



Self-Harm Policy



Approved by: SPC Full Governing Body

Date: March 2026

Next review due by: March 2027

Our Mission

We put Jesus at the heart of everything that we do.

special **kind** unique inventive
generous awesome gentleness
purity helpful good **positive**
expressive enjoyable caring
adventurous bouncy **zingy**
fun **truth** colourful superb
confident **polite** **compassion**
friendly enthusiastic marvellous
comforting nice remarkable
happy **magnificent** great
meaningful forgiveness
exceptional **joy** wonderful
interesting creative hopeful
incredible **spectacular**
original **brilliant** **peace**
lovely service outstanding
dynamic **amazing**
dignity fabulous impressive
beautiful **sacrifice**
glorious **fantastic** **tolerance**
exciting terrific delicious
integrity cool considerate
phenomenal laughing funny
sharing **humility** loving
energetic **smiling** captivating
justice encouraging mercy
gracious **faithful** important
supporting delightful **thankful**
hard-working tremendous



St. Peter's
Catholic Primary School

This policy forms an essential part of the school's medical and safeguarding procedures. It should be viewed in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

For the purposes of this policy, references to "parents/carers" shall be taken to include all individuals who hold parental responsibility for a child, as well as those who have been formally delegated authority to make day-to-day decisions in respect of the child (including, but not limited to, kinship carers and foster carers).

Purpose

The overall aim is to ensure that staff are able to recognise and act both swiftly and appropriately to all cases of pupil self-harm. In keeping with the school's values, vision and aims, this protocol aims to achieve these objectives:

- For all staff to recognise any form of self-harm or mutilation
- For all staff to understand that self-harming is almost always a symptom of an underlying emotional or psychological issue
- For all staff to be alert to the possibility that self-harm may arise from a history of abuse
- For all staff to know how to respond to students who self-harm and how to offer support in the short and long term.
- To put in place a framework for intervention
- For the school to be able to offer support depending upon the individual needs of the student
- To help students improve their self-esteem and emotional literacy.
- To support teachers who come into contact with students who self-harm.
- To prevent self-harm from spreading within the school.
- To have clear guidelines for staff – who needs to be informed, when do parents and external agencies need to be contacted.
- To provide education about self-harm for students and staff.

What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is any deliberate behaviour that inflicts physical harm on someone's own body and is 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;
- attempting to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

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 and fellow pupils may become aware of warning signs which could indicate that a pupil is experiencing difficulties which may lead to self-harm or suicide. These can include decreased school attendance and the giving away of possessions. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and anyone observing any of these should seek further advice from one of the school's Designated Safeguarding Leads.

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)
- refusal to remove long-sleeved clothing despite high temperatures
- 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
- low self-esteem
- reluctance to attend school / emotion-based school non-attendance

Links to Emotional Distress (including abuse)

Those who self-harm are usually suffering emotional or psychological distress and it is vital that all such distress is taken seriously to assist in both alleviating it and reducing the risk of increased distress or 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.

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
- 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 sexuality
- medical condition

Other causal or risk factors

- inappropriate advice or encouragement from internet websites, social media or chat-rooms
- experimentation, 'dares' or bravado, 'copycat behaviour'
- concerns by a girl that she may be pregnant (including an attempt to terminate this)
- a history of abuse of self-harming in the family
- parental separation
- domestic abuse and/or substance misuse in the home
- media influence
- issues surrounding religious or cultural identity

Information must be available within school to help students experiencing distress find an appropriate person to talk, e.g. a confidential listener.

Within St Peter's Catholic Primary School, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Miss Jordan) and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (Mr Fitzgerald and Mrs Giacalone), working in coordination, are responsible for self-harm matters. The school also has a Designated Senior Mental Health Lead (Miss Jordan).

Anybody concerned about a student must liaise with one of the DSLs as per safeguarding procedure. The DSL will take action as required, responding with sensitivity, discretion and in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. See procedure below.

Prevention

An estimated 1 in 12 children self-harm at some point and 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 an individual's self-esteem is raised and healthy peer relationships are fostered. This can be achieved through the development of meaningful relationships by all members of the school community and in particular through the school's Safeguarding Curriculum: the Protective Behaviours programme and Ten:Ten Life to the Full Religious Sex Education programme.

Staff awareness of issues leading to self-harm is increased through training and the understanding of comprehensive policies, linked to: Safeguarding and Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, Medical Needs and Self Harm. This policy is uploaded to the school's website to achieve the widest circulation, including parents.

The pupils are provided with a wide range of internal and outside sources of help and these are widely publicised. As well as the Designated Safeguarding Leads and a robust pastoral system within the school, the pupils are able to speak to any member of staff that they feel safe talking to and are familiar with using their 'Network Hand' to identify trusted adults. The school staff are strongly supported by the Senior Leadership Team in all matters concerned with Child Protection. The Senior Leadership Team have access to support from external agencies, such as: Warwickshire Children and Families Services, RISE Mental Health Team and School Nursing service (Warwickshire Child and Family Wellbeing Service), who can offer advice and assist with issues including pupils who self-harm.

School Procedures for Dealing with Self-Harm

If there is concern that a pupil may be self-harming, or is thinking of self-harming, this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Leads in person and via CPOMS, who will then review the information and decide next steps. This will first involve ensuring the child is safe and emotionally supported within school. It will then likely involve a conversation with the child, discussion with parents (including ensuring support for their own emotional wellbeing) and assessment of severity of need and appropriate next steps and referrals to external agencies. This will often mean the DSL will liaise with the School Nursing Team.

If physical harm has occurred, the pupil should be taken to Minor Injuries or to A&E for a medical assessment and care. (In an emergency, an ambulance must be called).

The Designated Safeguarding Leads will monitor the young person and may organise mental health support, in consultation with their parent(s), for the pupil within school or through external agencies; they will also offer the family additional support through the Early Support Pathway.

In some cases, self-harm may raise safeguarding issues; in which case, the procedures detailed within the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy must be followed. In the case of severe self-harm requiring medical intervention/A&E, parents will be informed immediately.

In a situation in which it is disclosed that self-harm is symptomatic of abuse in the home, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may take the decision to make a seek advice directly from Family Connect - Warwickshire's Safeguarding Team - first without informing parents. Where parents are informed about a safeguarding referral, they will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school, to support the young person through this difficult time.

As stated in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, staff must not promise confidentiality, but reassure the child that only those people who need to know will be informed for their safety. Staff should report incidents of self-harm concern through a CPOMS report, which will be submitted to the Designated Safeguarding Lead Team.

If a member of staff becomes aware of, or is alerted to, a self-harming issue, or a pupil discloses self-harm, they should treat the matter as a safeguarding and child protection issue in the first instance, following the procedures set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. It is safer to do this, including submitting a written report via CPOMS.

If a pupil suggests that there is evidence of self-harm beneath their clothing, a member of staff should accept such statements and not ask the pupil to remove clothing to reveal wounds/bruises etc. This disclosure should, again, be reported immediately, in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, where the DSL will then take further action.

In the event of any self-harm incident in school, the Safeguarding Governor and Chair of Governors will be informed.

Advice to Parents

Parents should not feel isolated if they know or suspect that their child 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 has any concerns, they should contact the school immediately for help, support and advice.

Useful Resources and Helplines:

- **Call 999 in a medical emergency**
- **RISE Mental Health support** - if you or someone you are with is experiencing a mental health crisis, whatever their age, call 111 and select the mental health option. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- **Warwickshire's Family Information Service** - <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/children-families>
- **Childline** - www.childline.org.uk - provides a free national helpline for young people, free confidential advice on a range of problems: 0800 1111
- **Young Minds** - www.youngminds.org.uk - provides information and advice on child mental health issues and a Parents Helpline 0800 802 5544.
- **Recover Your Life** - www.recoveryourlife.com
- **National Self-Harm Network** - www.nshn.co.uk - UK charity offering support, advice and advocacy services to people affected by self harm directly or in a care role.
- **Anna Freud** - <https://www.annafreud.org/resources/family-wellbeing/supporting-treatments/supporting-children-and-young-people-who-self-harm/>
- **LifeSIGNS (Self Injury Guidance and Network Support)** – An online, user-lead voluntary organisation to raise awareness about self-injury and provide information and support to people of all ages affected by self-injury.
- **NHS Direct** – a helpline with health advice provided provided by NHS nurses: 0845 4647
- **Samaritans** – a telephone helpline and email service for anyone who is feeling upset, worried or suicidal: 0845 790 9090 email: jo@samaritans.org
- **First Response** – provides support 24 hours a day, seven days a week to people of all ages: 01274 221181

Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy