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# **Self-harm Policy**

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***June 2026***

***Review date: June 2027***

# Self-Harm Policy

Harworth Church of England Academy

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## 1. Policy Statement

Harworth Church of England Academy is committed to safeguarding the health and emotional wellbeing of all pupils. Self-harm among primary-aged children, while less common than in older age groups, is a significant and growing concern.

We aim to respond to any incidents or disclosures of self-harm with sensitivity, professionalism and early intervention.

Self-harm will always be treated as a safeguarding concern and managed in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

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## 2. Aims of the Policy

- To define self-harm and identify early warning signs
  - To outline the school's response to concerns or disclosures
  - To provide guidance for staff in supporting affected pupils
  - To ensure clear communication with parents/carers and external agencies
  - To ensure all staff understand that self-harm may indicate wider safeguarding concerns, including potential risk of significant harm
  - To promote a proactive, whole-school approach to emotional wellbeing and early help
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## 3. Definition of Self-Harm

Self-harm is any behaviour where a child or young person causes harm to themselves in response to emotional distress. It may include:

- Scratching or cutting
- Banging or hitting body parts
- Hair pulling
- Ingesting harmful substances

Self-harm may occur with or without suicidal intent. However, all incidents must be taken seriously as they may indicate underlying distress or increased risk.

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## 4. Understanding Risk

Staff must be aware that self-harm can range in seriousness and may escalate. In some cases, it may indicate suicidal thoughts or intent.

Warning signs of increased risk may include:

- Evidence of planning or intent
- Repeated or escalating behaviours
- Verbal references to wanting to die or not exist
- Significant withdrawal or behavioural change

All concerns must be treated as potentially serious until assessed by the DSL.

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## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Deputy DSLs:
  - Oversees safeguarding procedures
  - Carries out or oversees risk assessments
  - Liaises with external agencies
- All Staff:
  - Identify and report concerns immediately
  - Follow safeguarding procedures

**Staff must not investigate incidents independently or delay reporting concerns.**

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## 6. Recognising Warning Signs

Staff should be aware of:

- Unexplained injuries (e.g. cuts, bruises)
- Wearing clothing to hide injuries
- Changes in mood or behaviour
- Social withdrawal
- Expressions of low self-worth

No single sign confirms self-harm, but concerns should always be passed to the DSL.

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## **7. Responding to Concerns**

If a pupil discloses self-harm or is suspected to be at risk:

1. Listen calmly and without judgement
2. Reassure the pupil they did the right thing
3. Do not promise confidentiality
4. Report immediately to the DSL/DDSL

Staff must not attempt to investigate, treat injuries (beyond basic first aid), or manage the situation independently.

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## **8. Escalation and Immediate Risk**

If a pupil has sustained a serious injury or is at immediate risk:

- Seek urgent medical attention or contact emergency services (999) if required
- Inform the DSL immediately

The DSL will consider whether a referral to children's social care, CAMHS or other services is required.

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## **9. Support for Pupils**

Support may include:

- Individual support from safeguarding staff
- Access to counselling or external services
- Risk assessment and safety planning
- Regular check-ins

Support will be graduated and based on the level of identified risk and need.

The school will also consider the wellbeing of other pupils who may be affected.

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## **10. Prevention and Whole-School Approach**

The school promotes emotional wellbeing through:

- PSHE and RSHE curriculum

- Pastoral care and trusted adults
- Early identification of need
- Positive relationships and safe environments

This helps reduce stigma, build resilience and encourage pupils to seek support.

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## **11. Involving Parents/Carers**

The DSL/DDSL will:

- Inform parents/carers sensitively
- Provide guidance and reassurance
- Offer information about support services

Parents will normally be informed unless doing so would place the child at greater risk. In such cases, safeguarding procedures will be followed.

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## **12. Recording and Monitoring**

All concerns must be:

- Logged on CPOMS
- Monitored by the safeguarding team
- Reviewed regularly

Patterns, trends and repeat concerns will be analysed to inform early help and safeguarding responses.

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## **13. Staff Training**

Staff will receive training on:

- Understanding self-harm and mental health
- Responding to disclosures
- Safeguarding responsibilities

Training will ensure staff understand both the emotional and safeguarding risks associated with self-harm.

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## **14. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSL and Senior Leadership Team, or sooner if required.