

# **Self Harm Policy**

**Member of SLT Responsible for Policy: D.Perks/ W. Tolhurst-Jones**

**Last reviewed: July 2016**  
**Review Date: July 2017**

# **Shrewsbury Academy Self-harm Policy**

## **Aims:-**

- To have a shared understanding of children who self-harm.
- To support a whole school strategy.

Designated staff, to who self-harm incidents should be reported:-

### **CORNDON CRESCENT CAMPUS:**

Child Protection Trained.

Wendie Jones, Safeguarding Manager(TAMHS trained)

Dave Perks KS3 Assistant Head/Designated Lead

Ian Breeze KS4 Assistant Head

Sue Pendergast KS4 Director

Natasha Dews KS4 Pastoral Assistant

Anna Mercer KS3 Pastoral manager

### **WORCESTOR ROAD CAMPUS:**

Rebecca Evans

Gill Lock

Lucy Howells

Chris Dobson

**These staff will complete the SSCB Self Harm Pathway**

## **What is it?**

**Self-harm** is sometimes seen as attention seeking behaviour. This is not the case. Often, people self-harm because they are in pain and trying to cope. They could also be trying to show others that something is wrong, whatever the reasons; self-harm must be taken very seriously.

## **Spotting the signs**

Common examples of self-harm include:

- Self-poisoning.
- Hitting.
- Cutting.
- Burning.
- Pulling out hair.
- Picking skin.
- Taking drugs or drinking excessively.

When a person self-harms they will often change their behaviour and frequently be upset, withdrawn or irritable. It is often kept secret but there may be clues, such as refusing to wear short sleeved shirts or to take off clothing for PE or activities.

## **What can you do if you suspect a child is experiencing serious emotional problems?**

In general, a parent will notice the signs before a member of the school staff and the majority of the time the parent will approach the school to discuss the issue. However, sometimes a teacher may see behaviour that suggests a problem. It is a difficult situation to be placed in but action needs to be taken.

**Talk to other members of staff** – this is often a good place to start. They may have noticed something amiss or may be aware of other reasons for changes in behaviour.

**Talk to the school nurse** – the nurse may be able to provide more information on how the child can be helped and perform an initial evaluation.

**Talk to the child** – they may be able to shed some light on their current situation and provide you with some more information that may either alleviate your concerns or provide you with further evidence to pursue the issue.

**Talk to the child's friends** – don't ask too many leading questions. Tell them the child doesn't seem to be themselves at the moment and you want to help if you can.

**Talk to the child's parents** – they may be able to provide more information which can help you better provide for their child.

If you do not feel comfortable with any of the above then **Refer to the Pastoral Team in school** – Pastoral support may be aware of issues.

## **What support is available?**

Support for self-harming pupils can be provided via various methods including counselling, support networks, mental health specialists, introducing coping strategies and more. The severity of the self-harm identified and the immediate risk to the pupil should guide the measures taken.

## **How can you help (reasonable adjustments)?**

The NHS offers the following advice for schools when helping a pupil who has self-harmed:

- Make sure the pupil understands the limits of your confidentiality.
- Take all attempts of suicide or self-harm seriously. Assess the suicidal risk by asking the pupil what they hoped would happen as a result of their self-harm. If you are concerned there may be real imminent suicidal danger, the pupil should be taken to A&E for an emergency psychiatric assessment.
- Make sure there is someone the pupil can talk to, who listens properly and will not judge. This may be the school nurse, a counsellor, the SENCO, a trusted teaching assistant or other staff member.
- Take a non-judgemental attitude towards the young person. Reassure them that you understand the self-harm is helping them to cope and you want to help them. Explain that you need to tell someone and try to work out together who the best person is.
- Help the pupil to identify their own support network and alternative coping strategies.
- Offer information about support agencies.
- Be vigilant to the possibility of close contacts of the pupil also self-harming.
- Support the peers of the pupil, they may wish to talk to an adult.

## **What to avoid**

School staff should avoid the following:

- Reacting with horror or discomfort.
- Asking abrupt and rapid questions.
- Getting angry or making threats.
- Engaging in power struggles.
- Accusing them of attention seeking.
- Becoming frustrated if the behaviour continues.
- Ignoring warning signs.
- Promising to keep the events secret.
- Consider any stresses at school that can be changed. For example, support around bullying or learning difficulties.

### **Procedure for schools**

The NHS suggests that schools follow the procedure outlined below when encountering self-harm at school:

1. Member of staff informed / discovers a pupil is self-harming
2. Stay calm. Reassure the pupil and listen to what they have to say. Follow first aid guidelines if necessary. Ensure the pupil understands the limits of confidentiality.
3. In the event of an emergency or overdose school staff must consult a doctor or A&E.
4. Complete relevant incident report and paperwork.
5. Arrange a meeting with parents and pupil if appropriate. Seek consent for other relevant professional's involvement.
6. Continue assessing needs. Plan and coordinate support services.
7. Continue to monitor and review regularly with pupil and others as agreed.

Schools can suggest the following **coping strategies** to pupils who self-harm:

- Writing, drawing and talking about their feelings.
- Contacting a friend, family member or support line.
- Going to a quiet place to vent. .
- Hitting a pillow/soft object.
- Listening to loud music (some music may lower a pupil's mood).
- Going for a walk, run or performing some other form of physical exercise.
- Reading a book.
- Keeping a diary.
- Looking after an animal.
- Drawing red lines on the skin with a washable pen.
- Clenching ice cubes until they melt – this can help to relieve tension
- Snapping an elastic band against the wrist