

Self-Harm Policy

Member of SLT Responsible for Policy: Mrs H Cornish
Safeguarding Manager – Mrs W. Tolhurst-Jones

Last reviewed: September 2018
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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

Mrs H Cornish, Assistant Head/named Designated Lead

Mrs W Tolhurst- Jones, Safeguarding Manager/ Deputy Designated Lead

Mrs L Howells/ Pastoral/ Deputy Designated Lead

Mr J Arnold, Head teacher

Miss M Lovatt, Deputy Head/ Designated Lead

Mrs N Dews, Pastoral Assistant/ Designated Lead

Mr K Dobson, Head of PE

These staff will complete the SSCB Self Harm Pathway

If these DSL's are unavailable please contact the Academy's other DSL's named in Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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When a person self-harms they will often change their behaviour and frequently be upset, withdrawn or irritable.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.

Good practice is to refer to a designated Lead as soon as possible (before the end of the school day)

If for some reason this is not possible refer to the pupil's Pastoral lead for their Year group. This must be done as soon as possible to reduce further risk.

See Below:

Year 7– Mrs L Howells

Year 8 – Miss S Downes

Year 9 – Mrs A Mercer

Year 10 – Miss S Childes

Year 11 – Mrs N Dews

If staff are unable to contact any of the named staff and feel there is an immediate risk, Parent/Carer of the child must be contacted on the same day.

These students will be identified on the Academy's **Vulnerable pupils** list as requiring monitoring and additional support and guidance.

If required a Time-Out card can be issued for access to support during the school day from the Pastoral Team.

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. **(Self-harm Pathway)** 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

If it is assessed by the DSL as necessary, a risk assessment will be completed and information around keeping the student safe disseminated to staff. Incidents will be recorded on the Academy's confidential CPOM's system.