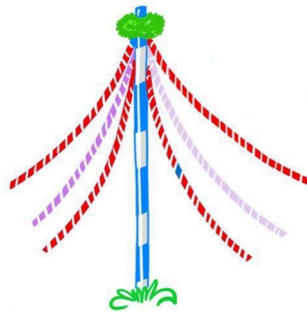


Maypole School



POLICY TO SUPPORT CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE IN SELF-HARM

2026-2027

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. AIMS AND SCOPE	3
• Aims	
• Scope	
3. DEFINITION OF SELF-HARM	3
4. WHAT CAN MAKE A YOUNG PERSON SELF-HARM?	4
• Individual factors	
• Family factors	
• Social Factors	
5. POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS	5
6. WHAT CAN I DO IF I KNOW SOMEONE IS SELF-HARMING?	6
7. RECORDING & REPORTING INCIDENTS OF SELF-HARM	7
8. HELPFUL WEBSITE RESOURCES	7
9. RELATED POLICIES	8

1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

2. AIMS AND SCOPE

Aims

As a school we have a responsibility to meet the needs of our pupils, 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 pupils who self-harm, their peers and their parents or carers.

This policy must be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding policy and our Supporting pupils with Thoughts of Suicide policy.

Scope

The policy applies to all pupils, staff, parents/carers and families, members of the Governing Body and visiting professionals who work with pupils at Maypole School.

3. 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 other parts of the body
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively
- Biting parts of the body
- Under medicating (eg 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 such as car dodging
- 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 Maypole School that we use the term self-harm cautiously. Sometimes pupils within our cohort will engage in sensory seeking behaviours such as skin picking or scratching which are not forms of self-harm. It is important that staff use calm, contained language with the pupils around these behaviours and that we do not mislabel sensory seeking behaviour as self-harm.

4. 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
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Impulsivity
- The need for control

- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem or self-worth
- Poor problem solving skills

Family factors

- Unreasonable expectations
- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse

Social Factors

- Loneliness or social isolation
- Difficulties in making relationships
- Being bullied
- Rejection by peers
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Having a friend who self-harms
- Eating disorders
- Feeling powerless
- Poor parenting
- Family arguments or poor family relationships
- Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family
- Family breakdown
- 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 of relieving their guilt. Some young people feel better immediately after self-harming, and then feel guilty about what they have done.

5. POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate that a pupil 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 or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding 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

Those who are most likely to harm themselves badly may have / exhibit / express:

- 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
- Use a dangerous or violent method of self-harm
- Self-harm regularly
- Be socially isolated
- Have a psychiatric illness

6. WHAT CAN I DO IF I KNOW 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 professional services if at all possible.

Pupils 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 pupil, it is important for staff to maintain a supportive, professional and open attitude. Pupils 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. *It is absolutely essential that self-harm is never dismissed as attention seeking behaviour by the pupil.*

If a young person self-harms in school, then the member of staff with the young person should if possible remove any equipment that they consider to be dangerous. If first aid is required, the staff member must stay with the young person until the first aider arrives, and together the members of staff will make an immediate plan to ensure the young person's safety.

If it is appropriate some of the following questions might be helpful:

- 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?

If the self-harm is significant, the DSL or the Deputy DSL should be notified immediately. They will assess the level of risk that the young person poses to themselves, and will make a plan for supporting the young person.

Where the self-harm causes serious injury, or is in the form of an overdose, then the emergency services must be called immediately, as well as the parents / carer.

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

We encourage pupils 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.

If staff are emotionally affected by an incident of self-harm or a disclosure about self-harm, they are encouraged to talk to their line manager so that appropriate support can be provided for them.

7. RECORDING & REPORTING INCIDENTS OF SELF-HARM

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

It is paramount that pupils 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) or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff must write up an account of the self-harm incident.

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 Lead will notify the parents of the pupil who has self-harmed.

We encourage pupils to report fellow pupils if they think they are at risk of self-harming or of suicide, by speaking to a member of staff.

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

8. HELPFUL WEBSITE RESOURCES

Young people can be directed to helpful websites such as:

- www.kooth.com
- http://www.nshn.co.uk/downloads/Advice_for_young_people.pdf
- www.childline.org.uk
- 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://epicfriends.co.uk/>
- www.neurolove.org

- www.lifesigns.org.uk
- www.recoveryourlife.com

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/>

9. RELATED POLICIES

The following related policies should be read in conjunction to this policy:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Support for pupils who have thoughts of suicide
- Health and Safety Policy (SHEF)
- Online Safety Policy