

Holy Cross RC Primary School



Self-Harm Policy

Signed _____ [Headteacher]

Date September 2025

Signed _____ [Chair of Governors]

Date September 2025

Next Review Date September 2027

Introduction

Our Definitions of Self-Injury

Holy Cross RC Primary School regards self-injury to be a coping mechanism for young people who are attempting to cope with high levels of distress and emotional pain. It is any deliberate, non-suicidal or sometimes suicidal behaviour which causes physical pain or injury and is aimed at reducing the emotional pain and distress of the individual concerned.

These behaviours may include deliberate bone-breaking, cutting, bruising, banging and non-suicidal overdosing and the behaviours are usually chronic, repetitive and habitual. Young people who self-injure will generally attempt to hide any scarring or injuries and can find it extremely difficult to discuss their behaviours, and the emotions behind them, with others. We understand these behaviours not generally to be about seeking attention but rather to be about seeking relief and release from emotional distress. There can be an element of attention seeking when linked to social media. We also understand that self-injury is generally not suicidal behaviour. However, the emotional distress that causes these behaviours can lead to suicidal thinking and actions and we will consequently take ALL incidents of self-injury seriously, investigate them and attempt to provide the most appropriate emotional support possible. Please see the attached information leaflet for further guidance.

Aims

Our school team is dedicated to ensuring the emotional, physical and mental wellbeing of all the students in our community.

We consequently aim to:

- Recognise any warning signs that one of our students may be engaging in self-harming behaviours.
- Understand the risk factors associated with these behaviours including low self-esteem, perfectionism, mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, home or school problems, social isolation, emotional, physical or sexual abuse.
- Be pro-active in discussing this topic with students we might feel are deliberately harming themselves.
- Know how to respond to students who wish to discuss these behaviours with and take them seriously at all times.
- To signpost individuals to liaise with other agencies so support health plans can be facilitated.
- Provide the appropriate level of practical and emotional support for staff dealing with students who self-harm and ensure appropriate training and education is available to all staff regarding this issue.

- Maintain a confidential & up to date self-harm log via our Safeguarding recording platform, CPOMS, detailing signposting to additional help and support
- Provide an appropriate awareness campaign for students and ensure the topic is a significant part of our PSHE, Mental Health and Well Being and Emotional Literacy curriculums, incorporating information on positive coping strategies and Mindfulness
- To provide similar awareness training to all staff

Recognising Warning Signs

We are aware that for some young people, there will not be any specific warning signs that they are engaging in or contemplating engaging in self-harming behaviours.

For others, the following indicators may be noted:

- risky behaviours, for example, drug taking, alcohol misuse
- lack of self-esteem, being overly negative
- bullying of others
- social withdrawal
- significant change in friendships
- regularly bandaged wrists and arms
- obvious cuts, burns or scratches (that don't look like accidents)
- a reluctance to participate in PE or change clothes
- frequent accidents that cause physical injuries
- wearing long sleeved tops even in very hot weather.

Key Responsibilities

Everyone in the school community - the Governing Body, the Headteacher, all staff and teachers, pupils and parents/carers all have responsibilities to promote and adhere to this policy in order to help ensure the wellbeing of all within the community. These are outlined as follows:

Governing Body

- Ensure pupils have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding self-harm alongside details of relevant support agencies.
- Determine how and when the topic is covered in the school curriculum.
- Provide access to appropriate and accurate information for parents or carers by way of a self-harm policy.
- Ensure that 'reasonable adjustments' are made for students who self-harm (for example, time out, wearing long-sleeved tops)

Headteacher

- Designated Safeguarding Lead to be responsible for all incidents of self-harm and be responsible for disseminating the policy and training to the whole team.
- Be ultimately responsible for ensuring that designated staff receive appropriate training and supervision and support in school from the Safeguarding Team
- Ensure that all staff in the school community are fully conversant with and adhere to our Self-harm Policy.

Designated Staff

- Ensure that the policy is disseminated and implemented appropriately, providing regular feedback and updates to the Headteacher and Governing Body.
- Develop a record keeping system via CPOMS to record such incidents and ensure that this is kept up to date and incidents and developments are regularly reported to the Headteacher.
- Liaise with external agencies (specifically CAMHS) in order to provide the most appropriate support alongside utilising key services to provide up to date education and information for students, parents/carers and staff.
- Liaise with parents or carers as appropriate in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students in the school community.
- Report on suicidal intent or feelings straight away and refer to other professional bodies as appropriate.
- Engage in appropriate supervision so as to ensure personal wellbeing.

All Staff

- Act in an empathic manner, assuring students that they are available to actively listen in a calm and non-judgemental manner.
- Will not invalidate any students' concerns or emotional distress.
- Know the available support options or referral routes and refer students to these as appropriate.
- Ensure that students know they cannot make any promises to keep things confidential if they feel that the student is a risk
- Adhere to our Safeguarding and Health and Safety Policies.
- Be committed to providing an emotionally literate context in which the self-esteem and emotional and mental wellbeing of all are fostered and promoted.
- Be aware of the 'healthy' coping strategies students can utilise and know who to ask for advice if it is felt that these are being abused or becoming unsuccessful for the student.
- Ask for help if they feel a situation falls outside of their emotional competency, skills or knowledge base.

Parents or Carers

- Ensure awareness of this policy and its contents
- Find out about self-harm, making use of school-based and external resources and discuss your findings with your child.
- Ensure that school staff are kept informed of any changes or incidents that occur outside of school that you feel may impact on the behaviour and wellbeing of your child.
- If you become aware that your child is engaging in these behaviours, work with designated staff in order to help us develop the best ways of supporting you and your child.
- Know that you may also need emotional support and find out where this is best accessed.

Pupils

- Try to find something positive and fun in each day.
- Never encourage others to participate in self-harm.
- Discuss why they or others might self-harm, that is emotional factors and not focus on the act of self-harm itself.
- Ensure that they know who they can talk to in the Safeguarding Team both the immediate and longer term should they feel distressed or at risk in either the school or social context
- Alert a trusted and responsible adult, if they are at all concerned about a friend or peer who may be at risk of self-harming, engaging in these behaviours or who may present as suicidal or discussing suicide.

Links to Other Policies

Our Self-harm Policy has direct links to (and should be read in conjunction with) the following policies:

- Health and Safety Policy.
- Online Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use of IT Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy.
- Anti-bullying Policy.
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy.
- Safeguarding Policy.

This policy was created with the whole staff team in consultation with parents/carers and pupils.

We consulted a range of external agencies.

The policy will be monitored by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Governing Body

Appendix Information Leaflet

This leaflet provides information about self-harm and is intended to be helpful to young people and their friends and families, staff and governors.

What is Self-harm?

It is a major public health issue among young people in the UK.

It is something that affects at least 1 in 10 young people, making their lives extremely difficult and seriously affecting their relationships with friends and family.

Self-harm describes a range of things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way.

It might involve:

- taking too many tablets
- cutting
- banging or scratching one's own body
- hitting, provoking fights, bone-breaking
- branding, burning (friction burns)
- hair pulling
- swallowing toxic substances or inappropriate objects
- taking extreme personal risks

These things are not done in a calculated way (as some people might erroneously think). Some young people who self-harm do this in a state of real distress and unbearable emotional pain. Some people may self-harm on only a few occasions while for others it will become a regular thing - like an addiction.

Who Self-harms and Why?

The average age for young people to begin self-harming is 12 years and the majority of people who self-harm are between 11-25 years.

It is more common in young women than men and those who self-harm are more likely to have experienced an emotional trauma or possibly physical, emotional or sexual abuse during childhood.

Factors may include:

- feeling isolated
- relationship problems with partners, friends and family
- academic pressures
- low self-esteem
- feeling depressed
- physical or sexual abuse

- being bullied
- feeling powerless - as though there's nothing you can do to change anything
- feeling hopeless
- using alcohol or drugs needing to show someone else how distressed you are in order to punish them (this is not the norm though - most people are very private about the whole process)

What Help is there?

Young people themselves have suggested that finding ways to distract from self-harming behaviours really helps.

Distraction techniques that are reported to be effective include:

- using a red pen to mark rather than cutting
- rubbing with ice
- hitting a punch bag etc.

Support Organisations

There are also a wide range of services across the UK for young people who self-harm.

- Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- ChildLine - free national helpline for young people, free confidential advice on a range of problems: 0800 111

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

- NHS Direct - A helpline with health advice provided by NHS Nurses: 111
- Samaritans - A telephone helpline and e-mail service for anyone who is feeling upset, worried or suicidal: 116123 free from any phone

<https://www.samaritans.org/branches/bristol/>

- Young Minds - guidance and specialist support for young people

www.youngminds.org.uk/self-harm

- Off The Record Bristol (OTR) - guidance and specialist support for young people: 08088089120

<https://www.otrbristol.org.uk/>