

PURPOSE

This policy aims to address the issue of self-harm as defined below. It outlines recommend actions to be taken by school staff in response to students who self-harm or are suspected of self-harming.

SCOPE

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when a person deliberately causes pain or hurts themselves – usually as a means of coping with difficult emotions when they feel under pressure or distressed.

<https://beyoud.edu.au/resources/suicide-prevention-and-response/suicide-prevention/self-harm>

Self-harm can include behaviours such as cutting, burning or hitting oneself, binge-eating or starvation, or repeatedly putting oneself in dangerous situations. It can also involve abuse of drugs or alcohol, including overdosing on prescription medications.

Self-harm is usually a response to distress, whether it be from mental illness, trauma, or psychological pain. Some people find that the physical pain of self-harm helps provide temporary relief from emotional pain.

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/self-harm/>

Self-harm and Suicide

There is an overlap between self-harm and thinking about suicide – but not everyone who self-harms wants to take their life. Sometimes self-harm involves very risky thing's which can lead to accidental death or serious injury.

<https://headspace.org.au/young-people/understanding-self-harm-for-young-people/>

- Please refer to Croydon Community School's Suicide Postvention Plan for further information.

POLICY

What are the warning signs?

While there are obvious signs that someone is self-harming, such as exposed cuts or burns, and overdoses that require intervention, there are some less obvious signs to look out for.

Physical signs:

- unexplained injuries, such as scratches or burn marks
- unexplained recurrent medical complaints, such as stomach pains and headaches
- wearing clothes inappropriate to conditions – for example, long sleeves in summer
- pulling hair or picking at fingers or skin when upset or stressed
- hiding matches, tables, razors or other sharp objects in unusual places
- use of drugs.

Psychological signs (many of which aren't unique to self-harming)

- dramatic changes in mood
- changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- losing interest in friends and social activities
- breakdown in regular communications with family or friends
- no longer interested in favourite things or activities
- problems with relationships
- low self-esteem
- being secretive about feelings
- avoiding situations where they must expose arms or legs – for example, swimming
- strange excuses for injuries
- dramatic drop in performance and interactions at school.

<https://beyoud.edu.au/resources/suicide-prevention-and-response/suicide-prevention/self-harm>

What does research say?

Recent Australian research suggests that self-harm is relatively common in young people. The research found:

- around one in ten adolescents (10.9%) reported having ever self-harmed
- self-harm was more common among females than among males
- self-harm was more common in older adolescents, with 16.8% of females aged 16-17 years having self-harmed in the previous 12 months and 22.8% having ever self-harmed
- one in ten of the young people aged 12-17 years who had self-harmed in the previous 12 months had received medical treatment as a direct result of injuries incurred by an act of deliberate self-harm.

<https://beyoud.edu.au/resources/suicide-prevention-and-response/suicide-prevention/self-harm>

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/self-harm/>

<https://beyoud.edu.au/resources/suicide-prevention-and-response/suicide-prevention/self-harm>

<https://headspace.org.au/young-people/understanding-self-harm-for-young-people/>

Contacts

Police/Ambulance - 000

Poisons Information Centre – 13 11 26

Security Services Unit – 9589-6266

Head space Knox – 9801 6088

CYMHS – 1300 721 927

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy, first developed in this format in December 2020, was endorsed/approved by School Council on 15th February, 2021 and will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if DET guidelines change.

Is this a medical emergency?

Yes

- First Aid
- Call 000
- Ensure student privacy
- Ensure student safety - supervision
- Notify leadership/student wellbeing
- Ask the student to hand over anything they have used to self-harm
- Notify parents/carers
- Support other affected students
- Follow Security Services Unit protocols

NO

- Place student in a safe private area – provide supervision
- Ask the student to hand over anything they have used to self-harm
- First Aid – assist the young person in attending to their own first aid where appropriate and seek medical attention as needed.
- Refer student to wellbeing for risk assessment
- Support other affected students.
- Contact parents unless there are protective issues
- Follow Security Services Unit protocols

A member of Wellbeing to inquire of the student who self-harmed,

- Are they ok?
- What were the circumstances/triggers/ frequency of the self-harm?
- Was it a once off or repetitive self-harm?
- Suicide risk assessment

Suicide Risk

Yes

- Wellbeing and student to develop a safety plan.
- Student referred to a mental health service
- Liaise with mental health service where possible.
- Meet with parents/carers and student to develop a return to school plan.
- Discuss covering of wounds, what to say to peers, support systems. social media.

NO

- Develop a safety plan with student
- Discuss covering of wounds, what to say to peers, support systems and social media
- Refer on where needed

- Discuss with the young person conditional confidentiality.
- Contact parents/carers of any students who are at risk/distressed
- Provide support as needed.