



# Self Harm Policy

Swakeleys School for Girls

**Date Approved: 22 September 2023**

**Date of Next Review: 22 September 2024**

## Control Sheet

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<b>Chair of Committee signature</b>	Hardip Singh

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1.1	XXXXXXXX 20XX	<A Smith, Job Title>	<add details of revisions>

## Self-Harm Policy

### **Rationale**

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

These behaviours may include deliberate bone-breaking, cutting, bruising, banging and non-suicidal overdosing and the behaviours are usually chronic, repetitive and habitual. Young people who self-injure will generally attempt to hide any scarring or injuries and can find it extremely difficult to discuss their behaviours, and the emotions behind them, with others. We understand these behaviours not to be about seeking attention but rather to be about seeking relief and release from emotional distress. We also understand that self-injury is not 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.

### **Objectives**

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:

- 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.
- 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 significant part of our PSHCE/Emotional Literacy curriculum.

## **Implementation**

We are aware that 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
- Lack of self-esteem/being overly negative
- Bullying of others
- Social withdrawal
- Significant change in friendships
- Regularly bandaged wrists and/ arms
- Obvious cuts, burns or scratches (that don't look like accidents)
- A reluctance to participate in PE/change clothes
- Frequent accidents that cause physical injuries
- Wearing long sleeved tops even in very hot weather

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

### **Governing Body**

- Ensure pupils have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding self-harm alongside details of relevant support agencies.
- Determine how and when the topic is covered in the school curriculum.
- Provide access to appropriate and accurate information for parents/carers.
- Ensure that 'special arrangements' are made for students who self-harm (eg time out, wearing long-sleeved tops etc) as part of the Individual Management Plans and that these are appropriately reviewed.
- 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 that all students are aware of the behaviours that will not be tolerated and that they understand these key rules eg no self-injury in front of others, no attempts to manipulate others with the threat of self-injury.

### **Headteacher**

- Appoint a designated member of staff to be responsible for all incidents of self-harm and be responsible for disseminating the Policy and training to the whole team.
- Be ultimately responsible for ensuring that designated staff receive appropriate training and supervision.

- Ensure that all staff in the school community are fully conversant with and adhere to our Self-harm Policy.

### Designated Staff

- Ensure that the policy is 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 (specifically Mental Health) 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. Use the Early Help Assessment to access local help as appropriate.
- Liaise with parents/carers as appropriate in order to ensure the safety and well-being of students in the school community.
- Report on suicidal intent/feelings straight away and refer to other professional bodies if appropriate.
- Engage in appropriate supervision so as to ensure their own well-being.
- **Report incidents of self-harm in pupils to parents/carers in a sensitive way and encourage them to seek appropriate medical support. The exception to this being if referrals to other agencies are in place for this child and to notify parents is thought to have the potential to cause significant physical or emotional harm.**

### All Staff

- Act in an empathic manner, assuring students that they are available to actively listen in a calm and non-judgemental manner.
- Will not invalidate any students' concerns or emotional distress.
- 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**

- Ensure that they both understand and endorse this Policy.
- Find out about self-harm, making use of school-based and external resources and discuss your findings with your child.
- Ensure that school staff are kept informed of any changes or incidents that occur outside of school that you feel may impact on the behaviour and well-being of your child.
- If you become aware that your child is engaging in these behaviours, work with Designated staff in order to help us develop the best ways of supporting you and your child.
- Know that you may also need emotional support and find out where this is best accessed.

## **Students**

- If they are self-harming, they will take care of any wounds appropriately and not display them in the school context.
- Ensure that they don't engage in 'sensationalised' conversations with peers or staff or talk about the methods they use to other students.
- Try to find something positive and fun in each day.
- Never encourage others to participate in self-harm.
- Discuss why they/others might self-harm ie emotional factors and not focus on the act of self-harm itself.
- 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 (eg designated staff).
- 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.

## **Evaluation**

This policy will be evaluated by the Curriculum and Pastoral committee.

## **Review**

The policy will be monitored by the Curriculum and Pastoral Committee and reviewed every two years. The next review will be in July 2025.