



## Greenwood School Self-Harming Policy

<b>Date of Policy Issue/Review</b>	October 2022	Review Date: October 2023
<b>Name of Responsible Manager/Headteacher</b>	Stuart Curtis / Fiona Leagas	

### 1. Rationale

Greenwood School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students, staff, parents and our wider community. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is respected and feels safe. All staff at Greenwood School are aware of the dangers of self-harm and the actions that need to be taken to support individuals. This policy is to ensure that students who are seeking help get the right support at that moment and beyond. It will also help to give a structure for staff to follow when cases of self-harm are identified.

### 2. Linked Policies

The following Policies should be read in conjunction with the Self-Harming Policy;

- Personal Development Learning and Drugs Education Policy
- SEN Policy
- Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour and Relationship Policy

### 3. Further Guidance

The policy has also been informed by the following guidance;

- Keeping Children Safe in Education, Dfe, Sept 2020
- Working together to safeguard children, Dfe, Sept 2018
- NICE Guidelines – Self Harm, September 2022

### 4. Definition of Self-harming

An act of Self-harm is any behaviour where a person intentionally sets out to harm themselves. This can either be as an impulsive act or planned. Self-harm will often be carried out in private and over a long period of time. Self-harm is not something that individuals usually do in front of others although peer pressures, on or off line, can act as catalysts for some people. It is important to be aware of the signs that a student is self-harming. Self-Harm can be considered as the symptom and it is important that the underlying difficulty is addressed in order that, Self-Harming thoughts or actions reduce or cease. It is also important to remember that Self-Harm is not an indication that someone wants to end their life, it is a coping mechanism to feelings of distress and in some cases is a

protective factor against actions of suicide. The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of the behaviours which can be considered as self-harm:

- Cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin
- Taking an overdose of prescribed medication with no intent to end life
- Tying something around the body or body part with no intent to end life
- Inserting things into the body
- Swallowing hazardous materials or substances
- Hitting, banging, punching self or parts of the body
- Burning or scalding
- Excessive drinking of alcohol
- Self strangulation
- Pulling out hair from any place of the body including eyelashes
- Over/under eating
- Scouring/scrubbing the body excessively
- Inappropriate use of aerosols
- Risky behaviours such as running into the road, numerous sexual partners or destructive relationships

#### **5. Risk Factors**

The following risk factors **can** make a young person particularly vulnerable to self-harm especially when combined:

Individual Factors:

- Depression / Anxiety / Mental health issues
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity
- Drug or Alcohol abuse
- Gender / Sexual Identity difficulties
- Neurodevelopmental Difficulties

Family Factors:

- Unreasonable expectations
- Neglect or Physical, Sexual or Emotional abuse
- Lack of support at home
- Poor parental relationships and arguments
- Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family
- Loss, separation and bereavement
- Domestic Violence
- Drug and alcohol misuse

Social Factors:

- Difficulty in making relationships / Loneliness
- Being bullied or rejected by peers

- Easy availability of drugs, medication or methods of self-harm
- School issues

## **6. Warning Signs**

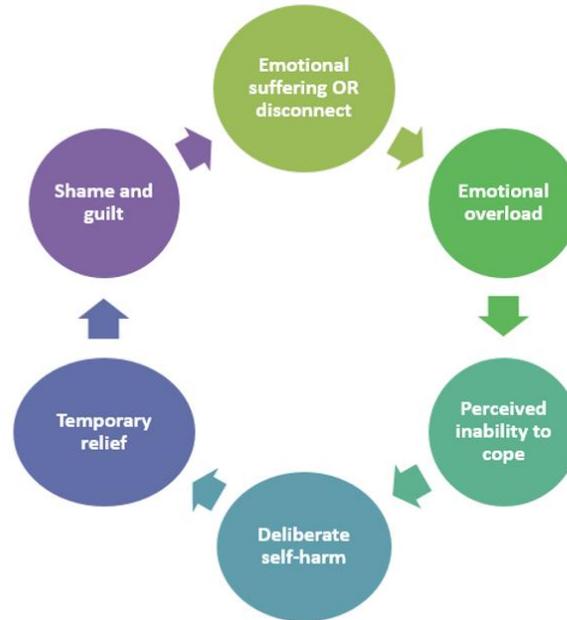
School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm. All instances of self-harm are taken seriously with the underlying issues and emotional distress being investigated. The appropriate emotional support should be given in order to minimise any greater risk.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends
- Changes in activity and mood
- Significant change in academic drive
- Talking or joking about self-harm
- Risk taking behaviour
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing
- Increased levels of aggression and / or bullying
- Obvious cuts, scratches or burns
- Frequent alleged accidents which cause injury
- Regularly bandaged limbs
- Frequent complaints of ill health
- Reluctance to take part in physical activity which requires a change of clothing

## 7. Cycle of Self-Harm

### Cycle of self harm



## 8. Principles for assessment and care

- Treat the young person with dignity, respect and compassion, with an awareness of cultural sensitivity
- Work collaboratively with the young person to ensure their views are heard
- Address immediate physical health needs – contact 111 when necessary and after any reported overdose.
- Contact 999 if urgent medical care is required
- Follow ‘Essential procedure guidelines’ as noted in section 11

## 9. Distraction Activities

Replacing cutting or other forms of self-harm with safer activities can be a positive way of coping with the tension. Things that aim to lower distress can be useful. Preferred options will be unique to each individual. Here are some examples:

- Contacting a friend. Family member or helpline
- Going for a walk or a run (Any physical exercise)
- Getting out of the house and going to a public place
- Reading a book
- Keeping a diary
- Looking after an animal
- Watching TV
- Listening to music or singing along
- Going shopping

- Cooking / eating your favourite meal

Self-soothing examples:

- Relaxation or massage
- Having a bubble bath
- Stroking a cat or other animal
- Going to a forest or park
- Listening to sounds as you walk
- Listening to soothing music (often without words)

Less damaging ways to discharge emotion:

- Clenching ice cubes in your hands until they melt
- Placing ice cubes on the area of the body one wants to harm
- Splashing ice cold water onto the face to bring thoughts back to the present
- Writing, drawing and talking about feelings
- Writing a letter expressing feelings, which does not need to be sent
- Going into a field and screaming / shouting
- Hitting a pillow / soft object
- Listening to loud music
- Physical exercise
- Contacting family, a friend or a helpline.

## **10. Confidentiality**

Greenwood School Child Protection Policy states students need to know that it is not possible to offer unconditional confidentiality. If you consider that a student is at risk of seriously harming themselves or others then confidentiality cannot be kept. It is important that all staff make this clear to students when they feel the students may be wishing to offload. The words 'trust' and 'promise' should not be used by staff in conversation to ensure that the message is clear from the teacher. This will allow the student to make an informed decision as to how much they wish to share.

## **11. Essential procedure when a student self-harms:**

Any member of staff who knows a student who may be thinking of self-harming must report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Mental Health Lead using CPOMS and also follow this up with a face to face conversation with the DSL. In the event of the DSL being unavailable then any member of staff can talk to the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL).

If a child discloses thoughts of self-harm and/or superficial injury then the member of staff should report the disclosure to the DSL and Mental Health Lead after following the Schools Child Protection guidelines in relation to discloses. The DSL / MHL will then take the appropriate action in relation to the disclosure whilst ensuring the student is supported emotionally and first aid has been given if required.

It is the DSL's / MHL responsibility to ensure that the Self-harm Risk Assessment (Appendix B) and the Coping Plan (Appendix C) are then completed for that child by an appropriate adult that they stipulate. The DSL / MHL will also make sure the member of staff has completed a confidentiality statement before undertaking the form with the student. This should include information about us keeping them safe both in and out of school. The final question on the Risk Assessment is a consent

to share question for completion. The DSL will then ensure that this information is shared with all staff so that they are aware of the Risk Assessment and potential triggers for the student.

**12 Role and Responsibilities**

**12.1 – The Governing Body**

The Governing Body has the legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their students. The nominated Governor for Safeguarding should meet with the DSL to discuss the provision for students who self-harm.

**12.2 – The Headteacher**

The Headteacher has responsibility for establishing effective safeguarding procedures with regard to self-harm, thereby ensuring the duty of care of students and staff. A Policy with guidance for staff to use when faced with a case of self-harm supports this.

**12.3 – Staff**

Students may choose to confide with any member of staff if they are concern about their welfare, or that of a peer. School staff need to be aware that injuries presented by students could possibly self-inflicted and that they need to pass on their concerns to the DSL.

A member of staff will:

- Ensure the student is aware of that any conversation will not be confidential
- Be reassuring and support the student to seek further help
- Actively listen
- Be non-judgemental
- Avoid asking the student to display injuries and ask for descriptions
- Seek first aid support if needed and inform the DSL or the situation.

**13 Useful Documents**

- APPENDIX A: How to help a student who self-harms
- APPENDIX B: Risk Assessment
- APPENDIX C: Coping Plan
- APPENDIX D: Coping Plan help
- APPENDIX E: Parental Advice
- APPENDIX F Friend Advice

**14 Support organisations**

- Young minds: 0800 8025544 [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- Childline: 0800 1111 [www.chilline.org.uk](http://www.chilline.org.uk)
- National Self-harm network: 0800 6226000 [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

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Signed

Management Committee Chair.....

Head teacher.....

### **Appendix A: How to help a student who self-harms**

Talking with student who self-harm is not always easy.

SLEEP is an acronym to help you remember the 5 important steps when talking to students about self-harm; **S**top, **L**isten, **E**mpathise, **E**xplore, **P**lan.

**Stop** and make time to talk:

- Remember if a student approaches you it is you that they want to talk to.
- Don't try to rush the conversation, give the student time to talk and think.
- If you are busy agree a time for the student to come back and see you when you can give them your full attention.
- Show them that they are important and stop doing other things.
- Talk in a private space but where other staff can see you and know where you are.

**Listen** to what the student is saying:

- Listening lets the student know that you care and will encourage them to open up.
- They may feel lots of different emotions so be patient.
- Don't try to offer solutions, let them explain.

**Empathise** with how they are feeling:

- Students will need to know that you accept what they are saying.
- Remain calm and open at all times.
- Acknowledge that they are feeling distressed.
- Reassure them that things can change and that talking to you was the first step.

**Explore** what the young person is saying:

- Be curious what the student is really saying.
- 'I wish I was dead' can be upsetting to hear but does not necessarily mean that the student is suicidal.
- Many statements are due to a sense of helplessness or frustration and it is that which will need to be expanded upon.

**Plan** what you will do:

- Firstly the need to share the conversation with the DSL/ MHL if that is not you and this must be conveyed to the student.
- DSL/ MHL will make the decision regarding who they inform but you can pass on the student's wishes. However, CP protocols will take priority.
- After the discussion with the DSL / MHL they will decide who is best placed to complete the safety plan in Appendix C.
- Check-in with the student the next day to see how they are feeling.

Appendix B: Risk Assessment

Self Harm Risk Assessment Form

**How long have you had thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself?**

**How often do you get these thoughts?** Occasionally, 1-2 x a week, daily, more

**How intense are these thoughts?** (scale : 1-10) 1 = I can ignore them, 10 = I have to act on them.

**What have you considered / used to hurt yourself?**

**Have you hurt Yourself ? When was this ? What did you do ? What happened next? How many times have you hurt yourself ?**

When ?

Consequences

What?

How many times?

Have you had thoughts to end your life? .....

Have you made any plans to end your life?.....

Can you tell me about those plans? .....

.....

.....

**Who is supporting you ?**

**Which adults do you give consent to share this information with?**

Appendix C: Coping Plan

My Personal Crisis and Coping Plan

When I am coping this is what life looks like for me:

My goals, dreams and hopes:

The following are signs that I am struggling to cope:

The following are signs I am not coping/ am in crisis:

Things that keep me well day to day:

My triggers for not coping:

Plan of action when I am struggling to cope:

Plan of action when I am in crisis:

Support I can access:

- [www.hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk](http://www.hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk) click the: HELP I'M IN CRISIS BUTTON
- Freephone Samaritans: 116 123 (24hrs, 7days/ week)
- YoungMinds Crisis Messenger; free, 24hrs /7days/ week text YM to 85258
- Call 111 24hrs, 7 days/ week)or visit [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) and speak to the NHS Mental Health Triage Service

Websites; [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) [www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk)  
[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net);

Apps; Stay Alive; What's Up; Well Mind; Blue Ice; Calm

Harm, MeeTwo

**Appendix D: Coping Plan help**

**My Personal Crisis and Coping Plan**

**When I am coping this is what life looks like for me:**

*How do you normally act and behave when you are well?*

*What would others say or notice about you when you are coping?*

**My goals, dreams and hopes:**

*Having short, medium and long term goals are important; they keep us motivated to keep going and give us things to look forward to.*

**The following are signs that I am struggling to cope:**

*What changes do you notice in how you think, feel, behave when you are feeling overwhelmed or are struggling to cope?*

*What would others say or notice about you when you are struggling to cope?*

**The following are signs I am not coping/ am in crisis:**

*What changes do you notice in how you think, feel, behave when you are not coping or are in crisis?*

*What would others say or notice about you when you are in crisis?*

**Things that keep me well day to day:**

*Are there things (e.g., routine, having regular meals, taking medication, seeing friends, doing hobbies and interests regularly) that help to keep you happy, healthy and able to cope?*

**My triggers for not coping:**

*Triggers are reasons or factors that might contribute to why you feel unable to cope. Common triggers are feeling like you have too much to do or arguments or conflict with others. Triggers are personal to you so no one else can question whether should or shouldn't contribute to how you feel.*

**Plan of action when I am struggling to cope:**

*Think of steps you and others supporting you can take or things you can do to help you cope and tolerate upsetting thoughts, feelings and situations. List as many as you can think of.*

**Plan of action when I am in crisis:**

*Think of steps you and others supporting you can take or things you can do to stay safe and manage when you feel unable to cope. List as many as you can think of.*

**Support I can access:**

- [www.hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk](http://www.hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk) click the: HELP I'M IN CRISIS BUTTON
- Freephone Samaritans: 116 123 (24hrs, 7days/ week)
- YoungMinds Crisis Messenger; free, 24hrs /7days/ week text YM to 85258
- Call 111 24hrs, 7 days/ week)or visit [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) and speak to the NHS Mental Health Triage Service

Websites; [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) [www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk) [www.thecalmzone.net;](http://www.thecalmzone.net;)

Apps; Stay Alive; What's Up; Well Mind; Blue Ice; Calm

Harm, MeeTwo

## Appendix E: Parental Advice Information

It can be difficult to find out someone you care about is harming themselves. As a parent/ carer you may feel angry, shocked, guilty and upset. These reactions are normal, but what the person you care about really needs, is support from you. They need you to stay calm and to listen to them. The reason someone self-harms is to help them cope with very difficult feelings that build up and which they cannot express. They need to find a less harmful way of coping.

### What is self-harm?

Self-harm is any behaviour such as self-cutting, swallowing objects, taking an overdose etc. It is where the intent is to deliberately cause harm to self.

### How common is self-harm?

There has been a large increase in the number of young people who harm themselves. A recent survey found that approximately 10% of young people had harmed themselves. A global study of 40 countries revealed the following:

- About 17% of all people will self-harm during their lifetime
- The average age of the first incident of self-harm is 13
- 45% of people use cutting as their method of self-injury
- About 50% of people seek help for their self-harm but only from friends instead of professionals.

The likelihood of a person self-harming is significantly larger within the LGBTQ+ community.

### Why do young people harm themselves?

All sorts of upsetting events can trigger self-harm. Examples are: arguments with family, break up of a relationship, failure in exams, bullying at school, a desire to escape, to reduce tension, to express hostility, to make someone feel guilty or to increase caring from others. Sometimes several stresses occur over a short period of time and one more incident can be the final straw. Young people who have emotional difficulties or low-self-esteem can be particularly at risk from self-harm. Suffering a bereavement or serious rejection can also increase the risk. Sometimes young people try to escape their problems by taking drugs and alcohol. For some self-harm is an attempt to show others that something is wrong in their lives. Self-harming should not be seen as attention seeking behaviour but a genuine need which requires support.

What can you do to help?

- Keep an open mind
- Make time for them
- Help them to find another way of coping
- Keep the home environment safe
- Go with them to get help from your GP
- Young Minds parent helpline 0808 8025544  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-self-harm/>

## Appendix F: Friend Advice

It can be very difficult being the friend of someone you know who is self-harming. The information below can be used to help support those students who are worried about friends but don't know what they can do to help. It is very important that you stress to the student that the situation is not theirs to fix. The student needs to be supported so that they can be a good friend not feel like they need to solve the challenges that the other person is facing.

- Be there for your friend by listening and giving support.
- Be honest and open. If you are worried by your friend's safety then you should tell an adult. Your friend will need to know you are doing this because you care about them.
- Encourage your friend to get help and tell an adult.
- Get information from trusted sites – CAMHS have a series of informative guides about mental health difficulties that might be useful.
- You may not be able to solve the challenges. It is not your fault and you should not feel guilty about it.
- Your friend may get angry with you and say that you do not understand. Try not to take this personally. Often people push away those they are closest to as to try and test the relationship.
- You will need to find an adult to talk to about what you are feeling. You may not always be there for your friend but someone else will be if they can get help they need.