

SCHOOL POLICY ON SUBSTANCE USE

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to the whole school community, including teachers, students, Parents/ Guardians, ancillary staff and users of the school building.

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a Christian Co-educational Secondary School. In keeping with the Jesus & Mary Ethos, we are committed to the holistic development of each individual in our community by:

- ❖ Empowering each person to grow in justice, honesty, respect and loyalty to self, family, school and community.
- ❖ Helping all students to achieve full potential at their studies.
- ❖ Promoting an appreciation of Heritage, Culture and the Environment.
- ❖ Providing an atmosphere where religious belief, a sense of responsibility, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-identity are developed.
- ❖ Encouraging participation in all facets of school life-spiritual, academic, sporting, social and cultural.

This policy is in keeping with the School's Mission Statement and is part of a general pastoral approach being adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment. The Substance abuse Policy is one of many policies that serve to underpin the school ethos as follows:

“This school is a health promoting school. We care for the welfare and protection of the whole school community, which includes students and staff. Respect for self, other and the environment is a basic principle underpinning and informing all the work we do in Jesus & Mary Secondary School”

The school asserts its right to protect and promote its particular ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.(See Code of Behaviour)

Rationale

This policy is rooted in the Board of Management’s view that:

- The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug use pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.
- It recognizes and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and alcohol misuse.
- The School Policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001 – 2008 and made mandatory for school in Circular 18/02.
- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

SECTION 2 SCHOOL POLICY

The School Position:

The school is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance use.

We believe that teachers, parents, Board of Management, students and other relevant personnel need to work together and that co-operation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of the policy.

The possession, use or supply of drugs/illegal substances in the school, on school trips or on any school-related activity by any member of the school community is not acceptable. (See School Code of Behaviour)

The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use. Parents and Guardian should inform if medication is being taken in school or on school related activities.

It has been agreed that a Drug is a substance, which changes the way the body functions mentally, physically and emotionally.

SECTION 3 PROGRAMMES FOR ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUG EDUCATION

The school within the limited resources available to it, will provide appropriate education programmes for all its students.

The programmes will be age-appropriate and will seek to build on and complement existing programmes already being taught in the school.

Parents are asked to acknowledge the importance of these programmes and recognize that they are in partnership with the school in educating their children regarding substance abuse.

Our educational **aims** in relation to **drug education** are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of young people.
- To equip young people to make informed, healthy, and responsible choices.
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To minimise the harm caused by drug abuse by offering supportive interventions.

Provision will be made as follows for:

Staff

- The school will facilitate training for staff involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education Programmes.
- Staff will be offered appropriate information and awareness training.
- Detailed and specific training will be made available to the SPHE Co-ordinator and key staff in relation to managing drug incidents.

Parents and Board of Management

- The school will provide opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops in relation to drugs and the school policy.
- Parents and the Board will be consulted and kept informed of this policy and matters relating to Substance Abuse Policy in the school.

Students

- Gortnor Abbey will offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE classes.
- Drug/ Alcohol awareness will be an integral part of the Pastoral Care Programme of the school.
- The use of guest speakers will enhance the work done in class and should be undertaken in the presence of a teacher.

SECTION 4 PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUG RELATED INCIDENTS.

Incidents involving alcohol, nicotine and nicotine related products ie. electronic cigarettes etc. and drug use might include:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, nicotine and nicotine related products on the school premises or during a school-related activity
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour.
- Disclosure about use.
- Finding these substances and /or associated paraphernalia.
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school-related activity.
- Other.

The school should respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be important in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include referral to a support agency. It should be stressed that the ultimate sanction of expulsion can have the effect of alienating a student from mainstream sources of help and may result in this student becoming more involved in the culture of drug misuse. Where a member of staff requires support, the school may consider seeking the assistance of an outside agency.

The following steps will be taken in managing and investigating an abuse incident:

1. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
2. All incidents involving the use of drugs will be investigated immediately or as soon as is practicable and a Report will be completed.
3. All steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident will be taken in whatever time is deemed necessary by the school.
4. The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation.
5. Statements will be sought from all persons involved in, concerned with or having knowledge of the incident and these statements will be recorded.
6. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation, including all communications and documentations associated with the incident.
7. The school may liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate.
8. If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner::
 - (a) Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his/her parents at the discretion of the school – in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his/her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he/she would wish to make or have made on his/her behalf

- (b) The school will allow the student concerned and his/her parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take in to account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
 - (c) The school will shortly thereafter inform the students and his/her parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the students has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
9. In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: an oral warning, a written warning, an automatic suspension of five days duration, a suspension of more than five days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
10. Each case of a breach of any of the above regulations will be treated on an individual basis with regard to how serious the breach is. The attitude, personality and general behaviour of the pupil will be taken into account.
11. The school will also ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the student/students and parents affected by an incident of substance abuse. The services of the Guidance Counsellor, Year Head or other nominated staff may be offered by the school as a demonstration of the school's Christian commitment at a time of personal crisis. In addition the school will play its part in initially liaising with the various statutory bodies with a view to establishing on going support for the family.

SECTION 5: THE INVOLVEMENT AND ROLES OF VARIOUS PARTIES IN AN INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

The Principal is the person responsible for all matters relating to this area. He or she may nominate the Deputy Principal, Year Head or other nominated staff to act on his or her behalf in the investigation of a substance abuse incident.

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (hereafter to be understood as meaning the Principal or his/her nominee) in this regard include the following:

1. The Principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school.
2. All reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal.
3. The Principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of an incident: communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.
4. The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments.
5. The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.
6. The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.
7. The Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, Year Head, or other staff members in conducting an incident investigation.

The school will inform at an early stage parents of students involved in drug related incidents particularly, where there are health and safety concerns relating to the student. Students involved will also be kept informed what is happening and why. Such actions will be taken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any abuse incident.

The school recognizes the importance in limiting as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing an abuse incident. It is the aim of the school to involve only those properly concerned with an incident. However students and Parents are asked to note and accept that:

- The duty of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come into contact with an abuse incident
- The school may be required in a given situation to contact as appropriate such authorities as the Gardai, Health Boards, Probation Services or Officers of the Courts.
- The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
- The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident or the investigation of an incident under statute, regulations or DES guidelines.

Media Inquiries

It is the school's policy that media inquiries involving a substance abuse incident will be handled as follows:

- The school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents.
- In the interests of the school's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

SECTION 6 MONITORING REVIEWING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring

The Principal, Year Heads, SPHE Co-ordinator monitor and update aspects of the policy on the three areas of:

- Education concerning substance use.
- Management of alcohol, nicotine and nicotine related products and drug related incidents.
- Provision for training and staff development.

The results of the monitoring will be made available to the Principal, teaching staff and Board of Management.

Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed periodically, in the light of changing information, by a drug policy working group set up by the Principal in consultation with the wider community.

Evaluation

Teachers, Parents, Students, Board of Management and other relevant groups will be involved in the evaluation of this policy when it has been in place for one year and any amendments will be incorporated into the policy.

Three main areas of the policy to be evaluated are:

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parents, Staff and Management Training and courses offered to the school community.

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

1. The following are examples of “drug incidents”:
- Intoxication / uncharacteristic behaviour
 - Suspicion / rumour of drug use, possession or dealing
 - Disclosure by another person
 - Possession of a legal / illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity
 - Selling / supplying legal / illegal drugs
 - School grounds being used for drug activity
 - Drug paraphernalia found on school property
2. “The school” is Jesus & Mary Secondary school, including all school buildings, grounds, play areas and public areas where students’ congregate coming and going from school.
 3. “Parents” is defined to include natural parents, foster parents, step parents or guardians of pupils in the school.
 4. “Students” means student’s in the school.
 5. “Banned or Prohibited Substances” includes all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol, nicotine and nicotine products ie. e cigarettes used contrary to the law of the land. The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.
 6. “Drug Paraphernalia” includes any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the

taking of illicit substances and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

7. The “Principal” means the Principal as appointed by the school and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the Deputy Principal, where the Principal is unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy or other staff member of the school.

APPENDIX 2

<p>STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY A TEACHER IF AN ALCOHOL OR DRUG RELATED INCIDENT ARISES.</p>

1. Take steps to secure the health and safety of the class or group and the individual/s involved in the incident.
2. Make contact with and if possible send for the Principal / Deputy Principal/ Year Head’s, whichever is available at the particular time.
3. Collect and secure any substance or paraphernalia associated with the incident of such are in evidence.
4. Complete a full Report of the incident and give it to the Principal.
5. Refer to Section 4 of this policy on Procedures for further information.