

## Self-harm Policy

The Green Room Foundation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Owner: DH/WCJ/KBT/CKP

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September 22	September 23		1	
		January 2023	2	January 2024
		January 2024		January 2025
		January 2025	3	January 2025

### Introduction

At The Green Room, we endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where the children and young people are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of self-harming and follow our procedures to ensure that children and young people receive effective support and protection. This policy must be read in conjunction with both our Safeguarding and Behaviour policies.

### Purpose

This policy has been put in place to ensure that we have a consistent approach from staff who deal with students who self-harm. School staff play an important role in working to prevent self-harm, building resilience and supporting students, peers and carers of students currently engaging in self harm. As a school we have a responsibility to meet the needs of our students and it is important that we all know how best to approach the issue of self-harm.

## What is self-harm?

The term self-harm used in this policy refers to any act of self-poisoning or self-injury carried out by an individual, irrespective of motivation. Self-harm is a sign that a young person is experiencing significant emotional distress (see NICE guidelines).

Though this is not an exhaustive list, self-harm may include overdose (self-poisoning), hitting, cutting, burning, pulling hair, picking skin, head banging, self-strangulation. This policy does not cover other issues such as overeating/food restriction or risk-taking behaviours such as consuming drugs/alcohol.

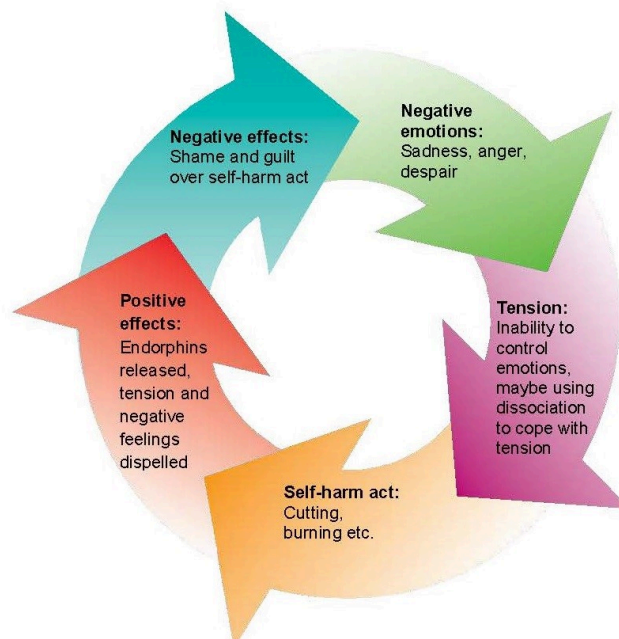
Self-harm is more common than many people realise, around 10% of young people self-harm at some point, and this figure is likely to be an underestimate. It is believed that young people with special education needs may resort to self-harm more often than their peers, it is estimated that about half of autistic people engage in self-injurious behaviour at some point in their life. ([Self-injurious behaviour - a guide for all audiences](#))

## Why do people self-harm?

Young people self-harm for a variety of reasons. Five of the most common reasons why young people self-harm include:

- **Tension relief** - a number of young people are unable to deal with their unpleasant feelings and find self-harm a way to relieve stress and tension.
- **Self punishment** - young people who self-harm often have low self-esteem and feel that they are worthless or bad people who should be punished.
- **To express distress** - for some young people, self-harm is a way of showing others how bad they are feeling. They may use this as a way of reaching out to get help.
- **To feel connected** - some people try to cope with very upsetting experiences, such as trauma or abuse, by convincing themselves that the upsetting event(s) never happened. These people sometimes feel 'numb' or 'dead'. They say that they feel detached from the world and their bodies, and that self-injury is a way of feeling more connected and alive.
- **They feel suicidal** - A proportion of young people who self-harm do so because they feel so upset and overwhelmed that they wish to die by suicide. At the time, many people just want their problems to disappear, and have no idea how to get help. They feel as if the only way out is to kill themselves.

The cycle of self-harm:



## How can staff identify the signs of self-harm?

All staff at the Green Room are expected to be vigilant and report concerns via CPOMS or, if more serious, in person immediately to an appropriate member of staff, if they notice any signs of self-harm.

There are a number of signs pupils may be self-harming. These include, but are not limited to -

- unexplained cuts, burns or bruises
- keeping themselves covered
- changes in eating or sleeping habits
- changes in levels of engagement in activity and mood
- increasing isolation from friends/family.

It is not unusual for young people with special education needs to have self-harm form part of their behaviour profile. However, any change in the frequency, severity or site of the self-harm in these students is a cause for concern.

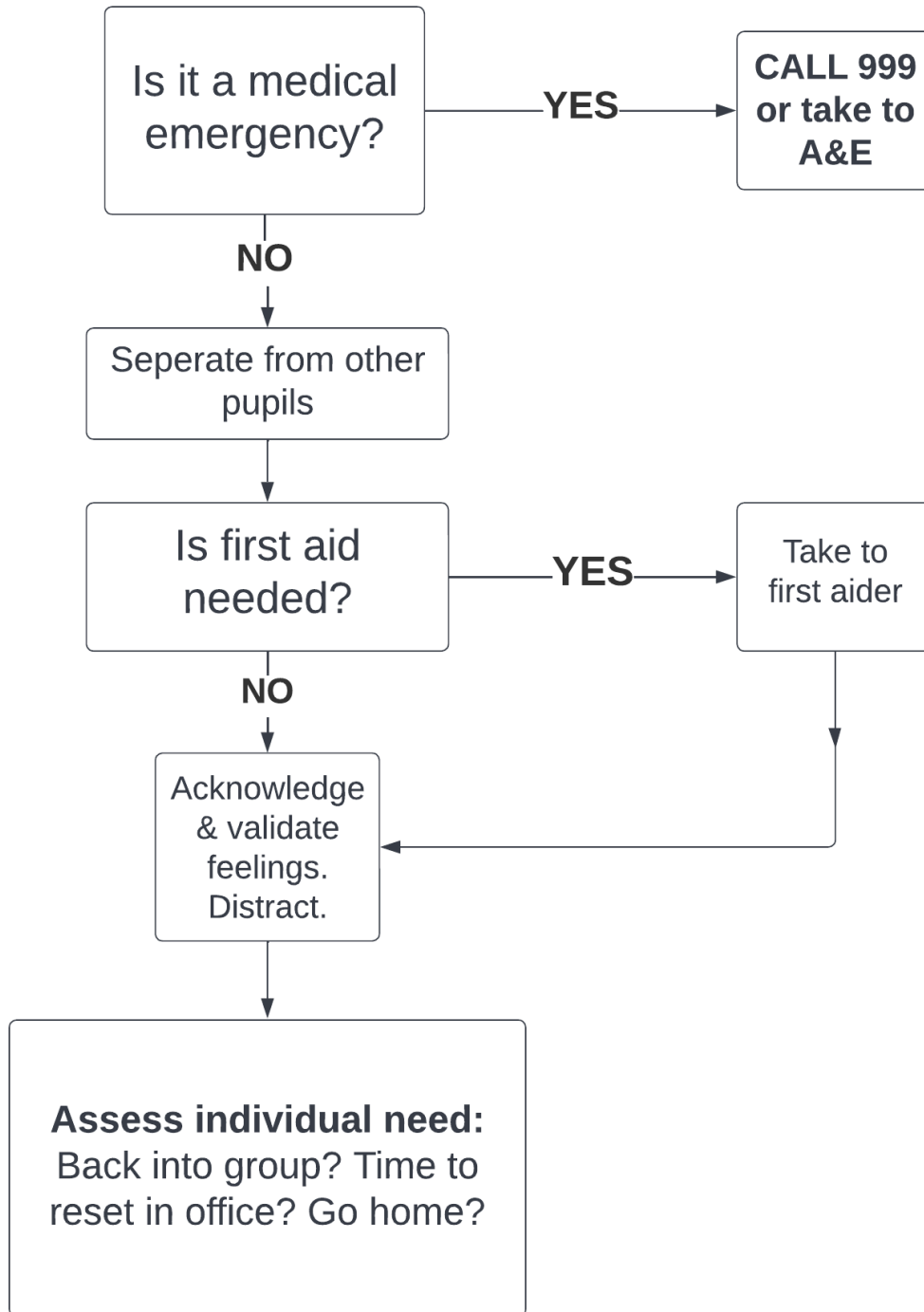
## School procedure in the event of self-harm on the premises

Any member of the school staff who knows a student who may be thinking of self-harming or who has self-harmed must report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead/s (DDSL). Where appropriate, in most cases a CPOMS report is to be made.

Confidentiality is a key concern for students; however, the Green Room's Safeguarding Policy states students need to know that it is not possible to offer unconditional confidentiality.

Please see below for what to do in the event of self-harm at school -

(Copy to be displayed in staff room)  
**Remain calm and consider other pupils**



- **See to immediate medical needs. Follow First Aid guidelines** for cuts, wounds or burns. Ask the student if they will give you the implement used for self-harm.
- Contact emergency services for overdoses

- Speak to the student, acknowledge and validate their feelings, listen and provide non-judgemental support. **It is important not to promise confidentiality.**

## Assessment of risk and planning support

The Green Room recognises that each young person is different, therefore, the support plans in place for each individual pupil reflect that.

A Pupil Risk Assessment is undertaken for each individual pupil upon their induction to the Green Room and updated termly or as risks present themselves/change. Pupil Risk Assessments are informed by data provided from previous schools, carers, outside agencies involved with a pupil and EHCPs. GR staff are consulted and their views reflected in the assessment.

Pupil Risk Assessments are completed by more than one member of staff as good practice and reviewed as often as necessary. Self-harming behaviour forms part of this Pupil Risk Assessment.

When assessing level of risk and self-harming behaviours the following is to be considered but is not definitive:

### **Low risk pupils:**

Pupils with little history of self-harm, a generally manageable amount of stress, and at least some positive coping skills and some external support.

### **Higher risk pupils:**

Pupils with more complicated profiles – those who report frequent or long-standing self-harm practices; who use high lethality methods, and/or who are experiencing chronic internal and external stress with limited positive support or coping skills.

If there are significant concerns about a pupil's mental health, a referral to CAMHS, with parental consent where appropriate will need to be made. If a pupil needs urgent medical attention emergency services to be called, 999 or the pupil taken to A&E. They should receive a mental health assessment at the hospital.

A plan will be put in place, ideally arranged with the pupil which will support them at school. This will be reviewed as needed - daily if required.

## How staff will be supported

Self-harm can be distressing for school staff. On discovering that a student is self-harming, staff may experience emotions such as sadness, shock, anger, fear, disgust, frustration and helplessness. Such emotions are common. Some suggestions that may help:

- Be honest with yourself about your emotions
- Discuss your feelings with colleagues or line managers
- Look after yourself (making sure that you prioritise your own health and wellbeing)
- Recognise that school staff can have an important role to play in helping young people who are self-harming

As a school we have a duty of care towards our employees and need to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and supported when dealing with difficult issues.

The Green Room offers training to staff coupled with advice and support from the DSL to staff supporting young people who self-harm. We will raise awareness of self-harm and ensure that all staff are fully aware of this policy as part of our safeguarding training. In addition to this, The Green Room also offers its employees access to the Benenden Health support line, which is available 24/7.

## Sources and References

[NICE Guidelines](#) - what is self-harm?

[Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) - Why do people self harm?

[Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) - the cycle of self-harm

This policy is approved by the CEO of The Green Room Foundation

Date

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CEO

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