



**PERTH WALDORF
SCHOOL**
Steiner Education

Bibra Lake & Parkerville Campus

**Students with Suicidal
Behaviour & Non-Suicidal
Self-Injury Policy
V2.0
website**

STUDENT RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY	
Date first approved:	May 2021
Date of effect/ approved by College of Teachers	June 2021, April 2022
Date last amended:	April 2022
Date of next review:	Annual evaluation and review before induction January 2023
Compliance interactions:	Child Protection Policy Disability Discrimination Policy Prevention of Bullying Policy
Delegated Policy Owner (Custodian)	Faculty Coordinators
Procedures and forms:	PWS Safety Plan
Supporting documents:	n/a
PWS Website:	Yes (policy only)
Links:	School response and planning guidelines for students with suicidal behaviour and non-suicidal self-injury- Department of Education Western Australia 2020
Legislation:	Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008 Children and Community Services Act 2004 Working With Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 Criminal Code Act (1913) Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 (changes to s204B of the Criminal Code Act
Circulation:	Faculty Co-ordinators Summary to Parents via newsletters All staff (induction, handbook)
Feedback:	pws@pws.wa.edu.au
Review/stakeholders:	Faculty Coordinators

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“At Perth Waldorf School we are committed to promoting the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people and expect all school staff, parents/guardians, students, volunteers and visitors to the school to share that commitment. Perth Waldorf School explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment.”

DEFINITIONS

Suicidal behaviour includes suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and suicide.

Suicidal ideation refers to an individual’s thoughts about ending their life.

An attempt refers to an individual harming themselves with the intent to die but not resulting in death.

Suicide is a deliberate act to end one’s life resulting in death. This is usually termed ‘death by suicide’ or ‘suicided’.

Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) is considered to be a deliberate act to harm oneself without the intent to die and is aimed at reducing uncomfortable or distressing emotions. The behaviour is repetitive in nature. NSSI is often referred to as self-harm and can include: cutting, scratching and/or picking skin, burning, pulling hair and hitting objects or oneself. Injuries from NSSI can vary from very mild to severe. It can be difficult to determine whether an individual’s behaviour is a result of suicidal behaviour or NSSI. NSSI and suicidal behaviour can also occur at the same time.

POLICY STATEMENT

Perth Waldorf School is committed to the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in our care and expect all school staff, parents/guardians, students, volunteers and visitors to the School to share that commitment. The school focuses on maximising the social and emotional outcomes for students and providing an engaging, safe and supportive learning environment. Hence, school staff members need to be mindful that some children and young people will experience emotional and/or psychological distress during their school years. Some children may be exposed to trauma and cumulative harm.

These factors, amongst others, could lead to an increase in the risk of mental health problems and, in some cases, suicidal behaviour and/or non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI). As children and young people spend a significant time at school, teachers and support staff are able to observe and identify changes in behaviour and notice other signs that may indicate concerns.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to address the fact that school staff need to have clearly identified roles and responsibilities in detecting and responding to suicidal behaviour and NSSI. School staff need to have an awareness and understanding of the mental health issues facing young people and the processes in place at the school to manage and care for a student reporting suicidal behaviour or NSSI.

INDICATORS OF CONCERN

There are certain signs that students may present with, that indicate they are struggling, stressed or distressed. School staff members are in a good position to observe any changes in a student that may indicate their struggle. It is also important to note that sometimes there will be no observable signs.

Common indicators of concern:

- Changes in activity or mood;
- Poor emotional regulation;
- History of trauma;
- Decrease in academic performance;
- Difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions;
- Disclosure of persistent thoughts about death and/or suicide;
- Negative view of self and/or the world;
- Significant tiredness and/or loss of energy;
- Significant grief and loss issues;
- Alcohol and/or other drug use;
- Peer conflict or withdrawal;
- Risk-taking behaviours;
- Persistent or sudden absence from school;
- Sudden weight loss or gain;
- Change in appearance (no care for clothes, hair, makeup, etc.);

- Unexplained injuries such as cuts, burns, bruises;
- Wearing long sleeves or covering up (not due to religious or cultural reasons);
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping.

DIRECT OR INDIRECT DISCLOSURES

A student's suicidal behaviour or NSSI may come to the attention of school staff through either direct or indirect means. A **direct disclosure** is when a student informs a school staff member of any feelings, thoughts or actions associated with suicidal behaviour or NSSI. This may include verbal disclosure or through a curriculum task (such as an English essay or a piece of artwork). An **indirect disclosure** is when information or concerns for a student are brought to the attention of a staff member by a third person such as another student, school or community member.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

Direct disclosure

If a student discloses suicidal behaviour or NSSI, a calm, caring and non-judgmental response is most effective. It is important to listen and reassure the student that talking about their feelings is positive and helpful, and that the student is linked to appropriate support and that safety is maintained.

1. Secure an appropriate place to discuss the concern.
2. Summarise the information the student has disclosed - "I appreciate it is difficult to let me know these thoughts and feelings. So what you're telling me is.... Have I got that right?"
3. Link the student to appropriate support – "We need to support you and understand better what's going on, so I'm going to discuss this more with (appropriate staff member)."
4. Negotiate with the student, remembering that staff members are not able to maintain absolute confidentiality with a student who has disclosed suicidal behaviour or NSSI and that it is important that the concern is reported and followed up appropriately – "There are a few people we can go to... who would you rather? How does that sound?"

5. Document the disclosure using the student's own words where possible.

If a disclosure indicates that the student is at imminent risk, the staff member keeps the student safe and informs the Administrator (or appropriate staff member) immediately. The staff member does not leave the student unsupervised. The Administrator (or appropriate staff member) contacts the parent/guardian and if necessary contact emergency services (000).

Indirect disclosure

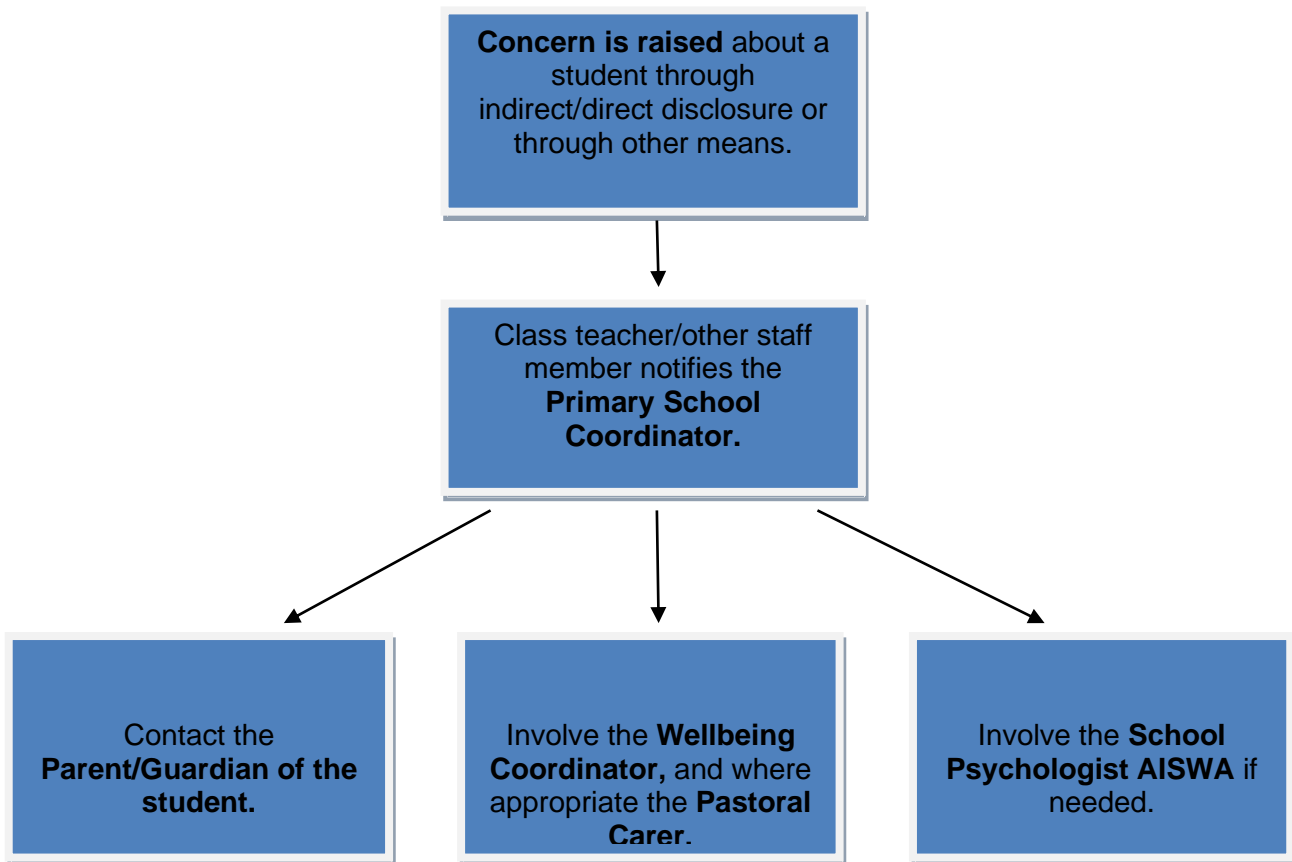
When a staff member is informed of a concern regarding student suicidal behaviour or NSSI, they need to advise that the information cannot be kept confidential, as the student will need to be supported. The staff member then checks in with the student who made the indirect disclosure, offers support and provides them with emergency contact details.

If the disclosure indicates that the identified student is at imminent risk, the staff member takes steps to locate and keep the student safe and informs the Administrator (or appropriate staff member), who contacts the parent/guardian and if necessary contacts emergency services.

In all other cases, the staff member supports the student's safety by:

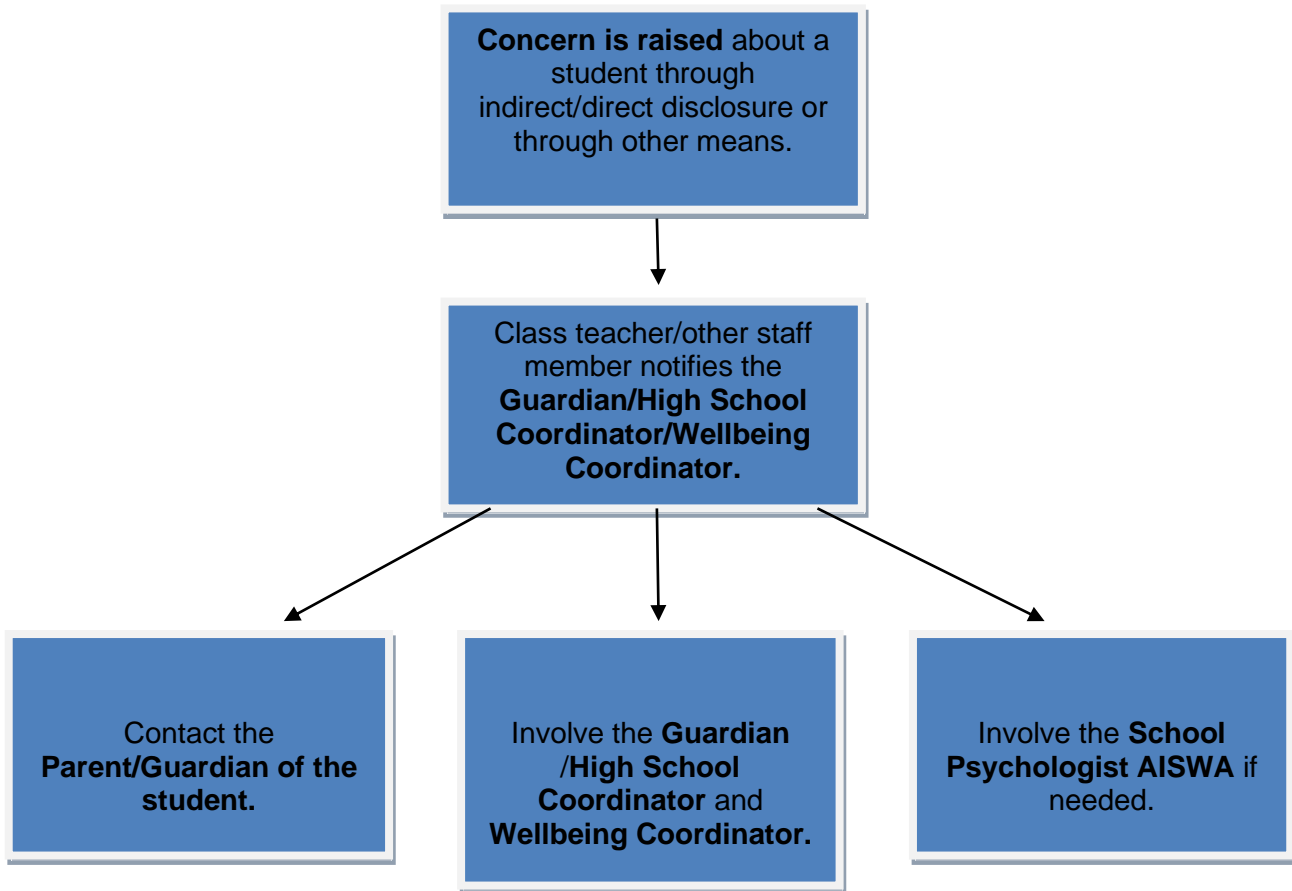
- Checking the student is at school and in class by following normal school processes;
- Informing the appropriate staff member as soon as practical following the disclosure;
- Documenting their actions.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PROCESS



- Consideration for whether it's safe for the child to discuss with the parent/guardian;
- Wellbeing Coordinator/Pastoral Carer can be involved in discussion with the student, discussion with the parent/guardian, and in helping to work with the teachers to develop a safety plan;
- School Psychologist from AISWA can be contacted for support/consultation.

HIGH SCHOOL PROCESS



- Consideration for whether it's safe for the child to discuss with the parent/guardian;
- Guardian and the Wellbeing Coordinator can be involved in discussions with the student, discussions with the parent/guardian, and in helping to work with the teachers to develop a safety plan;
- School Psychologist from AISWA can be contacted for support/consultation.

These issues need to be considered at an individual level, with each case being considered on its own merit. Each situation may require a different approach, depending on various factors (such as past risk issues, family dynamics, other co-existing health or mental health).