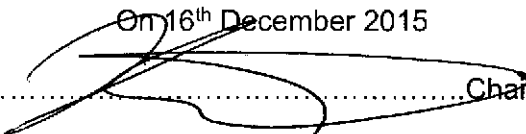


SELF-HARM POLICY

This Policy was adopted by:

The Directors of the Primary Academies Trust

On 16th December 2015

Signed by.....  Chair of Directors

Review Date May 2017 Signed

Review Date May 2019 Signed

Review Date May 2021 Signed

Linked policies: Child Protection Policy; Health & Safety Policy; Confidentiality Policy; Positive Handling Policy; Supporting Pupils with a Medical Condition Policy;

SELF-HARM POLICY

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1. Introduction

Recent research indicates that up to one in ten young people in the UK engage in self-harming behaviours. Self-harm is not a suicide attempt, on the contrary, it is a coping mechanism and it is a desperate attempt to deal with a difficult problem or situation. School staff can play an important role in preventing self-harm and also in supporting pupils, peers and parents of pupils currently engaging in self-harm.

2. Scope

This document describes the approach of schools within The Primary Academies Trust to self-harm. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

3. Aims

- To increase understanding and awareness of self-harm
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with pupils who self-harm
- To provide support to pupils who self-harm and their peers and parents/carers

4. Definition of Self-harm

Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to deliberately 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
- pulling out hair
- banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body
- scouring or scrubbing the body excessively.

5. Risk Factors

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

Individual Factors

- depression/anxiety
- poor communication skills
- low self-esteem
- poor problem solving skills
- hopelessness
- impulsivity
- drug or alcohol abuse

Family Factors

- unreasonable expectations
- neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- poor parental relationships and arguments
- depression, suicide or self-harm in the family

Social Factors

- difficulty in making friends/loneliness
- being bullied or rejected by peers

6. Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. These warning sign should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further guidance from the pupil's teacher or Head of School.

Possible warning signs include

- changes in eating/sleeping habits (pupil may appear overly tired)
- increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity and mood; e.g. more aggressive or introverted than usual
- 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; e.g. becoming a Goth

7. Staff Roles in working with Pupils who self-harm

7.1 Pupils may choose to confide in a member of School staff if they are concerned about their own welfare or that of a peer.

7.2 School staff may experience a range of feelings in response to self-harm in a pupil, such as, anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, guilt, helplessness, disgust and rejection. However in order to offer the best possible help to pupils it is important to try and maintain a respectful and non-judgemental attitude – a pupil who has chosen to discuss their concerns with a member of School staff is showing a considerable amount of courage and trust.

7.3 Staff should bear in mind that self-harm is a very private habit and great care needs to be taken with confidentiality not to worsen the situation for the child. Staff should not demand that the child stop the activity, as this is risky in itself.

7.4 Pupils need to be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality. If you consider a pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves then confidentiality cannot be kept. It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept even if a pupil puts pressure on you to do so.

7.5 Any member of staff who is aware of a pupil engaging or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-harm should speak to the pupil's class teacher. The flow diagram at the end of the policy sets out the procedure to be followed.

7.6 Following the report, the class teacher and Head of School will decide on the appropriate course of action.

7.7 If a pupil has self-harmed in school, or on a school trip, a first aider should be called for immediate help.

7.8 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.

8. Further Considerations

8.1 Any meetings with a pupil, their parents or their peers regarding self-harm should be recorded in writing, including:

- dates and times
- an action plan
- concerns raised
- details of anyone else who has been informed.

8.2 It is important to encourage pupils to let you know if one of their group is in trouble, upset or showing signs of self-harming. 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 and being a good friend. They should also be aware that their friend will be treated in a caring and supportive manner.

8.3 The peer group of a young person who self-harms may value the opportunity to talk to a member of staff either individually or in a small group. When a young person is self-harming it is important to be vigilant in case close friends of the individual are also self-harming. Occasionally schools discover that a number of pupils in the same peer group are harming themselves.

Procedure for identification and management of pupils exhibiting signs of self-harm

