



St. Mary's Diocesan School

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Principal: Ciarán O'Hare • Deputy Principals: Carrie Byrne, Catherina McNicholas

Substance Use Policy

This policy follows the *Guidelines for Developing a School Substance Use Policy (2002)*

St Mary's Diocesan School is a Catholic Secondary School committed to the development of the whole person, offering equal opportunities to all to achieve their full potential in a familial Christian environment. The school aspires to an education based on high ideals and a broad curriculum which will allow our students to confidently play their role in society.

Scope

To what will the policy apply? It is recommended that the term "substance" should be interpreted in the widest possible sense to include alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, legal/illegal drugs and over the counter/prescribed medication and other dangerous substances.

To whom will the policy apply? While this policy addresses substance use issues in respect of students only, the policy applies also to teaching and other school staff, parents/guardians, and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them.

When will the policy apply? During school time (including break times) and to all school related activities, including school trips inside and outside of school hours.

Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and wellbeing. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is part of this reality. We aim to provide for the needs of our students and respond appropriately to issues that can be both sensitive and emotive.

The Education Act, 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

The National Drugs Strategy, 'Building on Experience 1', is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place. Section IV of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools states that all schools should be actively engaged in the process of developing and agreeing a Substance Use Policy in line with Action 43 of the National Drugs Strategy and [Circular 18/02](#).

A report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled 'Drug use prevention' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school (school's mission/vision/aims)

St. Mary's Diocesan School is fully committed to the educational, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all our students in line with our mission statement. We are dedicated to providing a safe and positive environment for learning.

Our substance use policy is intended to achieve an appropriate and workable balance between support and sanction.

We Seek to promote healthy lifestyles for all in a safe, supportive and non-threatening environment. This vision of a Health Promoting School is promoted and enhanced by the implementation of an agreed policy governing substance use.

Goals/Objectives

- to provide a comprehensive programme of education for all students in substance use issues
- to equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way and in accordance with its statutory responsibilities
- to reinforce the role of the school in contributing to local and national strategies in relation to substance use education & prevention
- to minimise the dangers caused to young people by substance misuse within schools/ communities
- to manage incidents of substance misuse in a clear and consistent manner
- to support parents and pupils in understanding and addressing substance misuse.

Key measures (content of policy)

1. Education concerning substance use & staff training and development

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme which is delivered to all junior cycle students in the context of a supportive whole school environment. This programme will be age appropriate and will seek to build on and complement other curriculum areas e.g. PE, Science, Religion and CSPE. We deliver an overall wellbeing programme to all junior cycle students. We have a well-being co-ordinator in place who organises with the class teacher's events regarding wellbeing, the curriculum and CPD for teachers.

Parents are asked to recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse. We ask that they assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

We will provide parents with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes (e.g. SPHE etc.). We encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in community to support the school in its programmes and policy implementation.

2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents

In the event of a substance abuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

All suspected incidents shall be reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal by any member of the school community.

The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with a substance abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall be informed by the Principal/Deputy Principal of the incident.

In the event of a medical emergency the school will seek appropriate medical assistance. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be contacted and informed that medical assistance has been sought.

The Principal shall investigate, or instigate an investigation into, any suspected substance abuse incident. The Principal may contact other agencies and seek their assistance. Statements will be sought from all those involved, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident. These statements will be recorded and may be passed to the Gardaí.

The school reserve the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the college any student(s) involved or suspected to be involved in a substance abuse incident while an investigation is being carried out.

Those involved, or suspected to be involved, will be given the opportunity to respond to any allegations made against them.

In the event that the investigation concludes, that a student or students are in breach of the Substance Use Policy or Code of Behaviour, sanctions will be put in place. The following school disciplinary actions or sanctions may be implemented including suspension and expulsion. Please refer to our Code of Behaviour for further information.

The school will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident.

The Principal/Deputy Principal or a nominated spokesperson will handle all media queries. The school will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and the procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.

The school will endeavour to provide pastoral supports to the student(s) and parent(s) affected by an incident of substance abuse.

Ratification & Communication

Ratified by our board of management on 13th June 2019 and implemented on 26th August 2019

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Principal: _____ Date: _____

This policy will be displayed on our website www.stmarysds.ie

Monitoring the implementation of the policy - Reviewing and evaluating the policy

This Policy will be monitored on an on-going basis and will be reviewed and amended as the need arises.