Self-Harm Policy

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Date	Notes

Foxford Community School recognises that self-harm is a coping mechanism for individuals who are attempting to manage challenging emotional states.

ALL incidents of self-harm are to be taken seriously. As a school we aim to provide the most appropriate emotional support possible.

Aim

The overall aim is to ensure that staff are able to recognise and act swiftly and appropriately to all cases of student self-harm.

Objectives

- To recognise any form of self-harm
- To understand that self-harming is almost always a symptom of some underlying emotional or psychological issue
- To put in place a framework for intervention
- To be alert to the possibility that self-harm may arise from a history of abuse

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is any deliberate behaviour that inflicts physical harm on someone's own body and is often aimed at relieving emotional distress. Self-harm can include:

- Cutting themselves
- Scratching themselves
- Burning or scalding their body
- Banging and bruising themselves
- Scrubbing or scouring their body
- Deliberate bone-breaking
- Punching themselves
- Sticking things into their body
- Swallowing inappropriate objects or liquids
- Taking too many tablets (overdose)
- Biting themselves
- Pulling their hair or eye lashes out

Less obvious self-harm behaviours also include:

- Controlled eating patterns – anorexia, bulimia, over-eating
- Indulging in risky behaviour / risky sexual behaviour/ destructive use of drugs or alcohol
- An unhealthy lifestyle
- Getting into fights

Warning signs

Self-harm may present as visible or invisible signs. The latter can include ingested materials or cuts/ bruises under the clothing.

Staff, parents/carers and fellow students may become aware of warning signs that might indicate that a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to self-harm or suicide. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and anyone observing any of these should seek further advice from a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL).

Warning signs may include:

- Visible signs of injury (e.g. scarring)
- A change in dress habit that may be intended to disguise injuries (e.g. an unexpected / sudden change to wearing long sleeved tops)
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family; becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity or mood (e.g. becoming more introverted or withdrawn)
- 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
- Changes in clothing / image

Links to emotional distress (including abuse)

Those who self-harm may be suffering emotional or psychological distress and it is vital that all such distress is taken seriously to assist in alleviating that distress or to minimise the risk of increasing distress and potentially suicide.

Any young person who suggests they are experiencing suicidal feelings must be taken extremely seriously and safeguarding procedures put in place immediately. A young person showing this level of distress must not be left unattended, parents/carers should be contacted immediately. Medical support should be sought by school or parent/carer.

The police may be called to offer support where necessary and if appropriate to do so, although this decision should be taken by a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL).

Emotional/psychological risk factors associated with self-harm can be:

- Recent trauma e.g. death of a friend or relative, parental divorce
- Negative thought patterns and low self-esteem
- Bullying or abuse – sexual, physical, emotional or through neglect
- Sudden changes in behaviour and/or academic performance
- Relationship difficulties (with family or friends)
- Learning difficulties
- Pressure to achieve (from teachers or parents)
- Substance abuse (including tobacco, alcohol or drugs)
- Issues around gender identification or sexuality

Other causal or risk factors

- Inappropriate advice or encouragement from social media or other websites
- Experimentation, dares or bravado, copycat behaviour
- Concerns related to pregnancy or potential pregnancy (including an attempt to terminate)
- A history of abuse of self-harm in the family
- Parental separation
- Domestic abuse and/or substance misuse in the home
- Media or political influence
- Issues surrounding religious or cultural identity

Prevention

It is estimated that around 15 % of young people may try to hurt themselves on purpose at some point between the ages of 11 and 16. It is far better to prevent self- harm before it happens.

The risk of self-harm can be significantly reduced by the creation of a supportive environment in which individual's self-esteem is raised and healthy peer relationships are fostered. Foxford School recognises that this can be achieved through the development of good relationships by all members of the school community and in particular through the PSHCE program.

Staff awareness of issues leading to self-harm is increased through training and the production of comprehensive policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, anti- bullying, appropriate medical polices and a full and informative policy on self- harming. This policy is posted on the school's website to achieve the widest circulation, including parents/carers.

Students are provided with a wide range of internal and outside sources of help and these are widely publicised. As well as Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL), Year Leaders, Enhanced Year Leaders and a robust pastoral system within the school, students are given information about external agencies that can provide support and have access to school counselling, Education Mental Health Practitioners and school nurse.

How to Deal with Self Harm Incidents

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL), Welfare Team, Year Leaders and Enhanced Year Leaders are the staff responsible for dealing with incidents of self-harm at the school.

These designated staff member(s) will:

- Listen to students in emotional distress calmly and in a non-judgmental way
- Guide students towards appropriate support and help
- Promote problem-solving techniques and non-harmful ways to deal with emotional distress
- Keep records of self-harm incidents and concerns on CPOMS, with appropriate actions being appropriately assigned and monitored
- Liaise with outside agencies where appropriate to support students who self- harm
- Keep up to date with information about self-harm and broaden their personal knowledge about self-harm and mental health disorders
- Contact parent(s) or carer(s) **the day** that the self-harm is identified and wherever possible involve the student in this process; inform the parent(s) or carer(s) about appropriate help and support available for their child; monitor the student's progress following an incident. In a situation in which it is disclosed that self-harm is symptomatic of abuse in the home, the self-harm should be referred to Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL) who may take the decision to make a referral directly to the appropriate authority with or without informing parents/carers. Where parents/carers are informed, they will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school in supporting the young person
- Be aware of health and safety issues such as first-aid and clearing up if a self-harm incident takes place at the school
- Take the student to a First Aider if appropriate. Students must not display open wounds/injuries - these must be dressed appropriately (in an emergency an ambulance must be called)
- Take advice from Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL), where appropriate. In some cases self-harm may raise safeguarding issues in which case the procedures laid down in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy must be followed
- Refer the student to external agencies if appropriate
- Know when people, other than parents/carers, (e.g. social workers, educational psychologists) need to be informed
- Know when to seek help to deal with their own personal feelings and distress

All staff and teachers are expected to:

- Listen to students in emotional distress calmly and in a non-judgmental way
- Treat the matter as a safeguarding and child protection issue in the first instance and follow the procedures set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; speak confidentially to Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL) **the same day** if they become aware of a student who is self-harming or they are alerted to a self-harming issue, or a student discloses self-harm
- Not make promises (e.g. assuring confidentiality) which can't be kept
- Reassure students that in order to seek health and happiness people need to know about their problems so that they can help

Advice to parents

Parents/carers should not feel isolated if they know or suspect that their child (or one of their child's friends) is at risk or is actually self-harming. The advice contained within this policy provides a first source of useful information and guidance. If a parent/carers has any concerns they should contact the school immediately for help, support and advice. A student's tutor, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL or DDSL), Welfare Team, Year Leader or Enhanced Year Leader may be approached.

Useful Resources and Helplines

Childline – 24 helpline for children and young people. https://www.childline.org.uk/

Young Minds – national charity committed to improving the mental health of children and young people. Interactive website for advice and information. https://www.youngminds.org.uk/

CASS self-injury helpline – emotional support, Monday – Thursday 7pm-10pm. https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/pages/faqs/category/phone-support

SelfHarm UK - SelfharmUK is a project dedicated to supporting young people impacted by self-harm, providing a safe space to talk and ask any questions. https://www.selfharm.co.uk/

The Mix helpline: A free helpline for young people where you can talk to trained supporters about any issue. www.themix.org.uk

Kooth - Kooth is an anonymous site which helps young people feel safe in exploring their concerns and seeking support. https://www.kooth.com/

Flow Chart for Management of Self Harm in School

Staff member becomes aware of the potential self-harm issue



Staff member reports this the dame day under Safeguarding and Child Protection concerns to a DSL and logs concern on CPOMS



DSL decides who is best placed to speak to the student and therefore may devolve this responsibility to one of the pastoral or welfare team if there are no additional concerns about the student



The member of staff identified sees the student and contacts parents to advise them the same day, the concern has been recorded (unless a DSL has advised that parents should not be contacted because of wider information held).
Student/parent/carer should be given supportive information and advice.
Record of student meeting and phone conversation with parent/carer must be logged on CPOMS.