

SELF INJURY POLICY & PROTOCOL



St John
Bosco
College

Designated members of staff are:

**Maria Budzynska
Jonathan Bradford
Stella Kayaga Ojok
Paul Dunne**

September 2016

Reviewed (date).....

Signed (Chair of Governors).....

Self Injury – a definition

Self-injury is a coping mechanism for young people who are attempting to cope with high levels of distress and emotional pain. It is deliberate, non-suicidal behaviour which causes the person physical pain and / or injury and it is aimed at reducing the emotional pain and distress of the individual concerned.

Self injury covers a variety of behaviours but most commonly may include deliberate cutting or bruising, banging and non-suicidal overdosing. These behaviours are usually chronic, repetitive and habitual. Young people who self-injure may either attempt to hide any scarring or injuries, finding it extremely difficult to discuss their behaviours and the emotions behind them with others, or may make the evidence obvious, wanting another person to start an exchange with them and lead into a discussion about it or their feelings.

Self injury is most usually about seeking relief and release from emotional distress, and is not in itself suicidal behaviour. However, the emotional distress that causes these behaviours can lead to suicidal thinking and actions and we will consequently take ALL incidents of self-injury seriously, investigate them and attempt to provide the most appropriate emotional support possible.

Action

Our school team is dedicated to ensuring the emotional, physical and mental well-being of all the students in our community. We consequently aim to:

- Be alert to and recognise any warning signs that one of our students may be engaging in self-harming behaviours.
- Understand the risk factors associated with these behaviours including low self-esteem, perfectionism, mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, home/school problems, social isolation, emotional, physical or sexual abuse through dissemination of information through staff INSET
- Be pro-active in discussing this topic with students we might feel are deliberately harming themselves.
- Know how to respond to students who wish to discuss these behaviours with us and take them seriously at all times.
- Be able to produce short and long term care and management plans for such students in conjunction with external agencies if necessary.
- Provide the appropriate level of practical and emotional support for staff dealing with students who self-harm and ensure appropriate training and education is available to all staff regarding this issue.
- Provide an appropriate awareness campaign for students and ensure the topic is a part of our PSHCE/SEAL curriculum. As some students may choose to confide in another student rather than a member of staff, this matter should also be addressed in the curriculum so all students are confident of what to do if in this situation.
- Should a life threatening disclosure/action be made, staff should immediately alert the school office for emergency services to be called

Warning Signs

For some young people, there will not be any specific warning signs that they are engaging in or contemplating engaging in self-harming behaviours.

For others, the following indicators may be noted:

- Risky behaviours eg drug taking/alcohol misuse/casual sexual activity
- Lack of self-esteem/being overly negative
- Bullying of others
- Social withdrawal
- Significant change in friendships
- Regularly bandaged wrists and / or arms
- Obvious cuts, burns or scratches (that do not appear accidental)
- A reluctance to participate in PE/Dance/Drama/ activities which involve changing clothes
- Experiencing frequent accidents that cause physical injuries
- Wearing long sleeved tops / trousers / skirts even in very hot weather

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Everyone in the school community – the Governing Body, the Headteacher, all staff and teachers, students and parents all have responsibilities to promote and adhere to the policy in order to help ensure the well-being of all within the community. These responsibilities are outlined as follows:

Governing Body

- Ensure the existence of a Procedural Policy in case of self-harming incidents occurring within the school context and that this is reviewed as necessary.
- Ensure there is a Designated Member of Staff who has oversight of self injury within the school to ensure incidents are dealt with according to the policy

Headteacher

- Appoint a Designated Member of Staff to be responsible for all incidents of self-harm and be responsible for disseminating the Policy and protocol to the whole staff. This may be the DMS Safeguarding as part of the remit of that post.
- Be ultimately responsible for ensuring that Designated staff receive appropriate training and supervision (possibly from the local CAHMS team)
- Ensure that all staff in the school community are fully conversant with and adhere to the policy and protocol.

Designated Member of Staff should

- Ensure that the policy and protocol are disseminated and implemented appropriately, providing regular feedback and updates to the Headteacher and Governing Body.
- Develop a record keeping system to record such incidents and ensure that this is kept up to date and incidents and developments are regularly reported to the Headteacher.
- Ensure that students have an appropriate care and management plan which is recorded and, if necessary, developed with the support of external specialist agencies.

- Liaise with external agencies (including Mental Health/CAMHS as appropriate) in order to provide the most appropriate support alongside utilising key services to provide up to date education and information for students, parents and staff.
- Liaise with parents/carers as appropriate in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the student and of other students in the school community.
- Report on suicidal intent/feelings straight away and refer to other professional bodies as appropriate.
- Engage in appropriate informal pastoral support so as to ensure their own well-being.
- In liaison with their line-manager, staff affected by disclosures can request counselling support from the Local Authority if necessary.

All Staff should

- Follow the school protocol in the event of a self injury disclosure or sighting
- Act in an empathetic manner, assuring students that they are available to listen in a calm and non-judgemental manner.
- Know the available support options or referral routes and refer students to these as appropriate.
- Ensure that students know they cannot make any promises to keep things confidential if they feel that the student is at risk.
- Be committed to providing an emotionally literate context in which the self-esteem and emotional and mental well-being of all are fostered and promoted.
- Be aware of the 'healthy' coping strategies students can utilise and know who to ask for advice if it is felt that these are being abused or becoming unsuccessful for the student.
- Ask for help if they feel a situation falls outside of their emotional competency, skills or knowledge base.
- Parents/Carers should
 - Be advised about self-harm at an appropriate point, either by the staff or by the student themselves
 - Ensure that school staff are kept informed of any changes or incidents that occur outside of school that may impact on the behaviour and well-being of the student.
 - Work with Designated staff in order to develop the best ways of supporting both parent and student.
 - Seek outside help and support for themselves and for the student as appropriate.

Students should

- Take care of any wounds appropriately and not display them to other students in the school context if they are self harming
- Ensure that they don't engage in 'sensationalised' conversations with peers or staff or talk about the methods they use to other students.
- Never encourage others to participate in self-harm.
- Ensure that they know who they can talk to in both the immediate and longer term should they feel distressed or at risk in either the school or social context
- Alert a member of staff if they are at all concerned about a friend/peer who may be at risk of self-harming, engaging in these behaviours or who may present as suicidal or discussing suicide.
- This policy will be monitored by the Headteacher and the Governing Body and reviewed regularly after requesting evaluative feedback from all key stakeholders. This will enable the policy to reflect relevant and appropriate changes and ensure that this policy remains useful and user friendly.

St John Bosco Self Injury Protocol

Self Injury

Self-injury is a coping mechanism for young people who are attempting to cope with high levels of distress and emotional pain. It is deliberate, non-suicidal behaviour which causes the person physical pain and / or injury and it is aimed at reducing the emotional pain and distress of the individual concerned. It is a safeguarding issue – i.e. one which puts the safety and well-being of the student in question.

Warning Signs

Students may disclose self injurious behaviour to a staff member, or they may display visible/noticeable signs that they are self harming. The following is a short list of some of the warning signs that might indicate self injurious behaviour, but you may also notice something that is not in this list that you feel indicates self injury.

- Risky behaviours e.g. drug taking/alcohol misuse/casual sexual activity
- Lack of self-esteem/being overly negative
- Bullying of others
- Social withdrawal
- Significant change in friendships
- Regularly bandaged wrists and / or arms
- Obvious cuts, burns or scratches (that do not appear accidental)
- A reluctance to participate in PE/Dance/Drama/ activities which involve changing clothes
- Experiencing frequent accidents that cause physical injuries
- Wearing long sleeved tops / trousers / skirts even in very hot weather

What to do in the event of a disclosure or of witnessing warning signs that may indicate self injurious behaviour

Staff should follow the established safeguarding protocol with regard to disclosures, as outlined in the school safeguarding policy and issued annually at the opening staff meeting of the academic year in September.

- After speaking to the student in the case of a disclosure, or after observing something which may indicate self injurious behaviour, write down the main points of the disclosure/observation on a school incident form, including the date. This is most important as a clear record will be needed further on. Try to write the account as soon as you can to ensure an accurate and detailed record. Staff should remember that when speaking to the student, no promises of confidentiality can be made, and care should be taken to listen and record the student's own words, rather than make suggestions of what may or may not have happened.
- On the same day, report this incident to a Designated Person for Safeguarding (MBA/SOK/JBD/PDE). A Designated Person must be involved at this stage as there may have been other incidences of self injurious behaviour and the Designated Person may have further knowledge from other sources. Even if you are not sure, it is as well to indicate to the Designated Person something which you have heard or noticed that may indicate that the student may be self injuring.
- The Designated Person for safeguarding who will refer the case to the school nurse for further investigation.

Further points to note

- The school nurse is available for consultation by students or staff in all cases concerning child protection issues and she may be contacted via MBA or RJS
- Issues of self injury are by definition personal and indicate that the student cannot cope with their situation in an appropriate way. Students may begin conversations by asking for an unconditional guarantee of confidentiality. Staff should be aware that this guarantee cannot be given, as we are obligated to take action on issues which involve the safety and welfare of the student. The student should not be discouraged from speaking but staff should be aware that they should not give any such guarantees.
- A student should never be pressured to give information or show staff parts of the body not normally visible when the student is wearing school uniform. Any physical examination of students should be left to a trained Health Care professional.
- In the event of an allegation being made by a student against a member of staff then the Headteacher must be informed, who will then deal with the matter using the Procedures for Dealing with Allegations against Staff.

**In any event regarding self injury or safeguarding, never do nothing.
Always Listen, Record and Inform.**

The Designated Members of Staff for Safeguarding are Maria Budzynska, Jon Bradford, Stella Kayaga – Ojok and Paul Dunne

In the event of their absence, any immediate queries regarding self injury should be addressed directly to the Deputy Head or Headteacher.

Safeguarding Notice

This notice should be displayed in the Staff Room where all staff can see it. It should be renewed annually.

Safeguarding / Child Protection Issues

If you have a concern about a Safeguarding / Child Protection issue you should follow the St John Bosco College Safeguarding protocol for action.

Remember the main points –

Listen to the student – do not promise unconditional confidentiality

Record the conversation in writing – as you speak to the child is best, as soon as possible afterwards if this cannot be done

Inform a Designated Member of Staff. If they are unavailable then inform the Deputy Head directly.

Problem? Ask the Designated Member of Staff for Safeguarding for advice.

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