Paddon) must be alerted and a qualified first aider should administer first aid if it is needed. The member of staff with the young person should remove any equipment that the young person considers to be dangerous if possible. They must stay with the young person until the member of the Senior Leadership Team arrives, and together the members of staff will make an immediate plan to ensure the young person's safety.

Senior Leaders/ the Family Liaison Officer/ Mental Health 1<sup>st</sup> Aider will discuss some or all of the areas below with the student who has self-harmed:

- Find out what is troubling them;
- Explore how imminent or likely self-harm might be;
- Ask them what they would use to self-harm;
- Ask them how they will get access to what they might use to self-harm;
- Find out what help or support the child or young person would wish to have;
- Find out who else may be aware of their feelings.
- How long have they felt like this?
- Are they at risk of harm from others?
- Are they worried about something?
- What have they been doing that helps?
- What are they doing that stops the self-harming behaviour from getting worse?
- What can be done in school or at home to help them with this?
- How are they feeling generally at the moment?
- What needs to happen for them to feel better?

Where the self-harm causes serious injury, the emergency services must be called by the Senior Leadership Team and parents informed immediately.

In the case of an acutely distressed student, the immediate safety of the student is paramount and an adult should remain with the student at all times.

We encourage students who have self-harmed to not display their wounds or injuries and to talk to a member of staff if they are upset or stressed.

### **Recording incidents of self-harm**

All incidents of self-harming should be reported to the DSL or one of the Deputy DSLs as a matter of urgency.

It is paramount that students understand that staff have to share information regarding self-harm with appropriate people in school. All members of staff must share information about self-harming behaviours with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL) or the Designated Mental Health Lead. Staff must complete a yellow cause for concern sheet and hand this to a member of the designated safeguarding team and a course of action and support will be decided upon and implemented. The incident will be recorded on our electronic welfare drive and a copy kept within the child's safeguarding file.

Unless the self-harm is linked with problems at home, which place the young person at risk of harm, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads will notify the parents of the student who has self-harmed.

We encourage parent carers and families to work in partnership with the school and share any information about their children's self-harming behaviours at home and to support the school's policy on self-harm.

#### **Helpful websites:**

- [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)
- [http://www.nshn.co.uk/downloads/Advice\\_for\\_young\\_people.pdf](http://www.nshn.co.uk/downloads/Advice_for_young_people.pdf)
- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- <https://www.map.uk.net/get-help/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>
- <https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/Pages/Category/self-help-resources>
- <https://www.selfharm.co.uk/>
- [www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk)
- <http://epicfriends.co.uk/>
- [www.neurolove.org](http://www.neurolove.org)
- [www.lifesigns.org.uk](http://www.lifesigns.org.uk)
- [www.recoveryourlife.com](http://www.recoveryourlife.com)
- [www.papyrus.co.uk](http://www.papyrus.co.uk)

#### **And apps:**

- <https://calmharm.co.uk/>
- <http://self-healapp.co.uk/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/distract/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/chill-panda/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/meetwo/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/thrive/>
- <http://www.self-healapp.co.uk/>
- Molehill Mountain
- Think Ninja

