



South West Partnership Self-Harm Policy January, 2022

This policy should be ready in conjunction with other policies:

- CYPES document 'Self-harm – Early Intervention and Support in Schools, 2016:
<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Education/P%20Self%20Harm%20-%20Early%20Intervention%20and%20Support%20in%20Schools%2020160406%20JR.pdf>
- Education Department document 'Self-harm – Guidelines for School Staff' (**This document provides comprehensive guidance on self-harm**):
<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Education/ID%20Self-Harm%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Schools%2020170518%20JR.pdf>
- SWP Safeguarding Policy 2022
- CYPES Safeguarding Policy 2021
- CYPES Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021
- La Moye School PSHE Policy 2020

The South West Partnership recognises that individuals who self-harm are communicating emotional distress and so we take all emotional distress seriously.

Research indicates that up to one in ten young people may engage in self-harming behaviours. School staff play an important role both in responding to self-harm and in supporting pupils and peers of those pupils currently engaging in self-harm.

This policy is intended as guidance for staff. All staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Aims:

- Ensure that pupils who are suspected or engaging in self-harm, and their peers, are able to access appropriate support
- Increase staff understanding and awareness of self-harm and provide support for staff responding to pupils who self-harm, including links to outside agencies.
- Alert staff to warning signs and risk factors and provide clear guidelines for staff in dealing with incidents of self-harm

Definition of Self-Harm

Self-harm is any deliberate, non-suicidal, behaviour where the intent is to cause harm to one's own body. This might include, 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

While self-harm and suicide are separate, individuals who self-harm are communicating emotional distress as are those who attempt or complete suicide. Clearly it is essential that all emotional distress is taken seriously to minimise the chance of self-harm and suicide.

Risk factors

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

<i>Individual Factors</i>	<i>Family Factors</i>	<i>Social Factors</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression/ anxiety • Poor communication skills • Low self-esteem • Poor problem-solving skills • Hopelessness • Impulsivity • Drug or alcohol abuse • Unreasonable expectations of self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unreasonable expectations • Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse • Poor parental relationships and arguments • Child being in residential care • Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in making relationships/ loneliness • Being bullied or rejected by peers • Persistent experiences of perceived failure

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. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should share this information with and seek further advice from the school's designated teacher for safeguarding.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating/sleeping habits (e.g. pupil may be very tired if not sleeping well)
- 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
- Evidence of substance misuse (e.g. drugs or alcohol)
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in physical appearance e.g. becoming unkempt, unusual clothing style
- Variable school attendance and/or regular lateness

Disclosures about Self-Harm

Pupils may choose to confide in a member of school staff if they are concerned about their own welfare, or that of a peer. School staff may experience a range of feelings in response to self-harm disclosure (e.g. anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, guilt). Staff should maintain a supportive and open attitude in order to offer the best possible support to pupils. A pupil

who has chosen to share their concerns with a member of school staff is showing considerable courage and trust.

Confidentiality and information sharing in school

Pupils need to be made aware that it may not be possible for school to offer confidentiality. If school considers a pupil is at risk of seriously harming themselves then confidentiality cannot be kept. It is important that staff do not make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept - even if a pupil puts pressure on an individual to do so. Any member of staff aware of a pupil engaging in or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-harm, should consult the school's Designated Teacher for Safeguarding. Following the report, the designated teacher will decide on the appropriate course of action and in line with the school's/ Department's policy and procedures for safeguarding. In all cases a written record (signed and dated) will be made and saved within the pupil's file on My Concern.

Whatever action is taken, the child concerned will be monitored and supported following the incident in school, in conjunction with their parents, and if relevant, Social Services/CAMHS.

Processes and Procedures

The actions taken will depend on the circumstances of the actual or suspected self-harming behaviour. Key considerations will be:

- 1) The safety of the child:
 - If a child is acutely distressed an adult must remain with them at all times.
 - If a pupil has self-harmed in school, a First Aider must attend to any injury.
 - Immediately removing the pupil from lessons, if remaining in class is likely to cause further distress to themselves or peers
- 2) Arrange appropriate professional advice/support/assistance from CaFH or school-based services, like the central Education Support Team.
- 3) If needed, seek onwards referral to more specialist services and support e.g. CAMHS.

In the case of a pupil who has expressed suicidal thoughts and feelings, staff must remain with the pupil until the pupil can be accompanied to meet with the school's designated teacher for safeguarding. At no time should the pupil be left unsupervised. Consideration will be given to the need to contact parents/ carers to inform them of the situation and (as appropriate) ask them to collect the pupil to take them to hospital.

Education about Self-Harm

Through our PSHE Curriculum we teach children about the importance of being supportive of each other, but also seeking adult support if they are worried about themselves or someone else. Teachers encourage pupils to tell them if one of their classmates is in trouble, upset or showing signs of hurting themselves. We talk to the children about how betraying a confidence is worth doing if they think a friend is in trouble, for whatever reason, including if they are self-harming or are talking about doing so. Seeking help and advice for a friend is a responsible and pre-emptive behaviour. We reassure children that they are not responsible for the well-being of a friend. We also reassure them that their friend will be treated caringly and in a supportive manner.

If a child is self-harming, the peer group may be offered the opportunity to talk to a member of staff or other professional, either individually or in a small group.

Friends can worry about betraying confidences. As such, friends need to know that self-harm can be dangerous and that by seeking help and advice for a friend they are acting responsibly and being a good friend. Peers should also be reassured that their friend will be treated in a caring and supportive manner and that they are not responsible for either the well-being or choices of their friend. 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. Any member of staff wishing for further advice on this should consult with the school's Designated Teacher for Safeguarding.

Contagion

When a pupil is self-harming, it is important to be vigilant in case close contacts with the individual are also self-harming. Occasionally, schools discover that a number of pupils in the same peer group are harming themselves and this behaviour can be viewed as an 'acceptable' coping strategy. This is known as contagion and can potentially raise levels of anxiety both with the pupils concerned, their peers and within the school community. In such cases, school should liaise with the school's link educational psychologist (EP) to consider the need for a co-ordinated, multiagency response.

Support for staff

Teachers will have access to on-going advice, support and training as part of their own professional development. Responding to and supporting pupils who self-harm can be emotionally demanding. Teachers involved in dealing with self-harming incidents will have the opportunity to discuss this with colleagues and/or appropriate professionals such as the school's Educational Psychologist.

Responding to and supporting pupils who self-harm can be emotionally demanding. It is also acknowledged that some individuals may find this type of work particularly demanding due to their own experiences. Staff involved in this area of work should have the opportunity to discuss this with colleagues and/or appropriate professionals such as the school's EP. In addition, staff should attend suitable training to support their role.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Advice and what is considered to be best practice is continually being updated, thus it is necessary to regularly review school procedures and practices and this self-harm policy so that we can take account of new research, updates to DfESC policy and guidance, or related development.

The Headteacher takes responsibility for this policy and its implementation, in conjunction with the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.