



# Highsted Grammar School

## **Self-Harm Policy 2025**

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## **SELF-HARM POLICY**

Highsted's pastoral support systems and Compassion Curriculum programme play a key part in helping young people to develop in self-confidence and belief. However, we also recognise a national and local increasing trend of mental health problems, some of which are inevitably seen within the school environment. While the team at Highsted are not mental health experts, the level of risk to a student will attempt to be determined and parents/outside agencies involved as necessary, in order to support each student.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Self-harm is often a very private, intimate act and is sometimes associated with ritualistic behaviour, for example, always cutting in a certain way or wrapping razors in a particular towel. For many, self-harm is a means of creating an identity by destroying the self – it becomes a part of who they are, rather than what they do. Staff working with students who are self-harming need to be aware that there are periods when these students are accessible and some where they are not. No act of self-harm should be considered as minor. Once a student has self-harmed, they have broken through a boundary and may move on to more serious acts of self-harm and/or suicide. As such, this policy also refers to working with students who may be considering suicide.

### **PROFILE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SELF-HARM**

Associated behaviours and conditions include:

1. eating disorders
2. alcohol and drug abuse
3. mental illness
4. low spirits
5. extreme risk taking
6. family dysfunction
7. other relationship breakdowns

### **THE POSITIVE VALUE OF SELF-HARMING BEHAVIOURS e.g. cutting, to the Student**

- Diverts from the pain of memories, i.e. quite literally it allows them to “cut off” from the pain of the memories
- It proves to the cutter that they are alive
- Metaphor of cutting problems in two
- Seeing problems run away with the blood
- Preferable to create a mess outside rather than having inner mess/turmoil
- Creates a mess that can be cleaned up, as inner pain cannot be
- Punishes the cutter and/or the cause
- Produces endorphins which make the cutter feel good
- Can be addictive
- It is linked to dissociation – cutters can dissociate and watch themselves self-harm. Under extreme duress, people are capable of the most profound dissociation, a common feature of self-harm
- Cutting is familiar, a comfort zone
- Cutting can be easier than talking – cutters create wounds that speak for them
- May be seen as the only option

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In seeking to help young people who self-harm we need to find ways of giving them words to talk with, rather than self-harm.

## **SUPPORTING STAFF WHO WORK WITH STUDENTS WHO SELF-HARM**

Staff need to be careful that they do not internalise the feelings of the student with whom they are working, or feel any degree of blame. In creating a space for these young people to reflect and share, staff need to ensure that they have a system of sharing and caring for themselves. Staff may, for example, find it helpful to have a debrief with their pastoral team leader. We need to recognise that we are all vulnerable to having difficult memories stirred up. Anyone experiencing problems in working with a student who is self-harming should talk to either the Assistant Headteacher for the key stage, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead for advice and discussion on the best way forward.

## **SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHO SELF-HARM**

*Confidentiality must not be promised to any student, including Senior School students.*

### **Years 7 - 11**

The parents/carers of all Year 7 – 11 students **must** be told. Recognising that we are not a mental health team and as such are not qualified to determine a student's mental state, **students should never be asked to speak to their parents first**, prior to the school contacting home, in any instance of self-harm. If the school is concerned about the response shown by parents to a situation then the matter should be discussed by the **Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Headteacher**.

### **Senior School Students**

While recognising that our Senior School students are young adults, school policy is that the parents/carers of all Senior School students must be told about any self-harm for the same reasons as detailed for Years 7 – 11. Any decision not to contact home should only be made by either the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher, following close consultation with the Head of Year and Key Stage Lead, and then only in the most exceptional of cases.

### **The Question of Suicide**

Any student who is considering suicide should be considered a high-risk student. Any such student should be referred immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher** as a matter of urgency.

Professionals help students who self-harm:

- By being non-judgemental
- By staying calm
- By quietly and unobtrusively communicating kindness and caring

## **TALKING WITH STUDENTS WHO SELF-HARM**

When talking with students about self-harm, staff may find the list below useful as a possible structure for any conversation, as well as for later discussions with parents. Please note that

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this is not a prescriptive/exhaustive list. As with so much pastoral work, much will depend on the existing relationship between the member of staff and student:

4. Has a student done this before? When? How often? How?
5. Are there depression/delusions/hallucinations prompting self-harm/suicidal thoughts?
6. Are there significant life events e.g. child protection issues, bullying, bereavement, divorce? NB: any child protection issues must be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.
7. Is there considered intent e.g. plans/notes?
8. Is self-harm/suicide perceived as a solution? What to?
9. Does a student feel helpless, worthless, out of control?
10. Do they have a medical illness/condition contributing to self-harm?
11. Is there a family history/peer culture of self-harm/suicide?
12. Is there any rejection by peer group/social isolation?
13. Is there any indication of substance abuse?
14. What is your personal intuition of the level of risk? This is often the most valuable insight of all.

## **WRITE-UPS**

Self-harm discussions should be written up in the usual manner on the school's CPOMS platform; when not available the school's green 'Safeguarding Incident / Welfare Concern' forms are accessible in the shared staff area

Staff should:

- Maintain close monitoring and liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Share and *clearly record* all decisions made
- Detail the reasons why actions were taken, as well as the reasons for those that weren't taken

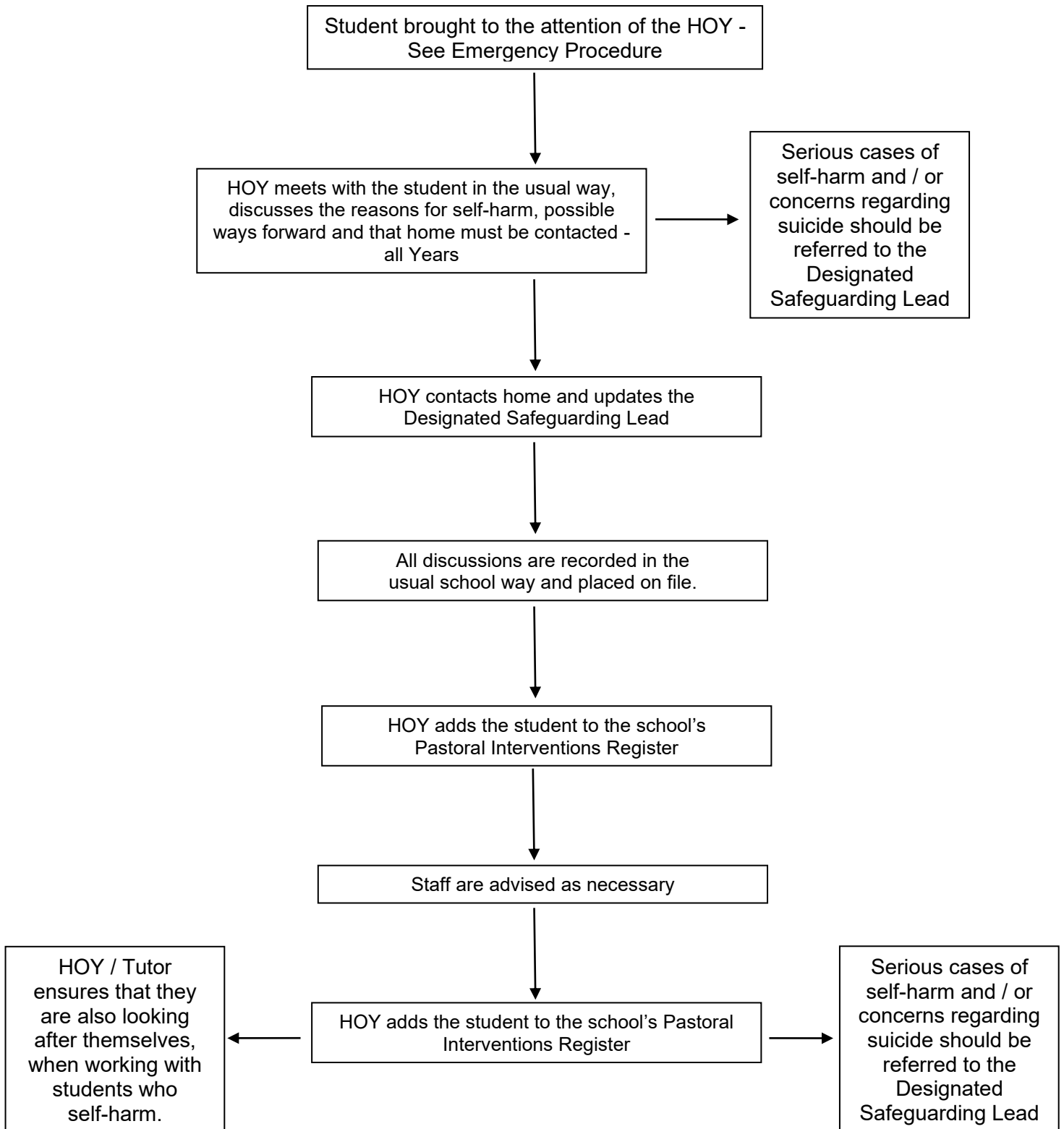
## **POSSIBLE PERSONNEL AND AGENCIES OF SUPPORT**

Possible methods of support may include:

7. Discussion with the Child Social Services
8. Discussion with the CAMHS self-harm support team
9. In-school support/coaching
10. Referral to School Health
11. Referral to CAMHS via the family GP or directly by the school, with the family's consent



**Flow Chart of Procedure for Working with a Student at Risk From Non-Accidental Self-Harm / Suicide**





APPENDIX 2

**SAFEGURDING INCIDENT / WELFARE CONCERN FORM**

<b>Student Name:</b>	
<b>Year Group and House:</b>	
<b>Name (including position) of person completing form</b>	
<b>Date of the incident / concern</b>	
<b>Full details of the incident / concern / initial action</b> <i>continue on a separate sheet if necessary and attach all evidence of communication</i>	
<b>Were there any witnesses?</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>If yes, who?</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date form completed and referred to DSL:</b>
<b>DSL Signature:</b>	<b>Date response initiated:</b>

## APPENDIX 3

### Dos and DON'Ts: Advice for Staff

#### DO

- DO stay calm and do not show anxiety, disapproval or disgust. Be prepared to be shocked, then...
- DO listen to the pupil, just being listened to can be a brilliant support and bring great relief to someone; particularly if they have never spoken to anyone about their self-harming before.
- DO make it clear that you cannot guarantee confidentiality.
- DO calmly ask any relevant questions, - try and build rapport with the pupil, whilst you ascertain what is happening for them.
- DO observe the pupil's non-verbal clues, look at their body language, does what they say and what you see match up?  
What is the underlying mood state, is it anger? Sadness? Frustration?
- DO reassure the pupil, they need to know that they will be supported
- DO report the self-injury to the Pastoral team and DSL.

#### For DSL trained staff only

Remember most episodes of self-harm do not result in suicide or suicide attempts. However, the easiest way to differentiate between suicide and self-harm is by asking the pupil directly about the intention behind their self-harm behaviours.

Treat a suicide intention as an emergency, do not leave the pupil alone or in a vulnerable environment – get help and support as soon as possible and remain calm.

#### DON'T

- DON'T panic – self-harm is a complex issue and each pupil will have a different reason or story behind their behaviour – panicking will not help the pupil feel safe and contained.
- DON'T send the pupil away – make some time for them – either help them find other ways of coping or support them in getting the right kind of support.
- DON'T be judgemental, you must keep an open mind about the behaviour and don't refer to it as "attention seeking".
- DON'T work alone: you may still see the pupil alone, but you will need to offload with an appropriate colleague and discussing with a professional from another agency can be very helpful.
- DON'T give them your mobile number or begin texting the pupil. It is more appropriate and professional for you to help the pupil identify their supportive network, than for you to take this upon yourself

Self-harming behaviours can be extremely concerning, but you cannot offer objective support when enmeshed within the pupil's difficulties.

**APPENDIX 4**

**Checklist for Self-Harm Procedures & Practices**

**Checklist for Schools: Supporting the development of effective practice**

✓ Date

The school has a policy or protocol for supporting pupils who are self-harming or at risk of self-harming. The school Governors have approved this.		
The ERYC and ERSCB Supporting Children and Young People who Self-Harm Guidelines have been approved by the school governors.		

**Training**

All new members of staff receive an induction on child protection procedures and setting boundaries around confidentiality.		
All members of staff receive regular training on child protection procedures.		
The following staff groups – office staff, first-aid staff, technicians, lunchtime supervisors – receive sufficient training and preparation for their roles.		
Members of the Wraparound Services Team have access to training in identifying and supporting pupils who self-harm.		

**Communication**

The school has clear, open channels of communication that allow information to be passed up, down and across the system.		
All members of staff know to whom they can go if they discover a pupil who is self-harming.		
The Senior Leadership Group is fully aware of the contact that reception, first aiders and lunchtime supervisors have with pupils and the type of issues they may come across.		
Time is made available to listen to and support the concerns of staff members on a regular basis.		

**Support for Staff / Students**

School staff know the different agency members who visit the school, e.g., School Health Nurses, etc.		
Male members of staff are supported in considering their responses to girls whom they notice are self-harming.		
Staff members know how to access support for themselves and pupils.		
Pupils know to whom they can go to for help.		

**School Ethos**

The school has a culture that encourages pupils to talk and to adults to listen and believe.		
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## APPENDIX 5

### Local and National Help and Advice

#### CHILDLINE:

24hrs helpline for children and young people under 18 providing confidential counselling. 0800 1111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

#### PAPYRUS:

Offers a helpline to give support, practical advice and information to anyone who is concerned that a young person may be suicidal.  
0870 170 4000 [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

#### NATIONAL SELFHELP NETWORK

Support for people who self-harm, provides free information pack to service users.  
[www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

#### SAMARITANS

Confidential emotional support for anybody who is in crisis.  
08457 90 90 90 [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

#### YOUNG MINDS

Information on a range of subjects relevant to young people and their emotional health and wellbeing 0808 8025544 [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

#### MIND

Information about all aspects of mental health  
0300 123 3393 [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

#### Royal College of Psychiatrists

Information for everyone which aims to improve the lives of those with mental health issues. [www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)

#### NHS

Information and advice on all aspects of health [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

#### YOUNG MINDS Parent helpline: 0808 802 5544

Information on a range of subjects relevant to young people.– [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

GET CONNECTED – 0808 808 4994 Free  
confidential help for young people under 25.

SELF INJURY SUPPORT– Women's self-injury helpline [www.selfinjury-support.org.uk](http://www.selfinjury-support.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0808 800 8088 Supports women and girls in emotional distress, especially those who self-harm, or their friends or relatives. Provides publications and holds list of local groups throughout the country.