



St. Gregory's Catholic High School

Self Injury Policy

Monitoring

The implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Deputy Headteacher Pastoral.

Evaluation

The policy was reviewed by the Deputy Headteacher Pastoral and Senior Leadership Team on 23rd September 2024 prior to the submission of the policy to Governors' Community Committee for scrutiny and recommendation to the Full Governing Board for approval.

Key policy dates:

Ratified by the Full Governing Board: 11th December 2024

Review frequency: Every 3 years

Next policy review commences: Autumn Term 2027

Please Note: This policy, as a working document, may be subject to changes as appropriate (such as changes in legislation, working practices, and in response to matters arising in school). Updated policies will always be on the website.

Self-Injury Policy

Introduction

St Gregory's Catholic High School fully recognises its responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of our young people. It is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for pupils, staff and visitors. We promote a climate where pupils and adults feel confident about sharing any concerns which they may have about their own safety or the wellbeing of others. Every human being has a value and dignity which we as a Catholic school acknowledge as coming directly from God's creation of male and female in his own image and likeness. This implies a duty to value all people and therefore to support them and protect them from harm.

"Our commitment to Safeguarding, which can be expressed in the introduction to all our policies, will include everything the State asks of us but our inspiration, our Foundation, is the belief in the 'sacred grandeur' of our children. That is why we are never content with mere compliance, but always strive for best practice."

At St. Gregory's Catholic High School, we have a dedicated approach to the health and happiness of our pupils. The aim of the Self-Injury Policy is to provide a clear set of protocols to adopt for managing any issues that may arise surrounding the pattern of self-injury. Such protocols include:

- Recognising the warning signs that a child may be self-injuring
- How to react positively if a pupil comes to you wishing to discuss their self-injury
- Practical and emotional support for the staff members dealing with a self-injuring pupil
- Provision of clear and standard guidelines for all staff in contact with the pupil
- Training and education surrounding the issue of self-injury for all staff
- Education and awareness campaigns for pupils

Methods of Self Injury

Direct (Self Injury):

- Cutting
- Self-poisoning/ingestion
- Hanging
- Burning
- Stabbing
- Insertion
- Hitting
- Head banging
- Misuse of prescribed medication

Indirect:

- Smoking
- Substance misuse
- Physical risk-taking
- Situational risk-taking
- Misuse of prescribed medication
- Eating disorders
- Self-neglect
- Over/under exercising

Self-injury is more common than self-poisoning, though this is not reflected in statistics. People who self-poison are more likely to seek professional help.

Self-injury is a coping mechanism which may be a result of underlying problems, some of which may include:

- Low/lack of self-esteem
- Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety

- The onset of more complicated mental health issues e.g. bi-polar
- Problems at home or at school/relationships
- Physical or emotional abuse
- Perfectionism
- Drugs and/or alcohol misuse or risk taking behaviour
- Negativity
- Expression of anger
- Hearing voices/having intrusive thoughts or images
- Having to be in control
- Stressful life events

What to look for

- A change in behaviour/ attitude
- Reluctance to engage in activities such as PE
- Wearing long sleeves and trousers even during hot weather
- Unusually dressed for the weather e.g. jumpers when it is hot
- Wearing wristbands/lots of bracelets
- Becoming more withdrawn/ a reluctance to talk to staff
- Suddenly becoming accident prone
- Regular dressings such as bandages on arms/wrists
- Blood marks on school uniform
- Blades missing from pencil sharpeners (Safety ones issued by school shop)
- Bruising
- Reduced interaction/ distracted/vacant
- Erratic mood swings/ increased irritation
- Defensive when questioned
- Disappearance when upset
- Obvious cuts, scratches or burns that do not appear to be accidental
- Frequent 'accidents' that cause injury
- Out of character behaviour
- Bullying other pupils
- A sudden change in friends or withdrawal from a group

Myths surrounding Self Injury

- It is attention seeking
- People who self-harm are suicidal
- All Self Harmers have a Borderline Personality Disorder (BDP)
- Only a teenage phase
- Self-Harmers could stop whenever they want to
- Self-Harmers are dangerous to other people
- All Self-Harmers are abuse victims
- It only refers to cutting
- Severity of problem determined by the severity of the injury

Why do people self-injure?

- They may feel - I deserve it
- They may feel - I hate myself and need to punish myself
- To feel in control
- To make me feel *anything*
- To shift from emotional to physical pain

- To stop voices and/or intrusive thoughts/images
- To 'empty my glass'
- It can make problems seem smaller afterwards
- To express anger/reduce anxiety
- To cope

Clinical experts and researchers say may cause a child to self injure

- A disrupted upbringing
- Family relationship problems
- Mental health problems
- Physical illness
- Drug or alcohol use
- Stressful life events
- Wider cultural environment
- Access to methods
- Poor peer relationships
- Mother-child attachment disturbed

Psychological Characteristics

Studies have shown that certain characteristics are more common in self injury

- Impulsivity
- Hopelessness
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Low self-esteem
- Anger and hostility

Risk Factors

The following risk factors and ACES, particularly in combination, are examples of what may make a young person particularly vulnerable to self-injury.

Individual Factors:

- Depression/anxiety
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity
- Drug/alcohol abuse

Family Factors:

- Unreasonable expectations
- Neglect or physical/sexual/emotional abuse
- Poor parental relationships and arguments
- Depression, self-injury or suicide in the family

Social Factors

- Difficulty in making relationships/loneliness
- Being bullied or rejected by peers

Roles and Responsibility:

Governors will:

- Review policy on a regular basis and ensure it conforms to legal expectations. Linked Safeguarding Governor (RHA)
- Ensure appropriate training for staff
- Will review the school curriculum and how self-injury should be addressed
- Ensure that education about self-injury neither promotes or stigmatises
- Regularly review support for staff dealing with referred pupils and their parents/carers.

The Head Teacher will:

- Appoint a lead officer for safeguarding DSL who is on the SLT to be responsible for self-injury matters and liaise with them as necessary and in accordance with Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Ensure that designated members of staff receive appropriate training about self-injury
- Ensure that self-injury policy is followed by all members of staff as directed by DSL

All staff are expected to:

- Respond following Safeguarding referral processes as detailed in Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Listen to pupils in emotional distress calmly and in a non-judgemental way following the 'Golden Rules' as set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Report self-injury to the DSL/designated staff member(s) for first aid immediately.
- Deliver key messages as directed in Curriculum Provision/Education
- Reassure pupils that in order to support them people need to know about their problems so that they can help
- Be aware of support mechanisms that already exist in school and how to access them

The designated staff member(s) and Safeguarding Team Members will:

- Attend all relevant training and keep up to date with procedures/legal requirements
- Keep records of self-injury incidents and concerns via safeguarding protocols (CPOMS). Written logs on purple referral forms will be recorded
- Liaise with local services about help available for people who self-injure
- Liaise with DSL according to Safeguarding procedures
- Complete Safety Plans when deemed necessary for known self-harmers.
- Contact parents/carers at all times and advise to take pupil to Accident and Emergency to access appropriate support or if this is not appropriate then parents/carers to take pupil to the GP.
- Seek advice from and CAHMS Team
- Involve the pupil in the process.
- Inform the parents/carers about appropriate help and support for their child which is available
- Monitor the pupil's progress following an incident
- Know when people other than parents/carers (e.g. social workers, educational psychologists) need to be informed
- Know when to seek help to deal with their own feelings and distress

- Look at provisions for people who self-injure, such as long-sleeved uniforms and PE kits and time out of lessons when under intense stress, emotional support and a mentor in liaison with relevant staff
- Promote problem-solving techniques and non-harmful ways to deal with emotional distress.
- Provide accurate information about self-injury
- Widen their knowledge about self-injury
- Be aware of health and safety issues such as first-aid and clearing up if a self-injury incident takes place school
- Be aware of their legal responsibilities – when they can help, and when they cannot

Pupils will be expected to:

- Not display open wounds/injuries (these must be dressed appropriately)
- Talk to the appropriate staff member if they are in emotional distress
- Alert a teacher if they suspect a fellow pupil of being suicidal or at serious risk of harm themselves, and know when confidentiality must be broken. This will be reinforced during Safeguarding Training for pupils through our 'Telling School' agenda.

Parents/Carers will be encouraged to:

- Endorse the school's approach to self-injury education and pastoral care and safeguarding procedures.
- Work in partnership with the school by following all advice and keeping school updated on help being provided and pupil responses/changes in circumstances.

Contacts

Warrington CYPMHS	01925 575904
CYPMHS Assessment and Response Team (CART)	01925 579405
National Self Harm Network	www.nshn.co.uk
Self Help and Resources	www.getselfhelp.co.uk
BEAT Eating Disorders Support	www.b-eat.co.uk
Warrington Local Service Support	www.happyokaysad.org.uk
CAMHS Support	www.camhswhoami.co.uk
Young Suicide Prevention	www.papyrus-uk.org
Text and email Support Service	www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk
Research Paper around teenage self harm	www.cellogroup.com/pdfs/talking.self_harm.pdf