



SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

St. Paul's Policy on Substance Use aims to set out in writing the framework within which the whole School community manages issues relating to substance use. In drafting this Policy, a consultation process was undertaken with all the partners in education.

Scope of Policy

The term "Substance" is to be interpreted in the widest possible sense to include alcohol, tobacco, legal/illegal drugs and over the counter/prescribed medication and other dangerous substances.

While this Policy addresses substance use issues in respect of students only, The Policy also applies to teaching and other School staff, parents/guardians and others insofar as measures under this Policy relate to them.

The Policy applies during School time (including break times) and to all School related activities – including School activities out of School hours and at weekends.

Definition of Drugs

Drugs can be defined as mood-altering substances, both legal and illegal. For the purpose of the Policy, this includes all illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco in keeping with present day legislation. Illicit drugs include all illegal drugs, magic mushrooms, substances available in headshops and the improper use of solvents (e.g. glues, aerosols, correction fluids, gas etc) and medication, both prescribed and non-prescribed. This list is not exhaustive.

An exception is the correct and supervised use of solvent based cleaning agents and curriculum-related materials/ingredients as specified by the staff member involved e.g. alcohol for culinary use, aerosols for Art, glue for Wood Technology etc.

Exceptions may also be made by School Management.

Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. The reality is that young people are exposed to alcohol, tobacco and drugs. We recognise the potentially negative impact this could have on the health of our students, their well-being and their academic performance. We need to provide for the needs of our students and respond appropriately to issues.

In keeping with the Education Act 1998, our School promotes the social and personal development of students and provides health education for them.

Our School Policy aims to co-operate with the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and furthermore Circular 18/02

Goals and Objectives

- The primary aim of the Policy is to protect the welfare and care of all students.
- To provide a 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 minimise the damage caused to young people by substance mis-use within schools/communities.
- To enable the School to manage incidents of substance mis-use in a clear and consistent manner.
- To support parents/guardians and pupils in understanding and addressing substance mis-use.

This Policy relates to St. Paul's Mission Statement in that the personal development of each individual can be nurtured in a caring and safe environment with the help of the framework within which the School manages issues re substance use.

Content of Policy

Education concerning substance use:-

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is provided in the broader context of the SPHE programme developed in the School. We aim to give young people the knowledge, skills and attitude to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and relate these to their own actions, both now and in their future lives. The Programme of education in SPHE will be age appropriate and will seek to build on and complement our existing programmes i.e. Science, Home Economics, CSPE, PE and R.E.

Visiting speakers may reinforce the School's education programme from time to time. A teacher will remain with the class during such sessions.

We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children and they are encouraged to inform themselves about substance use issues and to discuss these with their children.

MANAGEMENT OF SUBSTANCE-RELATED INCIDENTS

Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-Related Incidents

The School authorities will endeavour to handle any substance-related incident in a firm but fair manner, with due regard for the safety and welfare of individual(s) involved and other members of the School and to fulfil any legal obligations that apply. Every effort will be made to have any substance related incident dealt with by two members of staff.

Substance-Related Incidents

The School is a smoke free zone. The finding, possession, use, supply of alcohol or illicit drugs or substances (as per defined above) and/or the presentation under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs (substance as defined in this Policy) is viewed as a substance-related incident.

Substanc Related Incidents

The following procedures will be taken to manage and investigate any such incidents:-

1. All substance related incidents are to be reported to the Principal. The Principal, Deputy Principal/Year Head will manage the response to the incident. While on excursions, the person in charge will be responsible for the implementation of this Policy and management of response.
2. If a student is present in the School under the influence of alcohol/or drugs, parents will be called and also a doctor/ambulance when appropriate. Any other measures that are appropriate to ensure the student's wellbeing will be taken.

An Incident Report Form will be completed by the appropriate member of staff and retained by the Principal.

The School will take all steps required to fully investigate the incident. Statements will be sought from all persons involved in, concerned with or having knowledge of the incident.

The School will maintain a written record of:-

- (i) the incident
- (ii) the investigation
- (iii) the outcome of the investigation
- (iv) decisions taken and rationale for same
- (v) any disciplinary measures imposed
- (vi) agencies involved/concerned with the matters under the investigation.

The School, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance from such authority as it deems appropriate to its investigation of an incident.

If it is suspected that a person is in possession of a substance prohibited in this School, the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head has the authority to request a person to empty out his/her bags, pockets or his/her locker be searched and to remain in a designated place until the Gardai arrive.

The Gardai and Customs Officers have the authority to carry out a search of a person/bag/vehicle for a prohibited substance on the spot or in a Garda Station. If drugs are found in a student's possession, they must be handed over immediately to a member of the Gardai. The circumstances of the seizure should be fully documented to ensure continuity. The exhibit should be placed in a bag and sealed. It should be marked with the date, time, from whom and by whom it was seized and the date and time it was passed on.

It should be noted on the School Incident record the name of the Garda who is dealing with the exhibit. Extreme care needs to be taken when handling drugs/drug paraphernalia – latex gloves should be worn and a tongs or probe should be used in lifting the drugs.

Counselling/Support of those involved

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of students directly involved in illicit substance incidents will be strongly advised to seek professional help for their son/daughter. On-going monitoring and support will be made available to the student through the School's Pastoral Care System if he/she has been involved in an incident involving alcohol or illicit drugs.

Students or other members of the School who wish to speak to someone about their own misuse of alcohol or illicit drugs or that of a person about whom they are concerned, are invited to approach the Principal/Year Head/Guidance Counsellor. The Principal will be informed of such an approach. They will be offered support or information about external services. Where voluntary, such disclosures will be seen as a decision to seek help and will, therefore, not be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Where individuals have been involved in dealing with a traumatic drug-incident, they are invited to seek support from the School or through contact with external agencies where appropriate

Sanctions/Disciplinary Issues

As per the Code of Behaviour of this School, sanctions including suspension and up to and including expulsion may be imposed depending on the seriousness of the incident.

Confidentiality: While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, it is not always possible to guarantee confidentiality as:-

- (1) The School may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.

- (2) The School may be required to contact the Gardai/HSE..
- (3) The School may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and the outcome of an incident.

Informing Parents/Guardians

It will be standard practice to inform parents/guardians of the student involved in a substance related incident.

Board of Management

The Board of Management will be kept informed of substance mis-use incidents. The Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions/sanctions as they deem appropriate. The School will not comment on any individual matter other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents and this is to be done by the Chairperson of the Board, if ever it is deemed appropriate to do so.

Staff Training and Support

The School will endeavour to provide training for staff, B.O.M., parents and students.

Re:- Staff

Appropriate staff will be released to attend SPHE inservice.

Staff will familiarise themselves with this Policy.

In relation to Parents and BOM, the School will provide:-

- opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and Policy.
- Appropriate information, guidance and support to the Board regarding issues relating to the investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.
- Students and parents will be made aware of the Policy.

The School will monitor, review and evaluate this Policy on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practice, taking cognisance of changing information, legislation, feedback from parent(s),guardian(s), students, teachers, community members, Gardai, HSE staff on School development.

Signed:- _____

Date: _____ **(Date Policy Ratified)**

To be implemented on 01-09-2011