

## **Protocol for Addressing Suspected Self-Harm in Students**

These guidelines outline the appropriate steps to take when a student is suspected of engaging in self-harming behaviors. Our primary concern is the well-being and safety of our students.

### Identification of Suspected Self-Harm

- If a teacher suspects that a student may be engaging in self-harm, they must report the concern to the safeguarding team, a counselor, or a member of administration, along with completing the safeguarding form.

If a counselor or administrator suspects that a student may be engaging in self-harm, the following actions are taken:

#### 1. Initial Assessment:

- The counselor/administrator may approach the student in a supportive and non-judgmental manner to inquire if they have been self-harming.
- The student may be asked to voluntarily show any self-inflicted cuts or injuries for assessment.
- Students have the right to roll up their sleeves or adjust clothing voluntarily to show self-harm marks. However, this should only be done with their verbal informed consent and with another adult present.

#### 2. Involvement of the School Nurse:

- If the counselor/administrator is uncertain about the severity of the self-harm injuries or if immediate medical attention is necessary, the school nurse may be consulted to assess and treat the wounds as needed. When a nurse is consulted, their role will be to administer treatment and provide care in such a manner that will preserve the dignity of the child (see below).

#### 3. Communication with Parents:

- In all cases of suspected self-harm, parents or legal guardians must be promptly notified and asked to come into school, by the safeguarding team or administration. Full disclosure about the self-harm should be provided.

#### 4. School's Responsibility:

- The school's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of the student. We will provide guidance and support, but we are not a replacement for professional medical and psychological care. Our responsibility is to:
  - Encourage parents to seek medical and psychological assistance.

- Advise parents on the next steps in securing appropriate professional help.

#### 5. Respect for Student Dignity:

- Students will only be asked to remove clothing if there is a suspicion of wound that needs urgent medical attention. This will only be done by the nurse with administrators approval. Two nurses will be present at all times to treat the wound.
- Parents need to be contacted by the safeguarding team or divisional administration for verbal consent before students voluntarily remove any clothing, except for jackets and sweaters.
- Under no circumstances should students be asked to remove clothing against their will to check for self-harm.
- Physical contact should never be involved in voluntary searches.

#### 6. Parental Consent:

- Even with parental consent, it is not the school's responsibility to conduct involuntary physical checks for self-harm. Our role remains focused on support, guidance, and ensuring the student's safety.
- Remember, addressing self-harm concerns is a sensitive issue, and we should approach it with empathy, care, and respect for the student's privacy and dignity.