



## ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

# Self-harm Policy

### **Mission Statement**

"I called you by your name, you are mine." Isaiah 43

The mission of our school is to support and further the teachings of Christ and His Church.

We welcome and embrace individuals of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.

We aim to enhance and celebrate their moral, physical, social and emotional development, so that they may reach their full potential in an atmosphere of stability, care and respect.

We believe that education is for all and in partnership with parents, carers, children and the wider Catholic community: we will strive and succeed in a wholly inclusive setting.

### **Equality statement**

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School.

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PESD) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Date issued: September 2021

We want to support any young person experiencing difficulties with self-harm, including young people who are affected by the self-harm of a friend or sibling. This document gives a brief overview of how we intend to achieve this.

## **WHAT IS SELF-HARM?**

Self-harm is a physical manifestation of an emotional difficulty which a person finds difficult to communicate with words. Self-harm is an expression of need rather than a cry for help as it is sometimes thought of. It is a way of expressing unbearable emotional pain or providing a distraction.

Self-harm is an umbrella term to describe a wide range of behaviours.

These are often split into 2 sub-categories:

**Self-Injury:** Harming or injuring oneself e.g. cutting, bruising or scratching the skin with sharp implements, burning the skin, and other acts of self-mutilation.

**Harmful Behaviours:** Behaviours which could result in long-term harm e.g. over/under eating, drug misuse, binge drinking, and smoking.

Other behaviours which may also indicate that a person is self-harming include: wearing inappropriate clothing for the time of year, withdrawal, secrecy, low self-esteem, perfectionism, irritability, reduced academic performance or lack of interest in usual activities. It is important to recognise that these are behaviours which are similar to the signs of abuse, which may of course be a trigger for a young person's harming.

## **IF WE THINK SOMEONE IS SELF-HARMING**

If we suspect that a young person is self-harming we will provide an opportunity for them to disclose their behaviour to us. We will give them opportunities to disclose and we will be open and calm. It's important not to appear shocked.

In the event of one young person reporting concerns of self-harm about another, the following steps must be taken:

We have a duty to safeguard young people. After a disclosure has been made it's essential that we assess the immediate risk that they may be in and make accurate and secure notes.

- Is the young person at immediate risk to themselves (e.g. have they overdosed or are they speaking of an incident that happened several days ago?) All overdoses need to be referred to A&E regardless to time lapsed.

A Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) may help to understand whether there are any underlying mental health issues.

- What are they feeling now?

- What support do they need to move forwards? What support are they already getting if any?

We understand that self-harm is a coping strategy and stopping completely is not always an option. Therefore, we recognise that a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) or alternative Wellbeing action plan should be developed with the young person where we look at things that have helped them previously, alternative coping strategies, who they can call when they are feeling low/in pain, distraction/ delay techniques, first aid and infection control, appropriate behaviour in the classroom and therefore a safe word if they feel the urge to harm in class.

- Going over the incident may help to understand why it happened, but it doesn't change or undo it - how can they manage better next time? If we feel the young person is at risk of significant harm, or of harming others as a result of what they have told us then we would follow the child protection procedure.

### **IF A YOUNG PERSON COMES TO US WITH A SELF-HARM INJURY**

In the event of a self-harm incident where a young person comes to us for assistance, we will treat the incident as a first aid incident and follow normal procedures for dealing with such incidents.

Where possible, we may assist the young person in caring for their injuries themselves so that they become familiar with how to care for their wounds and the importance of hygiene and infection control.

This may also prove to be a helpful time to chat to the young person, so we will be available to listen and understand what's happened, or offer an alternative time if the young person requests one.

In the event of a young person making a disclosure, the self-harm lead will be notified as soon as possible and support and advice will be offered.

### **HOW WE CAN HELP SOMEONE WHO SELF-HARMS?**

If we feel that someone needs support but that we are not the right person to help them for whatever reason, we will discuss this honestly with the young person and work together to identify someone who they could receive help from.

We will:

**Listen:** Listening is one of the most valuable things that we can do. It makes people feel empowered and valued.

**Be honest and consistent.** It's OK not to understand. We will be consistent and not pretend that we know everything.

Identify emotional group and explore coping methods. Can they pin point what is driving their behaviour? Can they explore other options?

Encourage them to explore the underlying issues What has triggered this behaviour?

Set clear boundaries and let them know when you or someone else in the school will be available to talk.

Discuss possible alternative coping strategies for them to try

Provide them with a helpline (Samaritans 116 123/ ChildLine 0800 1111) number so they have someone to speak to the next time that they feel like this as this can be enough to distract or delay these feelings.

## WHO ELSE CAN HELP?

There are services which can support young people who may have a mental health need, or require specific self-harm support.

It is important that the young person understands the other people and services which may be able to help them.

Part of our responsibility is to signpost young people/parents to other sources of support and information.

- School Nursing - emotional and well-being team 0300 123 3444 (option 2)
- **Young minds'** parents' helpline **0808 802 5544** - 09.30-16.00
- Parent or family member
- School Counsellor/Play Therapist
- KOOTH [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)
- Recommended apps on the NHS website Blue Ice and Chill Panda <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/filter/?categories=Child%20health>

In some circumstances we may feel it is appropriate to make a referral to the CYPMHS (Child and Young Person's mental health service) on 0800 011 3474 This may be necessary if the child is showing an inability to maintain functional relationships, a high level of anxiety and phobia, a consistently unstable mood - hopelessness, depression etc and poor concentration and decision making skills. There may also be a history of traumatic events.

## WHAT ABOUT US?

We need to be aware that as professionals and people we have our own limitations. Self-harm can be very emotive and invoke difficult feelings, so we need to remember to look after ourselves whilst supporting someone else. This may include de-briefing with colleagues as well as relying on support.

Below are links to further information about the subject of self-harm, mental health and safeguarding young people

[www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk). This includes introductory notes on self-harm.

<http://youthscape.co.uk/store/product/a-parents-guide-to-self-harm>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-harm/useful-contacts/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/self-harm/>

<https://charliewaller.org/resources/young-people-who-self-harm>