

# BCS SELF INJURY

## Policy Statement

Recent research indicates that up to one in ten young people in the UK engage in self-injuring behaviours, and that this figure is higher amongst specific populations, including young people with special educational needs. School staff can play an important role in preventing self-injury and also in supporting students, peers and parents of students currently engaging in self-injury.

This document describes the school's approach to self-injury. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

### Aims

- To increase understanding and awareness of self-injury
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with students who self-injure
- To provide support to students who self-injure and their peers and parents/carers

BCS is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this Self Injury policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the school's Equal Opportunity Policy document.

This policy is applicable to all members of our school community including pupils in both senior and prep schools, those in boarding and EYFS. BCS seeks to implement this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.

In line with our Provision of Information policy, this document is available to all interested parties on our website and on request from the Senior school and Prep school offices and should be read in conjunction with the following documents: Child Protection Policy

This document is reviewed annually by Alison Davies and Laura Riggs, or as events or legislation change requires. The next scheduled date for review is 01/01/2019.

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## Key Personnel

Self Injury in the Senior school is led by Alison Davies, Deputy Head (Pastoral and Discipline). Self Injury in the Prep school is led by Laura Riggs, Assistant Head, Pastoral.

## Definition of Self-Injury

Self-injury is any behaviour where the intent is to deliberately cause harm to one's own body for example:

- Cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin
- Swallowing inedible objects
- Taking an overdose of prescription or non-prescription drugs
- Swallowing hazardous materials or substances
- Burning or scalding
- Hair-pulling
- Banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively

## Risk Factors

The following risk factors, particularly in combination, 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 or alcohol abuse

### Family Factors

- Unreasonable expectations
- Neglect or physical, sexual or 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

We recognise, in addition, that pupils who board may be at increased risk of self-injuring.

## Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-injury or suicide. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further advice from one of the designated teachers for safeguarding children Alison Davies at the Senior site or Kay Smith at the Prep. site or the designated deputies.

Possible warning signs include:

- Unexplained and uniform marks on body
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits (e.g. student may appear overly tired if not sleeping well)

- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood e.g. more aggressive or introverted than usual
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-injury or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing e.g. becoming a goth

## **Staff Roles in working with students who self-injure**

Students may choose to confide in a member of school staff if they are concerned about their own welfare, or that of a peer. School staff may experience a range of feelings in response to self-injury in a student such as anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, guilt, helplessness, disgust and rejection. However, in order to offer the best possible help to students it is important to try and maintain a supportive and open attitude – a student who has chosen to discuss their concerns with a member of school staff is showing a considerable amount of courage and trust. Students need to be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality. If you consider a student is at risk of injuring themselves then confidentiality cannot be kept.

It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept even if a student puts pressure on you to do so. Any member of staff who is aware of a student engaging in or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-injury should consult one of the designated safeguarding staff.

Following the report, the designated teacher will decide on the appropriate course of action. This may include:

- Contacting parents / carers
- Arranging professional assistance e.g. doctor, nurse, social services
- Arranging an appointment with a counsellor
- Immediately removing the student from lessons if their remaining in class is likely to cause further distress to themselves or their peers
- In the case of an acutely distressed student, the immediate safety of the student is paramount and an adult should remain with the student at all times
- If a student has self-injured in school a first aider should be called for immediate help

## **Further Considerations**

Any meetings with a student, their parents or their peers regarding self injury should be recorded in writing including:

- Dates and times
- An action plan
- Concerns raised
- Details of anyone else who has been informed

This information should be stored in the student's child protection file. It is important to encourage students to let you know if one of their group is in trouble, upset or showing signs of self-injuring. Friends can worry about betraying confidences so they need to know that self-injury can be very dangerous and that by seeking help and advice for a friend they are taking responsible action & being a good friend. They should also be aware that their friend will be treated in a caring and supportive manner. The peer group of a young person who self-injures may value the opportunity to talk to a member of staff either individually or in a small group. Any member of staff wishing for further advice on this should consult one of the designated teachers for safeguarding children. When a young person is self-injuring it is important to be vigilant in case close contacts with the individual are also self-injuring. Occasionally schools discover that a number of students in the same peer group are injuring themselves.

## **Education of pupils, parents and staff regarding Self Injury**

Pupils receive information regarding self injury, appropriate to their age through the PSHE programme. There is an annual meeting for parents at the Senior Site specifically on self injury on or around National Self Injury Awareness day. Senior Staff have also received CPD training on self injury.