



PENKETH HIGH SCHOOL

# **School Self-Harm Support Policy 2018-19**

**Reviewed by DSL Steven Panter and ratified by Governors - March 2018**

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## Introduction

Penketh High School is fully committed to Safeguarding young people from harm. This policy is intended to give rationale, procedures and further guidance for all staff both teaching and non – teaching to support pupils who do self-harm.

Recent research indicates that about 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 parents of students currently engaging in self-harm.

## **Aims: of the Policy**

- 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 fixed procedures and guidance for staff working with children and their families of children who do self-harm.

## **Definition of Self-Harm**

Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to 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
- Burning or scalding
- Hair-pulling
- Banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively

## **Risk Factors**

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

Individual Factors:

- Depression / anxiety
- Eating Disorders
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Impulsive behaviour
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Unreasonable or unsustainable expectations of self or parents

Family Factors

- Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Poor relationship with parents

- Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family
- Being a currently or previously a child in care
- Being a young carer

## Statements and procedures - Roles and Responsibilities

### The Principal and Headteachers

- Will ensure additional training on Self-Harm for Designated Senior Leads and Pastoral Support Staff.
- Will ensure that appropriate time is given to raise awareness of self-harm: its causes, how it may manifest itself and its consequences to all staff.
- Will ensure that all staff are aware of the action that they are required to take should they be made aware of a child who has self-harmed or discovers a student self-harming
- Will ensure that all staff are supported where they are working with children who are self-harming through supervision arrangements.
- Teaching staff and Support Staff
- Will keep an open mind when made aware of students who maybe self-harming and pass their concerns to a Pastoral Lead or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Will support the child by following the protocols and guidance in Appendices 2 and 3
- Will not promise confidentiality.
- Will seek first aid help where a child is found to be self-harming and will ensure that information is passed to the Pastoral Lead or Designated safeguarding Lead.

### Designated Leads for Safeguarding

- Will case manage alongside the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Lead pupils who are self – harming on their own site:

This may include:

- Contacting Parents/Carers
- Direct Referral to school health
- Direct referral to CAHMS or CART
- Arranging professional assistance eg; doctor, nurse, social services.
- Will consider the need for a Risk Assessment for the child when they are in school.
- Staff Support
- Staff Supervision
- All staff who works with cases of self-harm has a named Supervisor whom they can meet with to support their emotional wellbeing.
- Raising Awareness amongst students.
- Students will be encouraged to inform staff at school that they have concerns about a friend who they believe is showing signs of self -harm. This will be done through the contact with any member of staff or through the [Safeguarding@Penketh.warrington.sch.uk](mailto:Safeguarding@Penketh.warrington.sch.uk) dedicated email.
- 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 & 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 be given the opportunity to discuss their concerns as a group with their Head of Year or Learning mentor. This will be decided by

the Designated Lead if and when it is deemed to be appropriate and supportive to the individual who is self-harming.

### **Evaluation**

- The school will regularly review to ensure best practice.
- The training received by staff in school to support pupils who self-harm.
- The amount of support received from partner agencies and its value

### **Appendix 1 – Understanding Why People Self-Harm**

There are a wide range of reasons why people turn to self-harm and every single case is different but there are certain themes that recur time and time again. Here are some quotes from young people who've self-harmed to illustrate some of the most common reasons given in order to help you understand some of the reasons young people turn to this unhealthy coping mechanism.

### **Control**

During adolescence, a time when young people are keen to assert their independence, they can begin to feel very out of control of their own lives. This can be for a number of reasons, perhaps their life is in chaos with difficult relationships at home or school, or perhaps they feel like they're being told what to do every minute of the day and don't have the freedom they'd like from parents or teachers. When you can't control anything else in your life, you can completely control your own body.

### **Release and Communication of Feelings**

For people who struggle to communicate or express their feelings in another way, self-harm can feel like the only way to communicate and release those feelings.

### **Changing self-harm behaviours**

Here are some simple ideas that you can use to support someone who is trying to reduce how much they self-harm. Be realistic in your expectations and be sure to celebrate progress, no matter how minimal.

### **Time and Place**

People who frequently self-harm will often do so in the same place and at similar times each day. Talk to them about whether it's possible to try to disrupt this routine. Can you work with them to think of an alternative activity they might be able to do at their trigger time, or is there somewhere different they could go? As a minimum perhaps you can think with them about how to ensure they are not alone at the times when they are most vulnerable from self-harm. If it's not possible for them to be physically accompanied, you might suggest they phone a helpline such as Child line or the Samaritans so they feel less alone.

### **Means for Self-Harm**

Some people will always use the same implement to self-harm with. If they are ready, they might think about throwing away this implement. Doing so prematurely may leave them feeling very desperate and vulnerable so this needs to be carefully considered. If they are not yet ready to dispose of their implement then they might consider locking it away, either in a safety deposit box or even simply in a shoebox wrapped up with tape or ribbon. Making their preferred implement less available will provide valuable thinking time and remove some of the impulsivity from the act of self-harming; making it more likely they'll be able to think of an alternative coping mechanism.

Another helpful approach is to encourage them to reduce their easy access to items that might be used for self-harming. This might mean locking away or removing things like blades, knives and medicines where they cannot be so easily accessed.

### **Try to Break Rituals**

Self-harming activities can become highly ritualised, adding a feeling of control to the process and providing a sense of relief and release to the person harming. Trying to remove some of the more ritualised or repeated parts of their self-harming behaviours can reduce the reinforcement that young people feel from the activity. It also makes it harder for them to self-harm on auto pilot which, again, reduces the likelihood of them going through with an act of self-harm.

If a young person feels comfortable enough to talk to you about their self-harm rituals, take a real interest and try to understand their motivations behind each part of the process. Question why they do each thing and where possible make suggestions for alternative behaviours. Occasionally your words and questions will have an impact on the sufferer and play back to them during a self-harm act and empower them to stop.

### **Key documents/legislation and web links**

#### **Useful sources of support**

- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) – Young Minds are committed to supporting the emotional wellbeing of all pupils. This website has lots of resources and advice for teachers on a range of mental health issues.
- [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk) – support for young people impacted by self-harm
- Samaritans – The Samaritans helpline is available 24 hours a day 363 days a year and their trained advisers are a great source of support if you need to talk to someone.  
Helpline: 08457 90 90 90 [Email: [Jo@Samaritans.org](mailto:Jo@Samaritans.org)]  
Website: [www.samaritans.org/](http://www.samaritans.org/)
- Papyrus – Papyrus is aimed specifically at preventing suicide in young people. They have a free UK helpline which provides support and advice for young people at risk or those who care about them.  
Helpline: 0800 068 41 41 [Email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)]  
Website: [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

## Appendix 2- Managing Incidents of Self-Harm

Self-harm has occurred on a pupil

- Make sure the child is calm and leave them with Pastoral Support. Ensure that details are passed to the Designated Lead or Pastoral Manager
- Once the pupil is stable the DSL will make arrangements for further action e.g.:
- Referral to CAMHS
- Parents to arrange GP visit
- Writing of a risk assessment
- Record incident on school generated form
- Consider Risk Assessment

### Pastoral Support at Penketh High school

Self-Harm is a safeguarding issue and falls under all other ways to manage safeguarding issues in school. Staff are expected to raise concerns about self-harm issues as they would for all safeguarding issues

Please see the following linked Policy on our website and recommended procedures:

[Penketh High School Safeguarding and child protection policy 2018-19](#)

Pastoral support in Penketh High school is readily available in school to support our vulnerable pupils

The following members of staff are available at different times to support pupils who we are concerned have self-harmed in school or at home:

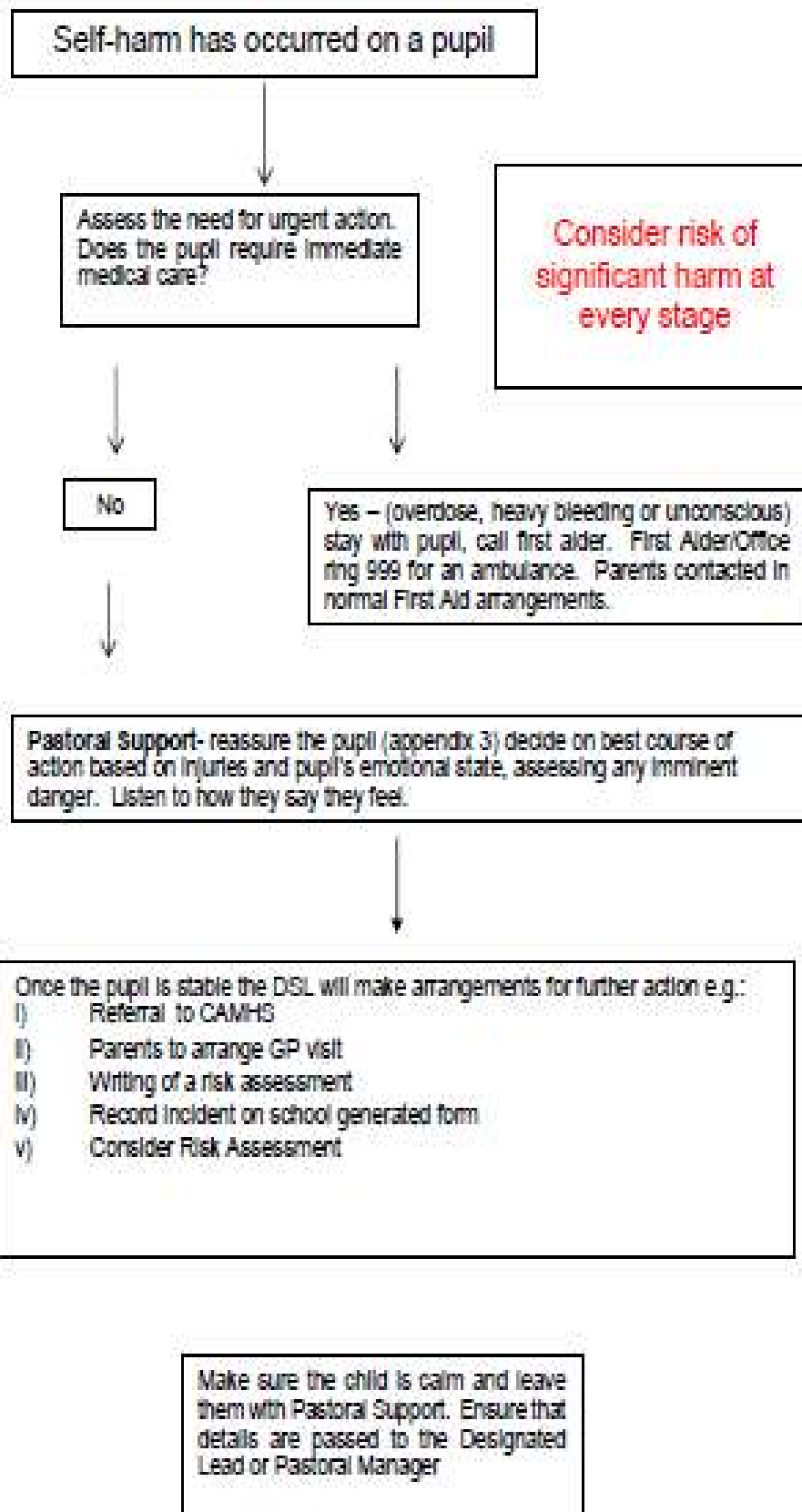
- Designated safeguarding Lead
- DSL Support
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing workers x 2
- Head of Year x 5
- Learning Mentors x 4
- Members of SLT x 5
- School Nurse x 1
- First Aiders x 5

It is these members of staff role to reassure the pupil (see appendix 3) and decide on best course of action based on injuries and pupil's emotional state, assessing any imminent danger. It is imperative they listen to how the pupil says they feel.

### Consider risk of significant harm at every stage

- Assess the need for urgent action.
- Does the pupil require immediate medical care?
- Yes – (overdose, heavy bleeding or unconscious) stay with pupil, call first aider. First Aider/Office ring 999 for an ambulance. Parents contacted in normal First Aid arrangements.

## Appendix 2- Managing Incidents of Self-Harm





### **Appendix 3: Children: How they would like you to respond**

#### **Help me manage my-self harm at school**

- Your first response to knowing I self-harm is very important. Please do not judge me negatively and try to understand.
- Stay calm and help me deal with the immediate situation.
- Try to understand my feelings of distress even if they appear minor to you.
- Ask me how I am feeling.
- Help me feel I have some control by asking me what I would like to happen and what I might need.
- It makes a huge difference for me to know that there is an adult at my school who knows all about my condition and who I can talk to if I am worried or unwell.