



Broughton Jewish Primary School

Self Harm Policy 2024-25

Date Approved	September 2024
Signed by Chair of Governors	D Bondt
Committee Delegated	
Renewal Period	September 2025

Rationale

Recent research indicates that up to 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

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

Scope

- This document describes the schools approach to self-harm. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff, governors and parents.

What is Self-harm?

Self-harm happens when someone hurts or harms themselves:

- Cut themselves
- Burn their body
- Bang their head
- Throw their body against something hard
- Punch themselves
- Stick things in their body
- Swallow inappropriate objects
- Take too many tablets
- Bite themselves
- Pull their hair or eyelashes out
- Scratch/re-infect wounds
- Drink bleach
- Eat glass

Young people who self-harm will usually do it in a state of high emotion, distress and unbearable inner turmoil although it can feel to other people that these things are done coldly or deliberately. Some young people plan to self-harm in advance, others do it suddenly. Some young people self-harm only once or twice, but others do it regularly- it can become an addiction.

Other words that are used to describe self-harm:

Deliberate self-harm, self-inflicted harm, self-injury, and deliberate self-injury.

Young people often refer to self-harm as cutting, slashing or burning.

Staff that are trained in the area of working with self-harm:

Name	Role
Mrs S. Caplan	Deputy Head/DSL
Miss N. Taylor	Deputy Head/DSL

Who self-harms?

About 1 in 10 young people will self-harm at some point and it can occur at any age

- Sometimes groups of young people self-harm together
- Having a friend who self-harms may increase a young person’s chances of self-harming as well
- People who self-harm are more likely to have experienced physical, emotional abuse during childhood

What makes young people self-harm?

A basic emotional need is not being met. If the act of self-harm becomes an addiction it is taking the place of the need/s that is/are not being met

Emotional Distress- Young people often struggle with difficulties for some time before they self-harm. These difficulties may include:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling bad about themselves
- Difficult relationship problems – friends/ family
- Stress due to school work and exams
- Being bullied
- Flash backs to traumatic events in their lives

Young people may feel:

- That no-one listens to them
- Hopeless
- Isolated, alone
- Out of control
- Powerless-it feels as though there's nothing they can do to change anything

For many young people there is a combination of factors at work.

How does it make young people feel?

Self-harm can help young people to feel more in control and can reduce uncomfortable feelings of tension and distress. If they feel guilty, it can be a way of punishing themselves and relieving their guilt. Some young people feel better immediately afterwards and then feel guilty about what they have done.

Popular Misconceptions about self-harm

- They are not attention seeking
- It is not a horrific prank
- It is not a phase
- It is not a cry for help
- It is not a suicide attempt, self-harm is a coping strategy; it is to do with staying alive

Are people who self-harm mentally ill?

Most young people who self-harm are not mentally ill. However, some may be depressed. Everyone who self-harms should be taken seriously and offered help.

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further advice from one of the DSLs, designated teachers for safeguarding children- Mrs Caplan, Miss Taylor, Mrs Deacon or Rabbi Pearlman.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating/sleeping habits (e.g. student may appear overly 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 or suicide

- Expressing feelings or failure, uselessness or loss of hope

Staff Roles in working with students who self-harm

Students 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 in a student such as anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, guilt, helplessness, disgust and rejection.

However, in order to offer the best possible help to students it is important to try and maintain a supportive and open attitude- a student who has chosen to discuss their concerns with a member of school staff is showing a considerable amount of courage and trust.

Students need to be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality. **If you consider a student 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 student puts pressure on you to do so.

Any member of staff who is aware of a student engaging in or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-harm should consult one of the DSLs - Mrs Caplan, Miss Taylor, Mrs Deacon or Rabbi Pearlman.

Following the report, the designated teacher will decide on the appropriate course of action. This may include:

- Contacting parents/carers
- Arranging professional assistance e.g. doctor, nurse, social services
- Arranging an appointment with the counsellor or art therapist
- **In the case of an acutely distressed student, the immediate safety of the student is paramount and an adult should remain with the student at all times**
- **If a student has self-harmed in school a first aider should be called for immediate help**

What can help?

When a young person wants to harm themselves:

The feelings of self-harm will go away after a while. If they can cope with the upset without self-harming for a time, it will get easier over the next few hours.

It might be useful to get the young person to think of a time when they felt like self-harming but had not done so. What had they done instead?

Try to help the young person come up with things that might work for them. If this is not possible some suggestions could be made. They could consider the following:

- Talk to someone - if they are on their own perhaps a friend
- Distract themselves by going out, singing or listening to music, or by doing anything (harmless) that interest them
- Relax and focus their mind on something pleasant- their very own personal comforting place
- Focus their mind on positives
- Be kind to themselves- get a massage
- Write a diary or a letter, to explain what is happening-no one else needs to see it

When the young person does not want to stop self-harming?

If the young person decides that they don't want to stop self-harming, you can still discuss the following with them:

- How to stay safe and reduce the damage to their body
- How to deal with the things that lead them to self-harm
- How to find another way of dealing with their distress
- Every so often, to revisit their decision not to stop self-harming

What can I do if I know someone who self-harms?

It can be very upsetting to be close to someone who self-harms but there are things you can do. The most important is to listen to them without judging them or being critical. This can be very hard if you are upset- and perhaps angry-about what they are doing. Try to concentrate on them rather than your own feelings, although this can be hard.

- Don't worry about saying the wrong thing
- Show genuine concern
- Be open and make time to listen to them
- Encourage them to make their own decisions
- Be calm and patient with them

Don't

- Show disappointment
- Give ultimatums
- Shout
- Try to force the person to talk
- Try to force them to stop- remember self-harming might be keeping them safe

School Procedures

- Any member of Broughton Jewish's School community who knows a pupil who has or they feel is thinking of self-harming should report this to one of the DSL's.
- Any equipment that you consider to be dangerous or is against school rules for the pupil to have in their possession should be removed.
- In the case of an acutely distressed student, the immediate safety of the student is paramount and an adult should remain with the student at all times
- If physical harm has been done the pupil should see a first aider and if required an ambulance called and the student taken to A&E for medical assessment and care. This would usually be arranged by a DSL, and the parents to be contacted if appropriate.
- School Support/Art Therapist can provide counselling within the school or they can help the pupil make contact with many support organisations within Salford as appropriate. The pupil should be advised of this.
- Some instances of self-harm are Child Protection issues in which case the procedures laid down in Broughton Jewish's School Child Protection Policy must be followed.
- Unless there is some other over-riding reason not to, the pupil's parents must be informed of the situation and be actively involved in the handling of the situation. The decision not to involve the parents should be taken in consultation with the DSL's
- If any member of staff has any concerns about the confidentiality issues they should take advice from DSL's.

Recording and Reporting Incidents of Self-harm that take place on Broughton Jewish's school premises

A written report should be completed, and passed to a DSL who will keep a central record of all incidents.

The DSL will review this record manually to identify any trends or other areas of concern.

Further Considerations

Any meetings with a student, their parents or their peers regarding self-harming should be recorded in writing including:

- Dates and times
- An action plan
- Concerns raised
- Details of anyone else who has been informed

This information should be stored in the student child protection folder.

It is important to encourage students 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-harming 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.

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 one of the DSLs.

When a young person 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 students in the same peer group are harming themselves.

Useful resources and Help lines:

- Childline- 24hr helpline for children and young people. 0800 11 11 (free phone from landlines) or 0800 400 222 text phone (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- www.youngminds.org.uk
- Recover your Life- self-harm support community, providing support and advice to those seeking to recover from self-harm- www.recoveryourlife.com
- Nation self-harm network support for individuals who self-harm, friends and family. 0800 622 6000 (Thurs-Sat 7pm-11pm, Sun 6:30pm-10:30pm) www.nshn.co.uk

Linked Policies:

- Child Protection