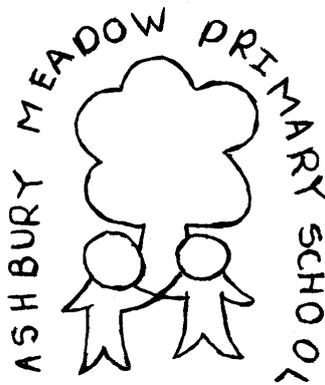


ASHBURY MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL



Management of self-harm, or expressions to self-harm by children & young people

September 2012

ASHBURY MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Management of self-harm, or expressions to self-harm by children & young people

In keeping with the values of Ashbury Meadow Primary School's vision and aims, this policy aims to address the issue of self-injury:

- 1.1 How to deal with pupils who self-injure and how to offer support in the short and long-term
- 1.2 To provide support depending upon the individual needs of the pupil
- 1.3 To help all pupils improve their self-esteem and emotional literacy
- 1.4 How to support staff members who come into contact with people who self-injure
- 1.5 How to prevent self-injury from spreading within the school
- 1.6 To have clear guidelines for staff - who needs to be informed, when do parents and outside agencies need contacting?
- 1.7 Education about self-injury for pupils and staff

What is self-injury?

Self injury is any deliberate, non-suicidal behaviour that inflicts physical harm on someone's own body and is aimed at relieving emotional distress.

- Overdoses (self poisoning)
- Self-mutilation (e.g. cutting behaviours)
- Burning
- Scalding
- Banging heads or other body parts against walls
- Hair-pulling
- Biting
- Ligature strangulation
- Attempt suicide

This list is not exhaustive

Young people may also express intent to harm themselves and this should always be taken seriously and the young person should be given the opportunity to talk about their feelings and any problems in a safe environment.

Risk factors associated with self-injury:

- Mental health disorders including depression and eating disorders
- Drug/alcohol abuse, and other risk-taking behaviour
- Recent trauma e.g. death of relative, parental divorce
- Negative thought patterns, and low self-esteem
- Bullying
- Abuse - sexual, physical and emotional
- Sudden changes in behaviour and academic performance

People who self-injure often go to great lengths to conceal their injuries so it can be hard to know if a person does self-injure

People who self-injure can seem withdrawn or depressed

You may notice cuts or bruises that are always accompanied by excuses that don't seem to fit

Many people who self-injure will cut their arms and so they may wear long sleeves, even when it is very hot.

Within school pupils who self-injure may look for excuses not to have to wear shorts or short sleeves and therefore may avoid activities like PE or swimming.

It is important to keep a close eye on vulnerable pupils such as those with a history of abuse.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

Anyone from any walk of life or any age can self-injure, including very young children. Self-injury affects people from all family backgrounds, religions, cultures and demographic groups.

Self-injury affects both males and females

People who self-injure can often keep the problem to themselves for a very long time which means opening up to anyone about it can be difficult.

You can't just tell someone who self-injures to stop - it is not that easy

Suicide:

While self-injury and suicide are separate, those who self-injure are in emotional distress, and those who end their lives are also in emotional distress. It is vital that all emotional distress is taken seriously to minimise the chances of self-injury, and suicide. All talk of suicide and warning signs must be taken extremely seriously.

All staff and teachers are expected to:

- Listen to pupils in emotional distress calmly and in a non-judgemental way
- Report self-injury **IMMEDIATELY** to the designated child protection officer (Headteacher or Home School Liaison Officer) in their absence Deputy Headteacher (**COMPLETING A CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND CONCERNS FORM AND SKIN MAP**)
- Not make promises (e.g. assuring confidentiality) which can't be kept. Reassure pupils that in order to seek health and happiness people need to know about their problems so that they can help.
- Guide pupils towards seeking health and happiness
- Promoting problem-solving techniques and non-harmful ways to deal with emotional distress
- Enable pupils to find places for help and support
- Provide accurate information about self-injury
- Widen their own knowledge about self-injury and mental health disorders
- Be aware of health and safety issues such as first-aid and clearing up if a self-injury incident takes place at school
- Be aware of their legal responsibilities - when they can help, and when they cannot

Advice

- 1.1 Listen to the pupil and try not to show them if you are angry, frustrated or upset. "Staff should learn that the best way to respond to common self-injury is with a "low-key, dispassionate demeanour" and 'respectful curiosity'"
- 1.2 Learn about the difference between self-injury and suicide
- 1.3 If someone tells you they self-injure it means they trust you and are willing to share this very personal problem
- 1.4 Some people will just want to be heard and empathised with. Try not to push them by asking questions that may overwhelm them
- 1.5 Some people may want to get further help with their self-injury and in this case you may be able to help in a number of ways. For instance, by putting them in touch with organisations that may be able to help further such as Childline.
- 1.6 If they want to talk to their parent/carer about their self-injury it may be helpful if you offer to act as mediator
- 1.7 Self-injury is not the only way for people to deal with emotional distress. Try to encourage the young person to seek alternative and more constructive coping mechanisms. However, do not expect them to be able to stop self-injuring.

The designated staff member(s) will:

- Keep records of self-injury incidents and concerns
- Liaise with local services about help available for people who self-injure
- Keep up-to-date with information about self-injury
- Contact parent/carers at the appropriate time(s). Involve the pupil in this process. Inform the parent/carer about appropriate help and support for their child which is available. Monitor the pupil's progress following an incident
- Know when people other than parent/carers (e.g. social workers, educational psychologists) need to be informed
- Know when to seek help to deal with their own feelings and distress

Appendices: -

FLOWCHART

See Child Protection Policy:-

CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND CONCERNS SKIN MAP