



SELF-INJURY Protocol

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31

A BACKGROUND

1. The purpose of our Self-injury Policy

As part of the School’s mission and values, and dedication to the health and well-being of its students this policy provides a set of protocols for dealing with issues that may arise surrounding self-injury.

These include:

- Recognising the warning signs that a student may be self-injuring;
- How to react positively if a student comes to you wishing to discuss their self-injury, or you are made aware of self-injury in a student;
- Short-term plan of action for the care and management of the student;
- Long-term plan of action for the continued support, assistance and monitoring of the student;
- How best to assist in building the confidence, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing of the student;
- Practical and emotional support for staff members who are dealing with self-injuring students;
- Provision of clear and standard guidelines for all staff in contact with the students;
- Implementation of a harm minimisation strategy to prevent the spreading of self-injury within the school;
- Training and education surrounding the issue of self-injury for all staff;
- Education and awareness campaigns for students.

2. What is self-injury?

Self-injury is a coping mechanism. An individual harms their physical self to deal with emotional pain, or to break feelings or numbness by arousing sensation.

Self-injury is any deliberate, non-suicidal behaviour that inflicts physical harm on your body and is aimed at relieving emotional distress. Physical pain is often easier to deal with than emotional pain, because it causes ‘real’ feelings. Injuries can prove to an individual that their emotional pain is real and valid. Self-injurious behaviour may calm or awaken a person. Yet self-injury only provides temporary relief, it does not deal with the underlying issues. Self-injury can become a natural response to the stresses of day-to-day life and can escalate in frequency and severity.

Self-injury can include but is not limited to, cutting, burning, banging and bruising, non-suicidal overdosing.

Self-injury is often habitual, chronic and repetitive; self-injury tends to affect people for months and years.

People who self-injure usually make a great effort to hide their injuries and scars, and are often uncomfortable about discussing their emotional inner or physical outer pain.

Self-harm is a wider definition, that includes eating disorders, self-injury and drug/alcohol misuse.

3. What self-injury is not

Like any behaviour, self injury may be used to attract attention, but this is not usually the focus of chronic, repetitive self-injury. If self-injury is being used in order to gain attention, one must look to find the reasons as to why someone is in such dire need of attention. It could be there is a problem at home, or issues of bullying, and they feel that no one is listening or hearing them.

4. Risk factors associated with self-injury

Self-injury is a coping mechanism and it is important to recognise and respond to the underlying reasons behind a person's self-injury. Risk factors include, but are not limited to:

- Low self-esteem;
- Perfectionism;
- Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety;
- The onset of a more complicated mental illness such as schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder or a personality disorder;
- Problems at home or school;
- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect;

It is important to recognise that none of these risk factors may appear to be present. Sometimes it is the outwardly happy, high-achieving person with a stable background who is suffering internally and hurting themselves in order to cope.

5. Physical signs that self-injury may be occurring

Obvious cuts, scratches or burns that do not appear of an accidental nature;

Frequent 'accidents' that cause physical injury;

Regularly bandaged arms and/or wrists;

Reluctance to take part in physical exercise or other activities that require a change of clothes;

Wearing long sleeves and trousers even during hot weather.

6. Suicide

Although self-injury is non-suicidal behaviour and relied on as an attempt to cope and manage, it must be recognised that the emotional distress that leads to self-injury can also lead to suicidal thoughts and actions.

It is therefore of utmost importance that all incidents of self-injury are taken seriously and that the underlying issues and emotional distress are thoroughly investigated and necessary emotional support given, in order to minimise any greater risk. Any mention of suicidal intent should always be taken seriously and acted upon as a matter of urgency.

Following an overdose, or disclosure of potential suicide/overdose, the parents or carers of the young person must take them to their GP. The School will require a note from a medical authority to say that they are well enough to be in School. Until a note or letter is received the young person needs to remain at home, as they are unwell.

If it is unsafe for that young person to be at home, it becomes a safeguarding concern and needs to be referred to the Designated Officers at School.

ALL INCIDENTS OF SELF-INJURY & REFERENCE TO SUICIDE MUST BE REPORTED IN THE FIRST INSTANCE TO THE DESIGNATED PERSON FOR SAFEGUARDING ON THE DAY OF BEING MADE AWARE OF THE NEED.

B ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

1. Head Teacher should:

- Appoint one or more designated key staff to be responsible for all incidents relating to self-injury. This should be the designated person for safeguarding or deputies.
- Ensure that all designated staff receive full and appropriate training surrounding self-injury and are fully confident with the procedures to follow;
- Provide practical and emotional support for key staff dealing with self-injury;
- Ensure that all staff, including LSA's, lab technicians and other non-teaching staff are made aware of, and understand, the self-injury policy.

- 2. Governing Body should:**
 - Provide students with open access to information about self-injury and details of who to go to for help and support;
 - Decide whether self-injury should be covered in the school curriculum or as an extra-curricular presentation;
 - Consider parental consent and whether parents/guardians should be invited to learn more about self-injury for themselves;
 - Monitor procedural policy in case of self-injury incidents occurring at school;
 - Monitor what behaviour will not be tolerated and ensure all students are aware and understand school rules (for example, self-injuring in front of other students or threats to self-injure as part of bargaining or manipulation may be deemed unacceptable).

- 3. All Staff and Teachers should :**
 - Make it known to students that you are available to listen;
 - Remain calm and non-judgemental at all times;
 - Avoid dismissing a student's reasons for distress as invalid;
 - Report the matter to a Designated Person for Safeguarding as soon as you become aware of the problem, and inform the student that you are doing this;
 - Do not contact parents/guardians directly. Leave to the responsibility of the Designated Person for Safeguarding.

- 4. First Aid staff should:**
 - Treat all injured students as with normal procedures.
 - Report the matter to a Designated Person for Safeguarding.
 - If any item is found which caused the self-harm, it is to place it in the sharps bin.

- 5. Designated Person for Safeguarding should:**
 - Ensure the implementation of the policy. To communicate with appropriate agencies and report back to the Head Teacher regularly;
 - Maintain up-to-date records of students experiencing self-injury, incidents of self-injury and all other concerns surrounding the issue;
 - Communicate with the Head Teacher on a regular basis and keep them informed of all incidents and developments;
 - Monitor the help, support and progress of the students in your care and maintain communication with them;
 - Is fully confident in understanding of self-injury and seek additional information and/or training if necessary;
 - Contact other organisations and key services where necessary.
 - Liaise with the Head Teacher and student to decide if any other members of staff who have contact with the student should be made aware of the self-injury and underlying concerns;
 - Ensure that all first-aiders are well informed about self-injury;
 - Inform the student's parents, if appropriate, and liaise with them as to how best manage the situation;
 - Be aware of when it is essential for other professional bodies to be informed, such as social services, educational psychologists or CAMHS
 - Report any mention of suicidal feelings or behaviour as a matter of urgency to parents/guardians if safe to do so.
 - Take care of their own emotional well-being and seek support as and when necessary.

- 6. Parents Should:**
 - Understand and endorse your school's self-injury policy;
 - Educate yourself regarding self-injury and discuss the subject with your daughter
 - If your daughter is self-injuring, work closely with the school and take an active role in deciding the best course of action for her;
 - Keep the school informed of any incidents outside of school that you feel they should know about;
 - Take care of yourself and seek any emotional support you may need in dealing with your daughter's self-injury.

**NOTRE DAME SCHOOL
SELF-INJURY POLICY
2018 - 2021**

6. ***Students should:***

- Endeavour not to self-injure in School.
- Ensure all wounds are cared for properly and bandaged appropriately;
- Do not display fresh or open wounds
- When talking to teachers or friends about your self-injury, focus on the emotional reasons behind your distress and not on the self-injury itself;
- Do not talk graphically about your injuries to other students or describing the methods you use;
- Never encourage anyone to try self-injury themselves;
- When under emotional distress or feeling the urge to self-injure at school, talk to a teacher or staff member as soon as possible;
- Discuss any additional support you feel you may need while you are going through emotional distress;
- Be aware that the teachers and designated self-injury staff are there to help you. The more you can talk to them the better able they will be to give you the support and help you need;
- Endeavour to seek fun and laughter every day;
- If you are concerned that a friend may be suicidal, or has mentioned suicide, then alert a teacher straight away.
- If you are using items to self-injure – keep them safe and clean and do not injure yourself in front of others.

By order of the Governing Body of Notre Dame School

Policy first adopted by Governors Ethos Committee: 21st February 2012

Review Term: 3 Yearly

Review Date: 25th April 2012 (Amendment) Signed Chair of Ethos

Review Date: 6th May 2015 Signed Chair of Ethos

Review Date: 14th November 2018 Signed Chair of Governors.....

Next Review: November 2021.....