



Doctrina Vitae

Bacchus Marsh  
Grammar

# POLICY

## Self-Harming Behaviours and Suicide Threat Policy

Approved: 15 November 2016



## 1 The Hazard – Self-Harming Behaviour

Self-harming behaviour (also known as 'deliberate self-harm' or DSH) is when someone deliberately hurts or injures themselves. This can include:

- Cutting;
- Taking overdoses of tablets or medicines;
- Punching oneself;
- Throwing one's body against something;
- Pulling out hair or eyelashes;
- Scratching, picking or tearing at one's skin causing sores and scarring;
- Burning;
- Inhaling or sniffing harmful substances; and
- Engaging in risk taking behaviours.

It is important to understand that people who self-harm are not attention-seeking and it is often a coping mechanism for dealing with anxiety or painful feelings.

Self-harm and suicidal thinking can go together, and self-harming behaviour can precede a suicide attempt although there is not necessarily a link between the two. People who self-harm usually do so without any intention of killing themselves.

## 2 Bacchus Marsh Grammar's Policy

Bacchus Marsh Grammar is committed to providing an environment that reduces the risk of self-harming behaviours by students.

We are focussed on the identification, early intervention and prevention of self-harming behaviours amongst our students. It is our policy that:

- 2.1.1 We provide an environment which promotes student well-being through general education programmes that increase self-esteem and address adolescent issues;
- 2.1.2 We implement policies and practices that promote emotional well-being and provide students with access to counsellors;
- 2.1.3 Our staff are trained to recognise signs of self-harming behaviours and are able to identify at risk students;
- 2.1.4 We establish procedures for responding to incidents of self-harm and suspected self-harm amongst our students; and
- 2.1.5 We provide education, support and resources for staff, parents, students and the wider school community on the issue to assist in managing deliberate self-harm.

## 3 Common Signs of Self-Harming Behaviour

As self-harming behaviour is often not obvious, staff should take note of the following signs of self-harm:

- Unexpected decline in academic performance;
- Ideas and themes of depression, death, self-harm and suicide;
- Obvious change in mood;

- Grief about a significant loss;
- Experience of trauma;
- Withdrawal from relationships;
- Physical symptoms;
- Strange excuses provided for injuries; and
- High risk behaviour.

## **4 Safe Work Practices**

Bacchus Marsh Grammar has developed the following work practices and procedures for managing self-harming behaviours:

### **4.1 Notification of Self Harming Behaviours**

4.1.1 Self-harming behaviours may be identified by parents/carers and reported to the school, or they may more frequently be identified by a school staff member.

4.1.2 When a staff member suspects a student is engaging in self harming behaviours they should:

- Identify their concerns and observations and provide these to the relevant Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal - Pastoral Care or Deputy Principal as soon as possible, the School will contact the parents / guardians; and
- Not raise their concerns directly with the student.

4.1.3 Where a student discloses to a staff member that they are engaging in self harming behaviours the staff member should:

- Respond in a 'neutral' and 'matter of fact' manner;
- Not be judgemental or react negatively; and
- Advise the student that accessing professional help the school has, there are procedures to assist students and families in accessing professional help

4.1.4 The procedure that the School adopts in these cases is as follows:

- When a student is exhibiting cutting, speaking of suicide or there is evidence that they are speaking to fellow students of suicide, the School immediately contacts parents / guardians;
- The student, depending on the circumstance is kept under observation either in the Health Centre / Student Welfare or in another location if considered appropriate;
- Arrangements are made with the parent or guardian to collect the student;
- A requirement of return to School of any student who has either been involved in cutting behaviour or expressing suicidal intent is a letter from an appropriate health professional outlining that the student is fit to be at School and is receiving appropriate health care;
- If it is clear that a student is exhibiting cutting behaviour or is speaking of suicide because of issues related to their relationship with their parents, the Principal will authorise alternative arrangements for appropriate care that do not require parental approval or knowledge (Mandatory Report).
- In all circumstances the School will ensure that it meets its requirements in relation to duty of care and Mandatory Reporting of students at risk.

4.1.5 This procedure has been developed to ensure that:

- a) Students that the School has concerns about are receiving appropriate assistance; and

- b) It is clear to parents that such issues are not the responsibility of the School, but ones in which the School should provide a supportive but not lead role in looking after.

## **4.2 Urgent Medical Treatment**

- 4.2.1 In the event that a student requires urgent medical treatment refer to the Health Centre.

## **4.3 Health Support Plan**

- 4.3.1 A Health Support Plan should be developed for any student engaging in self-harming behaviours in:

- Consultation with their General Practitioner or mental health professional prior to their return to school;
- Provide a "safe-to-return to school" document;
- The student will be supported academically during the periods of absence;
- Agreed behaviour management strategies;
- Agreed learning outcomes and strategies;
- Liaison procedures between parties; and
- Regular monitoring of the student.

- 4.3.2 Where a Health Support Plan is required, it shall be stored appropriately and updated regularly. It shall be communicated to relevant staff in a confidential manner.

## **5 Workers' Responsibility**

- 5.1.1 All Bacchus Marsh Grammar workers are responsible to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to identify and support students who may be at risk of self-harming behaviour. Early intervention and ongoing management is vital in promoting recovery.
- 5.1.2 Each worker shall fulfil their agreed roles as documented in a student's individual Health Support Plan and the school shall inform parents/carers as soon as possible of concerns regarding a student's health care, learning and behaviour management needs.

## **6 Implementation**

- 6.1.1 This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training and supervision;
- Support of the student's Health Support Plan;
- Effective incident notification procedures;
- Effective communication procedures with the student's parents/carers; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

## **7 Discipline for Breach of Policy**

- 7.1.1 Where a staff member breaches this policy Bacchus Marsh Grammar may take disciplinary action.



## 8 Related Policies

Accident Management  
Eating Disorders Policy  
First Aid Policy  
Medical Records (Student) Policy  
Medication Administration Policy

## 9 Authorisation

<b>Policy Document Name</b>	<b>Self-Harming Behaviours and Suicide Threat Policy</b>	
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