



HILBRE HIGH SCHOOL HUMANITIES COLLEGE

SELF-HARM POLICY

Author:
Name of Committee approved:
Date ratified at Full Governors:
Date to be reviewed:

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Pastoral
10th July 2019
May 2021

The purpose of Hilbre High School Humanities College Self-Harm policy

As part of Hilbre High School holistic view of pupil safeguarding and continued dedication to the health and happiness of its pupils, this policy provides a clear set of procedures the staff will follow when dealing with any issues surrounding pupil self-harm, including:

- Recognising the warning signs that a pupil may be self-harming.
- Broaching the subject of self-harm to a pupil you suspect of deliberately hurting themselves.
- How to react positively if a pupil comes to you wishing to discuss their/others self-harming.
- Provision of clear and standard guidelines for all staff in contact with the pupil(s) (Appendix 1).
- Training and education surrounding the issue of self-harm for all staff.
- Education and awareness campaigns for pupils.

Self-Harm Definition and Risk Factors

Self-harm is defined by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence Guidelines (2004) as an **“expression of personal distress, usually made in private, by an individual who hurts him or herself”**. Essentially, self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to cause harm to oneself (Multi Agency Guidelines for Professionals Working with Children and Young People Who Self-Harm, January 2012).

Self-Harm is a coping mechanism and it is important to recognise and respond to the underlying reasons behind a pupil’s self-harm. Risk factors include, but are not limited, to:

- Low self-esteem.
- Perfectionism.
- Mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety.
- The onset of a more complicated mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or a personality disorder.
- Problems at home or school.
- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

It is important that all staff at Hilbre recognise that none of these risk factors may appear to be present. Sometimes it is the outwardly happy, high achieving pupil with a stable background who is suffering internally and hurting themselves in order to cope.

Warning signs that may be associated with self-harm

As noted above, there may be no warning signs, but some of the things below might indicate that a pupil is suffering internally which may lead to self-harm. As most self-harm is privately or secretly carried out it can be hard to notice that a young person is self-harming but some signs to look out for are:

- Changes in clothing to cover parts of the body, e.g. wearing long sleeved tops.
- Reluctance to participate in previously enjoyed physical activities, particularly those that involve wearing shorts or swimsuits.
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping habits.
- Changes in levels of activity or mood.
- Increasing isolation from friends/family.

Physical signs that self-harm may be occurring in a pupil

Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of the behaviours that some people might consider to be self-harm. Staff at Hilbre are aware of these physical signs and the procedures to follow.

- Scratching or picking skin.
- Cutting body.
- Tying something around body.
- Inserting things into body.
- Scouring/scrubbing body excessively.
- Hitting, punching self.
- Pulling out hair.
- Over/under eating.
- Excessive drinking of alcohol.
- Taking non-prescription drugs.
- Burning or scalding body.
- Hitting walls with head.
- Taking an overdose or swallowing something dangerous.
- Self-strangulation.
- Risky behaviours such as running into the road.

Suicide

Although self-harm is non-suicidal behaviour and relied on as an attempt to cope and manage, it must be recognised that the emotional distress that leads to self-harm can also lead to suicidal thoughts and actions. It is, therefore, treated with utmost importance at Hilbre and all incidents of self-harm are taken seriously (recorded on “My Concern”) and that the underlying issues and emotional distress are thoroughly investigated and necessary emotional support given, in order to minimise any greater risk. Any mention of suicidal intent should always be taken seriously and acted upon as a matter of urgency. All staff at Hilbre are trained and are familiar with the safeguarding procedures involved in dealing with such an event.

Roles and responsibilities at Hilbre High School

Headteacher

- Appoint one or more designated key staff to be responsible for all incidents relating to self-harm. At Hilbre High School this is **Mr David White (Assistant Headteacher/DSL)**
- Ensure that all designated staff receive full and appropriate training surrounding self-harm and are fully confident with the procedures to follow.
- Provide practical and emotional support for key staff dealing with self-harm.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Self-Harm policy.

Designated Safeguarding Leaders (DSL)

- Ensure that Self-Harm policy is up to date and disseminated to all staff.
- Provide training to all staff to ensure consistent practice by staff at Hilbre High School when dealing with self-harm incidents.
- Provide clear and consistent plans of action to enable effective care in all pupil self-harm scenarios to be carried out.
- Maintain records of pupils experiencing self-harm, incidents of self-harm and all other concerns surrounding the issue in **“My Concern.”**
- Inform the pupil’s parents/carers, if appropriate, and liaise with them as to how best manage the situation.
- Report and act upon any mention of suicidal feelings or behaviour as a matter of urgency.
- Provide an effective support structure for those involved to increase chances of a positive outcome.
- Review case by case.

All Staff and Teachers

- Review all duty of care documents and be aware of communication processes.
- Make it known to pupils that you are available to listen.
- Remain calm and non-judgemental at all times.
- Avoid dismissing a pupil’s reasons for distress as invalid.
- Encourage pupils to be open with you and reassure them that they can get the help they need if they are willing to talk.
- Endeavour to enable pupils to feel in control by asking what they would like to happen and what help they feel they need, etc.
- Do not make promises you can’t keep regarding such things as confidentiality.
- Avoid asking a pupil to show you their scars or describe their self-harm.
- Record incident on **“My Concern”**.
- Report the matter to a designated key member of staff as soon as you become aware of the problem, and inform the pupil that you are doing this.

Training

All staff at Hilbre High School have undertaken Safeguarding Level 1 training including Deliberate Self-Harm training provided by DSL.

All pupils will be involved in information assemblies led by Mr David White in accordance to guidance.

Appendix 1

Hilbre High School Humanities College Self-Harm Procedure Staff Guidance

