



Churchill Park Academy

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Self-Harm Policy and Procedures for Pupils with Complex Needs

Introduction

At Churchill Park Academy (CPA), safeguarding every child is paramount, and we are committed to protecting them from harm. In line with our broader Safeguarding Children Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education, this Self-Harm Policy and Procedure outlines a proactive, compassionate, and effective approach to understanding, supporting, and managing self-harming behaviours in children, particularly those with complex needs and SEND.

Our approach is rooted in:

- Trauma-informed and nurture-based practice
- Understanding behaviour as a form of communication
- Prioritising emotional safety and regulation (Regulation Before Education)
- A developmentally informed approach to pupil need
- Partnership working with families and external agencies

We aim to provide a nurturing environment where every pupil can thrive emotionally, socially, and academically, and where their unique needs are met with dignity and respect.

At CPA, we work closely with a range of professionals and operate a graduated **Pathway of Support**, ensuring that pupils receive the right level of intervention at the right time. This enables early identification, targeted support and specialist input where required.

Linked Documents

- Safeguarding Policy
 - Intimate Care Policy
 - First Aid Policy and Procedures
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Administration of Medication Policy
 - Medical Conditions Policy
 - SEND Policy
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
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Aims of the Policy

- Foster understanding and awareness of self-harm across the whole school community, with sensitivity to pupils with SEND and complex needs
- Ensure consistent awareness and adherence to procedures across the school
- Promote emotional literacy, communication and self-esteem as protective

factors

- Reduce the risk of contagion, particularly in group or shared environments
 - Equip staff with the knowledge to recognise warning signs and risk factors
 - Provide comprehensive support for pupils, families and staff
 - Ensure all responses are aligned with safeguarding guidance and best practice
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Understanding Self-Harm in Pupils with Complex Needs

Definition of Self-Harm

Self-harm involves a person intentionally causing harm to themselves, often as a way of coping with emotional distress. For pupils with SEND, this may also reflect communication needs, sensory regulation or stress responses.

Examples include:

- Cutting
 - Hitting or biting self
 - Pulling hair
 - Skin picking or scratching
 - Overdosing or ingesting harmful substances
 - Head banging
 - Burning or scalding
 - Eating disorders
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Considerations for SEND Pupils

While self-harm can be a coping mechanism, for pupils with SEND it may also be linked to:

- Communication difficulties
- Sensory needs (seeking or avoiding input)
- Frustration or inability to express needs
- Changes in routine or environment
- Social misunderstanding or isolation
- Trauma or attachment needs

At CPA, we recognise that:

Self-harm may represent a stress response (fight, flight, freeze or shutdown) or a form of communication rather than deliberate intent to harm.

Pathway of Support and Multi-Agency Working

At Churchill Park Academy, we operate a clear and graduated **Pathway of Support** to ensure all pupils receive appropriate, timely and effective support.

This includes:

Universal Support

- Classroom strategies
- Pastoral care

- Wellbeing and regulation approaches

Targeted Support

- Nurture-based interventions
- ELSA support
- Personalised behaviour and communication strategies

Specialist Support

- Multi-agency involvement
- Individualised interventions

We work closely with:

- CAMHS and Learning Disability CAMHS
- General Practitioners (GPs)
- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists (SALT)
- Occupational Therapists (OT)
- Social Care and Early Help services

This ensures a **coordinated, holistic approach** to supporting pupils.

School's Approach to Self-Harm

Risk Assessment and Safety Planning

- Individualised risk assessments are completed
 - Safety plans are developed with pupil (where appropriate), families and professionals
 - Plans are regularly reviewed and updated
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Building Communication

- Use of AAC, visuals, and structured communication systems
 - Emotional literacy embedded within daily routines
 - Use of social stories and supported communication approaches
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Duty of Care

- Staff maintain a calm, supportive and non-judgemental approach
 - Emotional safety is prioritised
 - Confidentiality is balanced with safeguarding responsibilities
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Preventative Measures

- Sensory breaks and structured routines
 - Regulation strategies (e.g. sensory tools, calm spaces)
 - Opportunities for positive peer interaction
 - Strong relationships with trusted adults
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Responding to Self-Harm

Immediate Response

- Treat all injuries promptly
 - Provide emotional reassurance
 - Prioritise regulation over questioning
 - Record on CPOMS
 - Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately
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Risk Categorisation

Low/Medium Risk

- Provide a key adult for support
- Use regulation and distraction strategies
- Reduce demands and identify triggers
- Support development of safer coping strategies
- Review support plans

High Risk

- Seek immediate medical attention
 - Inform DSL immediately
 - Inform parents/carers (unless safeguarding concerns prevent this)
 - Refer to external agencies (CAMHS, GP, LD CAMHS)
 - Follow safeguarding procedures
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Good Practice Update

- Harm-minimisation strategies (e.g. elastic bands, ice) should only be used under professional guidance
 - Focus should remain on:
 - Regulation
 - Communication
 - Emotional support
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Identifying Patterns

- Record triggers and context
 - Monitor frequency and severity
 - Use data to inform planning and interventions
 - Work with pastoral and behaviour teams
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Support for Parents and Carers

- Provide clear and supportive communication
 - Acknowledge the emotional impact on families
 - Share resources and signpost to:
 - YoungMinds
 - NHS
 - Work collaboratively through the Pathway of Support
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Support for Staff

- Access to supervision and wellbeing support
- Training in safeguarding, mental health and trauma-informed practice
- Opportunities for reflection and debrief
- Access to Mental Health First Aiders

Staff are encouraged to prioritise their own wellbeing and seek support when needed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- All incidents are recorded and reviewed
 - Safety plans are updated accordingly
 - Feedback from pupils, families and staff informs practice
 - Policy reviewed annually in line with updated guidance
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Policy Review

Policy Reviewed: April 2026

Next Review Date: November 2027

Responsible Persons: Jade Collinge Long- Senior Mental Health Lead