

Newpark Comprehensive School

Policy and Procedure – Self Harm/Self Injury

Policy reviewed and updated December 2016

1. Policy

- 1.1 In Newpark we understand self-harm and self-injury to mean harming oneself without suicidal intent. Self-injury is a coping mechanism. An individual harms his or her physical self to deal with emotional pain, or to break feelings of numbness by arousing sensation. Self-injury is any deliberate, non-suicidal behaviour that inflicts physical harm on one's body and is aimed at relieving emotional distress. Physical pain is often easier to deal with than emotional pain, because it causes 'real' feelings. Yet self-injury only provides temporary relief, it does not deal with the underlying issues. Self-injury can include but is not limited to, cutting oneself, for instance on arms or legs, bruising or striking oneself, or banging one's head repeatedly. Self-harm is a wider definition, that includes eating disorders, self-injury and substance misuse.
- 1.2 Although neither 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection & Welfare of Children', nor 'Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary Schools' refer to self-harm, the spirit of both these documents inform our policy. It is our policy to inform parents/guardians of an incidence of self-harm if it comes to our attention, unless doing so is likely to place the child at further risk. If there is extreme concern about the welfare of the child the designated liaison person (DLP) will be informed and he will seek advice from the Duty Social Worker or the Child Manager.
- 1.3 In Newpark we endeavour to respond to students who self-harm in a compassionate and non-judgemental manner. Through the student support team, we also endeavour to help the student make the choice not to self-harm.

2. Procedure

- 2.1 If a student *discloses self-harm to a member of staff, or a member of staff sees evidence of self-harm*, the staff member should refer the student to a member of the student support team. The staff member should inform the student support team member the student nominates and let the student know that this is necessary for the student's own protection.
- 2.2 If a student *reports to the member of staff that another student may be self-harming* the staff member should instruct the reporting student to inform a member of the student support team. The staff member should also inform the nominated student support team member.
- 2.3 If a parent/guardian *reports to the school that a student may be self-harming*, a member of the student support team will endeavour to support the parent/guardian in managing how he or she wishes to respond. The parent/guardian should be aware that if the school follows up on a report of self-harm, confidentiality is not inherently guaranteed.

- 2.4 Subsequent to meeting with the student concerned, the student support team member will decide, in the best interests of the student, the manner in which parents/guardians and possible other persons may be informed. The criterion for informing possible other persons will follow 'best practice' norms outlined in section 1.9.1 of the 'Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary Schools'. The student support team member may in turn refer the student to an outside agency.
- 2.5 If the student is deemed to require medical attention, the member of the student support team will refer the student to the school nurse on duty.

Policy reviewed and updated by the student support team: December 2016

Proposed date for next review: December 2019

Student Support Team:

Chaplain
Guidance Counsellors
Nurses
SEN Coordinator
Deputy Principal

References

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection & Welfare of Children, 2011
Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools, 2011
Self-Harm Policy: A Model Policy to Use in Schools & Colleges, Royal College of Psychiatrists, www.rcpsych.ac.uk
Creating a School Self-Injury Policy V2, LifeSIGNS, Self-Injury Guidance & Network Support, 2008