



Self-Harm Policy

Adopted by Governing Body: 04.07.17

Reviewed by Governing Body: 07.07.2020

Cycle of review: 3 years

Statutory Policy: No

1. Statement of Intent

At Pitcheroak School, we strive to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment in which each pupil can discover and realise their own potential. With this in mind, this policy has been created to outline the steps that will be taken by the school to monitor and support pupils who self-harm.

All members of staff will be made aware of the warning signs and associated factors that can indicate whether a pupil is at risk of self-harm. All members of staff will be vigilant for these signs in pupils and any issues raised will be thoroughly investigated in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner. Any concerns in relation to self-harm, and its associated risks, will be raised with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

2. Legal Framework

2.1 This policy has due regard to relevant legislation, including but not limited to, the following:

- The Children Act 1989 section 3 (5)
- Common law: duty of 'reasonable care' when in loco parentis

2.2 This policy complies with the following guidance, including, but not limited to:

- DfE 'Mental health and behaviour in schools: Departmental advice for school staff' 2018
- DfE 'School Teachers Pay and Conditions' 2019
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020

2.3 This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- First Aid Policy
- Bodily Fluid Hygiene Policy
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy

3. Definition

3.1 Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to cause harm to one's own body. Types of self-harm include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cutting, scratching, biting, 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
- Excessive alcohol/drug use
- Eating disorders
- Sexual promiscuity
- Suicidal behaviour

3.2 Self-harm is usually a physical manifestation of fear, anger, anxiety, emotional distress, low mood or low self-esteem and is an attempt to manage negative feelings.

4. Risk Factors

4.1 Risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a pupil particularly susceptible to self-harm. All staff will be particularly vigilant when monitoring pupils who display signs of the following factors:

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 frequent arguments
- Family history of depression, self-harm or suicide
- Grief, family loss

Social factors

- Difficulty in forming relationships/loneliness
- Being bullied or rejected by peers

5. Warning Signs

5.1 Staff may become aware of warning signs, which may indicate that a pupil is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. These warning signs will always be taken seriously, and staff observing any of these warning signs will seek further advice from the school's DSL.

5.2 Possible warning signs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Changes in eating/sleeping habits, e.g. the 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
- A dip in 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 appearance, e.g. confrontational clothing or clothes which offer the maximum amount of coverage, to hide cuts/scars
- Refusing to change clothes during PE lessons
- Absence from PE lessons
- Lateness to, or absence from school
- Secretive behaviour
- Breakdown in parent/child relationship

6. Prevention Strategies

6.1. The issue of self-harm and a range of alternative coping strategies will be covered sensitively in PSHE lessons.

6.2 The school will continually strive to create a warm, caring and safe environment for all pupils, with a strict and efficient approach towards bullying.

6.3 The school will endeavour to work closely with the parents/carers of all pupils, so that early intervention may prevent potential cases of self-harm.

6.4 Pupils will be encouraged to inform a member of staff if one of their friends is upset and/or showing signs of self-harming. The school will take care in explaining that seeking help and advice for a friend is the action of a responsible and caring person.

6.5 The peer group of a pupil who self-harms will be monitored carefully and offered support from a member of staff either individually or in a small group, to reduce the risk of a number of pupils in the same peer group harming themselves.

7. Whole Staff Support Procedure

7.1 Pupils may confide in a member of staff if they are concerned about their own welfare, or that of a peer. Staff members will respond to such information in a gentle, supportive and non-judgemental manner and will refrain from telling the pupil to stop self-harming, as research has found that this is counterproductive.

7.2 If a pupil offers personal information in relation to themselves or a peer, the staff member will sensitively explain that it may not be possible for them to offer complete confidentiality.

7.3 In a non-urgent situation, staff members will try to establish more information which will be useful for offering further support. Examples of such questions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- How long have you been coping in this way?
- How does it affect you?
- What help do you need?
- What would you like to happen next?

7.4. Regardless of the level of risk posed by the pupil's behaviour, the staff member will discuss next steps with them, as a lack of involvement in the decision-making process can increase the risk of further harm. The implications of referrals to other agencies may be discussed, along with information to be shared with key staff.

7.5 If appropriate, the pupil will be given the opportunity to make an informed choice about a referral for psychological assessment; however, if a pupil is not mentally capable, the school has a responsibility to act in the best interests of the pupil, e.g. ensuring they are treated at hospital.

7.6 The staff member will record the incident using CPOMS in line with school policy. The DSL and Deputy DSL should be alerted via CPOMS.

7.7 In an emergency, or in the case of a drug overdose, the staff member will call for an ambulance and arrange for a parent or member of staff to accompany the pupil to hospital.

7.8 The staff member will complete the relevant incident report and paperwork as soon as possible following the event.

8. DSL support procedure

8.1 The DSL will conduct a risk assessment to consider whether to inform the pupil's parent/carer and make a referral to children's social care services or alternative early help services.

8.2 If appropriate, the DSL will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer of the pupil.

8.3 The DSL will seek consent for other relevant professionals' involvement, as well as planning and coordinating suitable support services.

8.4 A plan approved with the pupil and parent/carer will be implemented by the DSL and will be reviewed by an agreed date.

8.5. The DSL will continue to monitor and review regularly with the pupil and those involved.

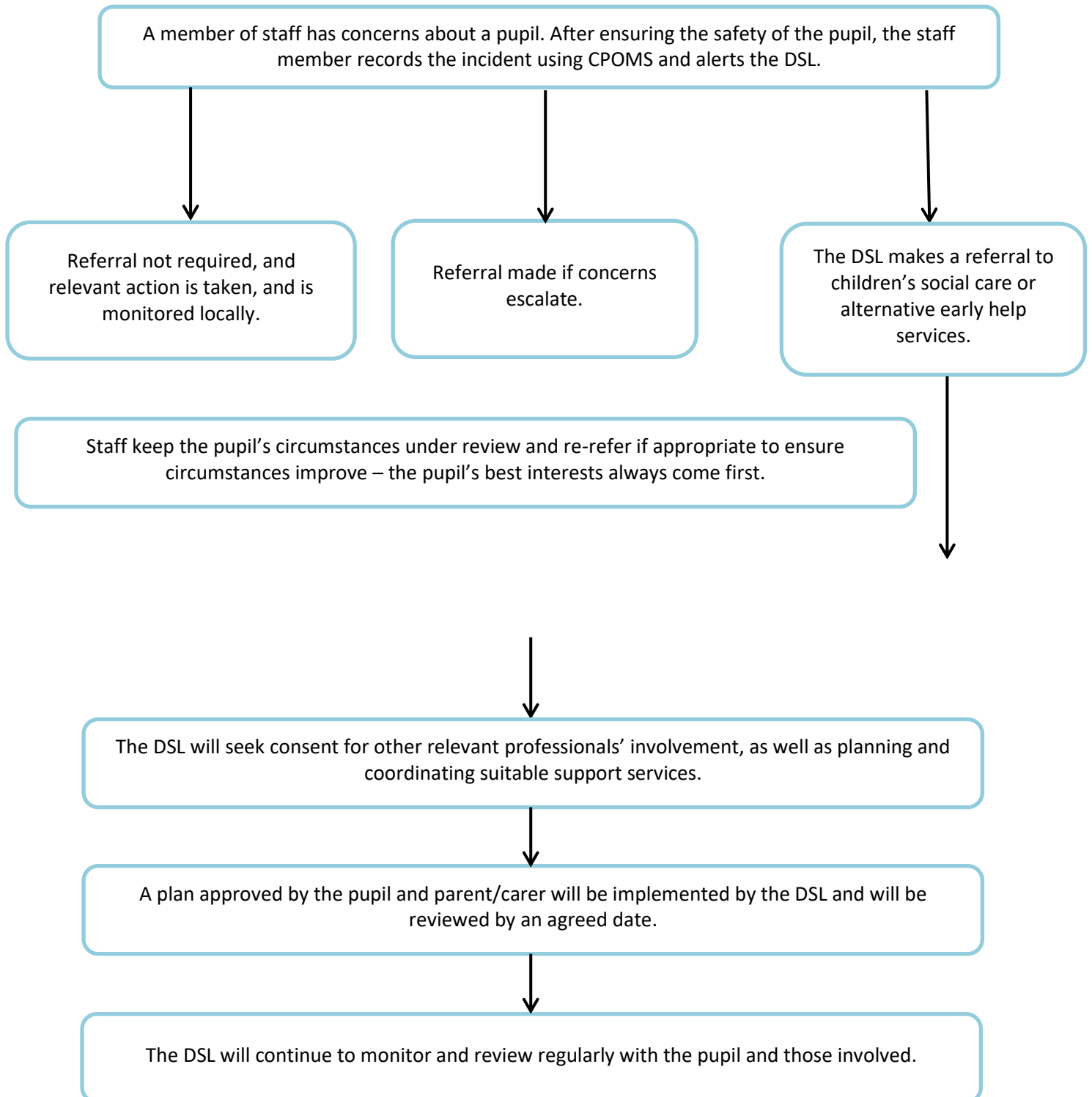
9. Recording information

9.1 Any meetings with the pupil, their peers or their parent/carer in relation to self-harm will be recorded on CPOMS and will include the following information:

- Dates and times
- Concerns raised
- Nature of self-harm incident(s)
- Dates of previous occurrences
- Risk level
- An action plan with review date
- Details of anyone else who has been informed

9.2 The details of any meetings held will be stored in the pupil's file on CPOMS and will be recorded as 'Assigned' until such a time that there are no further concerns.

Appendix a) Concerns about a Pupil Flowchart



Useful reference material

Coping with self - harm A guide for parents and carers Department of Psychiatry University of Oxford
https://www.psych.ox.ac.uk/files/news/copy_of_coping-with-self-harm-brochure_final_copyright.pdf

Supporting Your Child Who is Self-Harming

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-self-harm/>

Self-harm in young people: for parents and carers Royal College of Psychiatrists

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/self-harm-in-young-people-for-parents-and-carers>

Self-harm: a guide for parents The SPARK

<https://www.thespark.org.uk/relationship-support-parents-families/free-parenting-resources/self-harm-guide-parents/>