

SELF HARM POLICY

This document which applies to the whole college inclusive of boarding is publicly available on the college website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the college office.

Purpose of the Policy

David Game College recognises that mental health difficulties, self-harm, and suicide present significant safeguarding risks to children and young people. This policy sets out how the College promotes emotional wellbeing, identifies and manages risk, responds appropriately to incidents of self-harm or suicidal ideation, and meets its statutory safeguarding duties. It also explains how the College works in partnership with parents, carers, Local Authorities, and external agencies.

This policy forms part of the College's whole-College safeguarding framework. The College recognises that self-harm may, in some cases, be associated with increased suicide risk. Where suicide risk is identified or suspected, this is treated as an immediate safeguarding concern and escalated in line with statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures.

Reviewed: January 2026

Next Review: January 2027

Signed

David Game
Founder

John Dalton
Principal

Scope

This policy applies to all students of the College, including boarding students where applicable, and to all staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, and adults working on behalf of the College. It applies across all College activities, including off-site activities, trips, educational visits, College premises, and any supervised environments. All staff share responsibility for understanding and implementing this policy.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations, particularly Part 3 relating to welfare, health, and safety of pupils. It is informed by *Keeping Children Safe in Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children*, the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, and relevant statutory and professional guidance including *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education, Counselling in Schools*, and NICE guidance on self-harm.

This policy should be read alongside the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, Attendance Policy, SEND Policy, Looked After Children Policy, RSE and Health Education Policy, and Medical Conditions Policy.

Governance, Leadership and Accountability

Proprietor

The Proprietor holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the College has effective safeguarding policies and procedures, that this policy is reviewed annually, that appropriate resources and training are in place, and that safeguarding duties are discharged effectively.

Principal

The Principal are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy. They ensure that staff understand their safeguarding and mental health responsibilities and that effective systems are in place for identifying, managing, and responding to risk.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL has operational responsibility for managing all concerns relating to self-harm or suicide risk. This includes undertaking risk assessments, making safeguarding decisions, liaising with parents, carers, CAMHS, Local Authorities, and other external agencies, and ensuring that safeguarding records are accurate, secure, and up to date.

Definitions

Self-harm refers to any intentional behaviour where a young person harms themselves as a way of coping with overwhelming emotions or experiences.

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts about ending one's life, which may range from passive thoughts to active planning.

Suicidal behaviour refers to any deliberate act with potentially life-threatening consequences.

Suicide is the act of intentionally ending one's life.

Risk Environment and Safeguarding Context

The College recognises that self-harm and suicide risk may be linked to wider safeguarding concerns. These may include child sexual exploitation, county lines involvement, radicalisation, online grooming, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, trafficking, abuse, neglect, or domestic instability. Mental health vulnerability may increase exposure to exploitation, and all concerns relating to self-harm or suicide risk are therefore treated as safeguarding concerns.

College Responsibilities

The College is committed to maintaining a safe physical and emotional environment. This includes reducing access to potential means of self-harm where possible, fostering a culture in which students feel able to disclose concerns, ensuring students know how to seek help, providing access to counselling and pastoral support, acting promptly on concerns, working in partnership with parents and external agencies, maintaining accurate safeguarding records, and ensuring staff receive appropriate training.

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

All staff must remain alert to signs of distress, self-harm, or suicidal ideation. Any disclosure or concern must be taken seriously. Staff must never promise confidentiality, must report concerns immediately to the DSL, must record concerns accurately and promptly, and must follow College safeguarding procedures at all times. Self-harm and suicide prevention is the responsibility of every member of staff.

Identification of Risk

Indicators of risk may include emotional withdrawal, expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness, changes in behaviour, attendance, or engagement, self-harming behaviours or disclosures, risk-taking behaviours, online activity indicating distress, or physical indicators consistent with self-harm. This list is not exhaustive. Any concern must be reported immediately. Additional vigilance is exercised for boarding students due to the increased amount of time they spend under College supervision.

College Response to Self-Harm

When self-harm is identified or disclosed, the College undertakes an immediate risk assessment and refers the concern directly to the DSL. Emergency services are contacted where required, and medical attention is provided if necessary. Parents or carers are informed unless doing so would place the student at further risk. A risk management plan is developed, referrals to counselling and/or CAMHS are made where appropriate, and ongoing monitoring and review are put in place.

College Response to Suicidal Ideation or Attempt

Any suggestion of suicidal thoughts or intent is treated as high risk. The College acts immediately, escalates concerns to the DSL without delay, and contacts emergency services where necessary. A formal risk assessment is undertaken, urgent referral to CAMHS is made, parents or carers are involved, and a clear safety plan is implemented. Temporary adjustments to attendance, timetable, or supervision may be considered in the student's best interests.

Liaison with External Agencies

The College works closely with Local Authority Children's Services, CAMHS, NHS professionals, the police where appropriate, social workers for Looked After Children, and Virtual School Heads. The College understands and fulfils its duty to share information where there is risk of harm.

Record Keeping

All concerns relating to self-harm or suicide risk are recorded securely using the College's safeguarding recording system (MyConcern) and retained in accordance with statutory guidance. Compliance with this policy is monitored through safeguarding audits, DSL reporting, staff training records, and case reviews.

Notifiable Incidents

The College recognises its duty to report notifiable incidents, including the death of a child (including suspected suicide), serious harm where abuse or neglect is suspected, and the death of a Looked After Child. Such incidents are reported to the Local Safeguarding Partnership, the Local Authority, the Department for Education, and other regulatory bodies as required.

Training and Awareness

The College ensures that safeguarding training includes mental health awareness and self-harm and suicide risk. Staff are trained to recognise indicators of risk and understand escalation procedures. Training is delivered at induction and refreshed at least annually, with regular updates provided.

Monitoring, Review and Assurance

This policy is monitored continuously and reviewed annually by the Proprietor. It is updated in response to changes in legislation, guidance, or identified risks. Any weaknesses are addressed without delay.

Policy Availability

This policy is available on the College website, can be provided on request in accessible formats, and is issued to staff electronically or in hard copy.

