



Trinity School and College



## Self Harm Policy

*Trinity puts children's rights at the heart of our provision in order to improve well-being and develop every child's talents and abilities to their full potential. Trinity recognises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child putting it into practice within the school and beyond.*

*This policy promotes Article 3: the best interests of the child must be a top priority; Article 19: protection from violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment; Article 24: the right to the best possible health; Article 33: protection from illegal drug use and distribution; Article 34: protection from sexual abuse and exploitation; Article 35: protection from abduction or illegal movement for exploitation; Article 36: protection from all forms of exploitation; Article 37: protection from cruel treatment or punishment.*

**September 2021**

Self-harm in children and young people is often misunderstood but is a very real issue that Trinity School and College identifies needs to be taken seriously. Many students at Trinity School and College experience anxiety and other mental health issues which can be associated with higher rates of self harm. Individuals who self harm are more likely to express or act upon suicidal thoughts. There is also a recognised risk that an individual who self harms may make a mistake when self harming and unintentionally end their life. All staff at Trinity School and College are aware of the signs and indicators of self harm and the action which must be taken when there are concerns about a child or young person who may be self harming or experiencing self harm urges. Trinity School and College seeks to work in collaboration with parents, carers and professionals to support all children and young people to ensure positive outcomes both academically, socially and emotionally. This policy must be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Child Protection Policy.

### **What is Self-harm?**

Self-harm is a way of expressing very deep distress, which sufferers struggle to put into words. It is a coping mechanism but relief for the sufferer is short lived as nothing has been done to resolve the original problem so the self-harm is repeated, thus creating a vicious circle. It is often habitual, chronic and repetitive and tends to affect young people for months or even years. It can include burns, cuts, bruising, head banging, biting, hair pulling and deliberate ingestion of noxious substances, anorexia and bulimia, deliberate withdrawal of medication and risk taking behaviours. In extreme cases it can also include eye gouging, use of ligatures and mutilation of genitals.

**Any mention of suicidal intent should always be taken seriously and acted upon as a matter of urgency.**

Although self-harm is often used as a coping mechanism (ie not with any suicidal intent), it must be recognised that the emotional distress that leads to someone needing to self-harm can also lead to suicidal thoughts and actions particularly if attempts are made to 'stop' or 'control' the self-harm. Also, if the self-harm has been long-term and escalating in its urgency and severity, then someone who self harms in this way, is at higher risk of becoming suicidal.

## **Policy Aims**

- To enable staff, volunteers and parents to recognise the warning signs that a pupil or their child or young person may be self-harming.
- To enable staff, volunteers and parents to broach the subject of self-harm with you young person where there are concerns
- For staff and volunteers to know how to react positively if a pupil discloses self harm or their wish to self-harm.
- To make clear the possible short-term plan of action for the care and management of the pupil which includes assessing the child or young person's unique and individual needs
- To make clear the possible long-term plan of action for the continued support, assistance and monitoring of the child or young person
- To build awareness of how best to assist in building the confidence, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing of children and young people
- To ensure staff members and volunteers are aware of the practical and emotional support available to them when supporting children and young people who self harm
- To provide staff and volunteers with clear standard guidelines for all staff in contact with the pupil self harming and for parents to understand this standard
- To implement a 'harm-minimisation approach' to prevent the spreading of a self-harm culture within the school.

## **Trigger Factors**

They are not clearly known in young people, however self-harm seems to be associated with:-

- 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, school and relationship difficulties
- All forms of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect).
- Victim of bullying.
- A sense of 'not belonging'.
- Exam stress
- Victim of peer on peer/ child on child abuse
- Risk of harm or actual harm from safeguarding threats in the community such as Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation, Gangs and County Lines
- Other extra familial harm
- Experiencing trauma
- Educational transitions
- Gender identity issues

## **Warning signs that may be associated with self-harm**

- Drug or alcohol misuse or risk taking behaviour including promiscuity.
- Low self worth, negativity and lack of self-esteem.
- Out of character behaviour.

- Bullying other pupils or a victim of bullying
- Involvement in peer on peer / child on child abuse.
- A sudden change in friends or withdrawal from a group.
- Physical signs that self-harm may be occurring such as cuts, scratches, bruising or burns that do not appear to be of an accidental nature, plus old scarring.
- Regularly bandaged/covered 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 warm weather.
- Apparent weight loss/gain with notable deviations from normal eating habits and symptoms associated with eating disorders such as vomiting, feeling cold, bloating, poor hair skin and nails and the absence of periods in girls.

**If you are student and need to talk to someone about self harm or are worried about another student who you think or know is self harming, you can send an email to:**

**[wellbeing@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk](mailto:wellbeing@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk) or  
[safeguarding@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk)**

**A member of the wellbeing or safeguarding team will make contact with you. You can talk to any member of staff at the school or college but adults with purple wellbeing or yellow safeguarding lanyards are specially trained to help you.**

## **Roles and responsibilities of Trinity professionals and parents**

### **All staff**

- To be alert to the signs and indicators of self harm
- To report all noticed signs and indicators of self harm on CPOMs immediately including a body map where appropriate
- To maintain open communication with the child or young person
- To ensure first aid assessment is carried out where necessary
- To never assume another member of staff will already have reported the signs and indicators you have seen or observed
- To understand that self harm takes many forms and can take the form of self-neglect
- To ensure that risk assessments for students have been read and are followed

## **Emotional Wellbeing Team**

- To provide ongoing support and strategies regarding emotional wellbeing and self harm
- To ensure the safeguarding team are informed on CPOMs immediately a student discloses self harm or if self harm ideation with expressed
- To work with the safeguarding team to provide information for external professionals in order to secure additional support over time for the student
- To contribute to professional referrals in collaboration with the safeguarding team as appropriate

## **First Aid Team**

- To provide sympathetic and discreet first aid assessment and treatment
- To provide an update immediately to the safeguarding team following treatment
- To provide details of first aid provided to the safeguarding team so this informs their conversations with parents, carers and professionals

## **Safeguarding Team**

- To contact parents, carers, social workers and any other relevant person when a child or young person has self harmed or disclosed self harm thoughts to ensure safeguarding measures are in place at all settings
- To consider contextual safeguarding factors and any additional safeguarding information which may be appropriate
- To liaise with CAMHS/NELFT as appropriate
- To liaise with and make additional referrals for support such as children's social services, CAMHS /NELFT, Early Help as appropriate
- To update student risk assessments as appropriate and share these with appropriate staff
- To liaise with the Emotional Wellbeing Manager regarding collaborative working and onward support
- To continue to monitor the student and the provision in place
- To provide crisis contact numbers for out of hours support as appropriate

## **Parents, carers and guardians**

- To inform the safeguarding team via email or telephone on each occasion when their child or young person has self harmed or has disclosed self harm thoughts ([safeguarding@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk) or 01634 812233)
- To work in collaboration with the emotional wellbeing and safeguarding team to ensure the safety of the child or young person overtime and inform the safeguarding team as soon as a safety plan is provided by any external professional. This must also be share with the team

## **Helping a pupil who is self-harming**

Children and young people who self-harm need emotional and sometimes medical support. Medical support is sometimes needed to assess wounds for self harm and to apply appropriate dressings. Where possible, the member of staff who supports a young person who has self harmed or has disclosed self harm will be someone who is familiar to the child or young person. If the child or young person is not seen immediately by their usual support member, the emotional wellbeing manager will arrange for them to be seen by this worker as soon as practicable. Trinity recognises that it is important for children and young people to have a designated person to talk to.

### **When supporting a child or young person who has self harmed, staff and volunteers must:**

- Remain calm and non-judgmental at all times and avoid dismissing reasons for distress as invalid or trivial.
- Reassure that self-harm is very common and that individuals who do it are by no means alone
- Do not guarantee confidentiality if significant harm is suspected or there is a potential risk of further significant harm. Explain there may be a need to share concerns but reassure sensitively the need for sharing is for their own safety and wellbeing.
- Complete detailed notes and report these on CPOMS including a body map
- Never take photographs of a student's self harm
- Do not chastise after an episode of self-harm is suspected or the pupil volunteers for examination.
- Seek support and guidance from the safeguarding team a referral.

### **Children and young people may:**

- Need to work with the emotional wellbeing team to help them identify 'triggers'
- Be supported to identify strategies to manage feelings associated with self harm and the desire to self harm
- Have special allowances in place such as time out of the classroom during emotional distress, permission to wear long sleeves etc
- If the urge to self harm cannot be stopped, support to minimise the harm done
- Require to complete a first aid course in order to keep themselves safe
- Need frequent opportunities to celebrate successes

### **Preventative measures to prevent acts of self-harm when urges become strong**

Children and young people may find the following strategies helpful when managing self harm urges:

- Flicking a rubber band against wrists.
- Writing down anger/frustrations in an on-going diary.
- Putting some music on and dancing vigorously for 10-15 mins.
- Using a pillow/cushion as a punch bag.
- Applying plasters to the skin short term to areas wanting to harm.
- Dipping fingers in ice or even rubbing ice to the areas wanting to warm.

- Marking skin with a red, water-soluble pen which may resemble drawing blood
- Thinking about and looking forward to something that gives pleasure such as planned holiday, social event, day out etc.
- Participate in vigorous exercise (endorphins make you feel 'good')
- Move to somewhere safe.

### **Useful tips for the young person who is self-harming**

- Keep cutting equipment clean and have easy access to cleansing and first aid materials with means of safe disposal of soiled clinical waste.
- If there is more than one method of self-harming being used, be realistic and try to deal with only one issue at a time.
- Accept that decreasing the urge to self-harm is a very gradual process and it does not stop over-night.
- Use products such as Bio-oil or Vitamin E moisturisers to minimise long term skin scarring.
- Try to live a healthy lifestyle in order to minimise health issues such as eating healthily, drinking plenty of water, have a good bedtime routine, take walks in daylight, participate in exercise and attempt activities you have previously enjoyed. This will stimulate serotonin and endorphins which give 'feel good factors'.
- Substitute addictive substances (such as drugs/alcohol) for less addictive substances (such as caffeine in tea, coffee & cola, chocolate & confectionery – all regarded with 'moderation' and advise not to drink caffeine beverages after 6pm to prevent sleep deprivation).

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### **Out of hours support - Trinity**

Parents, carers and students can contact Trinity professionals via:

[safeguarding@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk)

[wellbeing@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk](mailto:wellbeing@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
Georgina Moorcroft	School headteacher	07960 321 661
Thomas Furnell	College headteacher	07507 424 207

Joanne Baker	Interim Headteacher School and College	07903 071 255
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## Further information and out of hours support - external

### Over 18s

For residents of Kent and Medway who are not currently a patient with KMPT (sometimes referred to as Kent and Medway secondary care mental health services), call the free 24 hour helpline on **0800 783 9111** if you need urgent mental health support, advice and guidance.

Or call **0800 107 0160** to speak with someone from the Release the Pressure team if you're feeling stressed. You can also text "**Kent**" to **85258** for 24 hour mental health crisis support via text from trained volunteers.

### Under 18s

**(children and young people services or children and adolescent mental health services)**

For residents of Kent and Medway, you can call the 24 hour Single Point of Access (provided by North East London Foundation Trust) on **0800 011 3474** (select option one, then option three).

[MIND local services](#) - offer face-to-face services across England and Wales. These services include talking therapies, peer support and advocacy.

[Side by Side online support](#) - a supportive online community where you can feel at home talking about your mental health and connect with others who understand what you are going through. We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes, but now there's a safe place to listen, share and be heard. Whether you're feeling good right now, or having a hard time, it's a safe place to share experiences and listen to others. The community is available to all, 24/7. Side by Side is moderated daily from 8.30am to midnight.

[Every Mind Matters](#) - an online tool and email journey to support everyone in taking action to look after their mental health and wellbeing

[Mental Health Resources for parents and carers](#) - The Education Hub is a site for

parents, pupils, education professionals and the media that captures all you need to know about the education system. You'll find accessible, straightforward information on popular topics, Q&As, interviews, case studies, and more.

[Public Health England Advice and guidance for parents and professionals to support young people's mental health](#) - includes actions you can take to support your child and emphasises the importance of taking 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

**Get free, confidential support at any time by:**

- texting SHOUT to 85258
- calling Childline on 0800 1111
- calling the Mix on 0808 808 4994

**Find help online through:**

- [Young Minds](#) - information on COVID-19 and mental health
- [Think Ninja](#) - a free app for 10 to 18 year olds to help build resilience and stay well
- [Every Mind Matters](#) - building resilience and supporting good mental health in young people aged 10 to 16

[Advice from National Autistic Society](#) - Information and further reading to support children and young people with autism who self harm including advice for parents and professionals.

Paula Brett, Safeguarding and LAC Manager

Joanne Baker, Interim Headteacher School and College

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