



Self-Harm Policy

Rationale

Recent research suggests that up to one in ten young people in the UK engage in self-harming behaviours, and that this figure is higher amongst specific populations, including young people with special educational needs. School staff can play an important role in preventing self-harm and also in supporting students, peers and Parent(s)/Carer(s) of students currently engaging in self-harm.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to self-harm. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff and Governors.

Aims

- To increase understanding and awareness of self-harm.
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors.
- To provide support to staff dealing with students who self-harm.
- To provide support to students who self-harm and their peers and Parent(s)/Carer(s).

Definition of self-harm

Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to deliberately cause harm to one's own body. For example:

- Cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin
- Swallowing inedible objects
- Taking an overdose of prescription or non-prescription drugs
- Swallowing hazardous materials or substances which lead could to making oneself sick
- Burning or scalding
- Hair pulling
- Banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively
- Not eating or making themselves sick after eating (anorexia or bulimia)

Risk Factors

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

Individual Factors:

- Depression/anxiety
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity, sometimes leading to criminal behaviours
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Eating disorders

Family Factors:

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

Social Factors:

- Difficulty in making relationships/loneliness
- Being bullied or rejected by peers
- Isolation
- Homelessness

Warning signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek advice from one of the designated teachers for safeguarding children.

Possible warning signs include:

- Change in eating/sleeping habits (e.g. student may appear overly tired if not sleeping well)
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity and mood e.g. more aggressive or introverted than usual.
- 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
- Joining a school subculture
- has unexplained cuts or bruises

Staff roles in working with students who self-harm

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 self-harm in a student, however, in order to offer the best possible help to students it is important to try and maintain a supportive and open attitude; a student who has chosen to discuss their concerns with a member of staff is showing a considerable amount of courage and trust.

Any member of staff who is aware of a student engaging in or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-harm should alert Deputy/Head of School **and also** log their concerns on CPOMS, notifying Deputy/Head of School and Senior Designated Safeguarding Officer.

As with all safeguarding concerns it needs to be made clear to any student who discloses self-harm that it isn't possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality and that details will be passed to their D/HOS and Safeguarding Team and staff should make use of Annexe 1 (check list for spotting signs of self-harm).

Following the report, Deputy/Head of School in conjunction with other members of the Tor Bridge High Safeguarding Team will decide on the appropriate course of action. This is likely to include:

- Contacting Parent(s)/Carer(s)
- Arranging professional assistance e.g. GP, CAMHS, Social Care
- Signposting to counsellors through Plymouth Eclipse or Options Services
- Immediately removing the student from lessons if their remaining in class is likely to cause further distress to themselves or their peers

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.

If a student has self-harmed in school a First Aider should be called for immediate help.

Further Considerations

Any meetings with a student, their Parent(s)/Carer(s) or their peers regarding self-harm should be recorded in writing on CPOMS under the category SELF-HARM including:

- Dates and times
- An action plan
- Concerns raised
- Details of anyone else who has been informed

Documentation can be uploaded to CPOMS and any hard copies of this information should be stored in the student's Child Protection File.

It is important to encourage students to let the School know if one of their peer group is in trouble, upset or showing signs of self-harming. This message will be reinforced during School Assemblies and through the PHSE Programme. Friends can worry about betraying confidences so they need to know that self-harm can be very dangerous and that by seeking help and advice for a friend they are taking responsible action and being a good friend. They should also be aware that their friend will be treated in a caring and supportive manner.

The peer group of a young person who self-harms may value the opportunity to talk to a member of staff either individually or in a small group. Any member of staff wishing for further advice on this should speak to Deputy/Head of School or if they are not available another member of the Tor Bridge High Safeguarding Team.

When a young person is self-harming it is important to be vigilant in case close contacts with the individual are also self-harming. Occasionally schools discover that a number of students in the same peer group are harming themselves.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff will:

Review all duty of care documents and be aware of communication processes.

Make it known to students that you are available to listen. Remain calm and non-judgemental at all times. Avoid dismissing a student's reasons for distress as invalid or attention seeking. Encourage students to be open with you and reassure them that they can get the help they need if they are willing to talk.

- Endeavour to enable students to feel in control by asking what they would like to happen and what help they feel they need etc.
- Not make promises you can't keep, regarding such things as confidentiality.
- Encourage all students to seek health and happiness in their lives every day.

- Discuss and promote healthy coping mechanisms and suggest ways in which students can be empowered to make positive changes in their lives.
- Provide and encourage access to exterior help and support where possible.
- Monitor the reactions of other students who know about the self-harm.
- Avoid asking a student to show you their scars or to describe their self-harm.
- Avoid telling a student to stop self-harming, you may be removing the only coping mechanism they have.
- Report the matter to the students Deputy/Head of School or other member of the Tor Bridge High Safeguarding Team and record the incident on CPOMS, as soon as you become aware of the problem and inform the student that you are doing this.

Students that are at risk of self-harming will be encouraged to:

- Ensure all wounds are cared for properly and bandaged appropriately, seek help from their School Office or another person in the First Aid Team, if they have self-harmed in school.
- When talking to teachers or friends about self-harm, focus on the emotional reasons behind the distress and not just talk about the self-harm itself.
- Avoid talking graphically about injuries to other students or describing the methods used.
- Never encourage anyone to try to self-harm themselves.
- When under emotional distress or feeling the urge to self-harm at school, talk to a tutor/teacher/Deputy/Head of School as soon as possible.
- Discuss any additional support that may be needed whilst experiencing this emotional distress.
- Be aware that all members of staff including the Tor Bridge High Safeguarding Team are there to help, as with all cases where your safety is at risk if teachers are concerned about your safety or well-being, they may have to break your confidentiality for your own safety. (See Annexe 2 and 3).

All students will:

- Talk to a teacher/member of the Safeguarding Team for support and guidance if they are worried that a friend may be self-harming.
- Alert a teacher/member of the Safeguarding Team straight away if they are concerned that a friend may be suicidal, or mentions suicide.

Deputy/Head of School (s)/Tor Bridge High Safeguarding Team will:

Ensure the implementation of policy, communicate with each other and report back to the Headteacher at each stage.

- Maintain up-to-date records of students experiencing self-harm, incidents of self-harm and all other concerns surrounding the issue on CPOMS.
- Communicate with the Headteacher on a regular basis and keep them informed of all incidents and developments.
- Regularly review practice around self-harm during ‘Peer Supervision’ meetings
- Monitor the help, support and progress of the students in your care and maintain communication with them.
- Ensure they are fully confident in their understanding of self-harm and seek additional information and/or training if you feel it necessary.
- Contact other organisations and key services in the area and find out what help and support is available for young people who self-harm.

- Make members of staff who work with the student aware of the student's issues that could affect behaviour and progress.
- Ensure that all First Aiders are well informed about self-harm.
- Inform the student's Parent(s)/Carer(s) if appropriate and liaise with them as to how best manage the situation.
- Be aware of when it is essential for other professional bodies to be informed, such as Social Services or Educational Psychologists, GP, CAMHS.
- Report any mention of suicidal feelings or behaviour as a matter of urgency to another member of the Safeguarding Team who will carry out a STORM Assessment (Assessing suicidal tendencies level of risk) on the student. There are STORM trained staff in school. They log the Assessment and outcomes on CPOMS under STORM.
- Take care of their own emotional well-being and seek support as and when necessary.

Parent(s)/Carer(s) will

- Understand and endorse the school's self-harm policy which is available on the school website in the 'About Us' pages.
- Educate themselves about self-harm and discuss the subject with their child, the websites below are a good starting point:

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents/whats_worrying_you_about_your_child/self-harm

<http://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Self-harm/Pages/about-self-harm.aspx>

<http://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health/self-harm>

- Work closely with the school and take an active role in deciding the best course of action for their child if they are self-harming. Keep the school informed of any incidents outside of school that links to self-harm.

Headteacher will

- In collaboration with the school's Governing Body develop, implement and review the School Self-harm Policy.
- Ensure staff, Parent(s)/Carer(s) and students are aware of their roles and responsibilities when implementing the policy across the school.
- Appoint one or more designated key staff to be responsible for all incidents relating to self-harm. At Tor Bridge High this is the Tor Bridge High Safeguarding Team
- Ensure that all designated staff receive full and appropriate training regarding self-harm and are fully confident with the procedures to follow.
- Provide practical and emotional support for key staff dealing with self-harm.
- Ensure that all staff, including teaching assistants, lab technicians and other support staff are made aware of, and understand, the self-harm policy.

Tor Bridge High is committed to ensuring the General Data Protection Regulation GDPR is adhered to at all times within the schools. We will ensure that all data we are given is processed in line with our organisations Data Protection Policies and in line with your rights under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulations.

Owner: Head of Inclusion
 Date Reviewed: September 2020
 Next Review Date: September 2021

Annexe 1 Checklist for spotting the signs of self-harm

Name of Student _____ TG _____

Completed by _____ date _____

Signs of self-harming	Yes/No Commentary
1. Unexplained cuts, bruises or cigarette burns usually on the wrists arms, thighs and chest	
2. Remaining fully covered at all times, even when hot.	
3. Appearing depressed, crying easily, a lack of motivation or interest in anything.	
4. Using language that indicates self-loathing.	
5. Becoming very withdrawn.	
6. Sudden weight loss or gain, secretive about eating habits.	
7. Self-blame for anything that goes wrong.	
8. Thinning hair or bald patches.	
9. Increased/excessive use of alcohol or drugs.	

Listen, Talk to and include the young person throughout the process.

1. Discover or informed of a self-harm incident

2. Assess the need for urgent action

Does the student require immediate medical care?

NO

YES

Heavy Bleeding, overdose OR unconscious – call 999 for an ambulance.

3. Are you the right person to deal with this incident? Are you a D/HOS or member of the Safeguarding Team?

YES

NO

Contact your D/HOS/ Safeguarding Team

Reassure the student and decide on the best course of action.

Discuss with D/HOS to determine best course of action.

4. Decide on what is the best course of action based on the young person's injuries and emotional state. Is the young person in imminent danger?

YES

NO

Administer First Aid at school.

Take the young person to A&E.

5. Once the young person is stabilised, both physically & emotionally, you need to gather more information and plan ongoing support as well as making immediate contact with the student's Parent(s)/Carer(s)

Refer to the ongoing support guidance

Annexe 3.

Ongoing Support Guidance - for the Safeguarding Team to follow.

It is important to assess the young person at regular intervals as things may change. It is good practice to keep a record of these meetings on CPOMS and record any information you gather during discussions with the young person and their Parent(s)/Carer(s) and other professionals if they are involved.

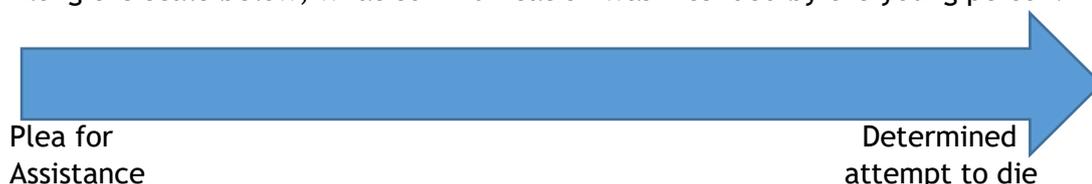
Ensure the young person has the opportunity to talk and be taken seriously you may want to use the following series of questions to help you understand the episode and gather essential information to know how best to respond:

1. About the self-harm

- What was used to self-harm?
- When did it take place and where?
- What time of day/night?
- What did the young person do?
- Who was around at the time?
- Who did they tell?
- What did they do?

2. Degree of intent and risk of further self-harm

Along the scale below, what communication was intended by the young person?



- How long has the young person been thinking about harming themselves?
- Was the act impulsive or part of a long standing plan?
- What were they thinking at the time of the event?
- Who knew that they were feeling so bad? What would you have wanted them to do?
- What did they expect to happen as a result of the event?

3. What other vulnerabilities affect the self-harming behaviour?

Trauma	Family violence, child abuse, bullying
Life events	Parent divorce, exams, bereavement
Cultural factors	Identity, sexuality, language
Social support	Friendship/relationship breakdown, isolation
Family	Mental health of Parent(s)/Carer(s), domestic violence

4. Who knows about the young person's self-harming behaviour?

Who knows the student has/is self-harming?

How does the young person feel about this?

How have Parent(s)/Carer(s) been engaged?

What support has been provided to the young person and their Parent(s)/Carer(s)?

5. Has there been a STORM Risk Assessment to determine degree of suicidal thoughts?

When was it done?

What level of risk is there?

Has the STORM assessment been uploaded to CPOMS?

What actions around this risk are now required?

6. What services need to be involved?

Has a referral been made previously?

- School nurse - complete and submit a 'Teacher Concern' form
- GP (can make a CAMHS referral) - complete and send a 'Consent to share information' form to GP.
- Plymouth Gateway 01752 668000 call this service anytime to refer an urgent or non-urgent self-harm incident.

7. Reassess regularly

Is follow-up required?

- Speak to the student, log any concerns
- Follow up with Parent(s)/Carer(s)/Carers(s)
- The School Nurse and GP
- CAMHS
- Plymouth Gateway

This Self-Harm Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Child Protection
- Confidentiality