

# **St. Mary's Secondary School Substance Misuse Policy**

(Adopted by B.O.M. on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

## **Introduction**

St. Mary's Secondary School is a health promoting school. It recognizes that substance misuse takes place in the community. The school as part of the community can therefore have incidents of substance misuse which need to be handled in a fair, consistent and sensitive way, with the health, safety, care, protection and welfare of students and the school community as its central concern.

### **Mercy Philosophy of Education**

The school community consists of parents, students, staff and management personnel, sharing a common vision of Mercy Education. The central purpose of the school community is the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of the student. This community seeks to create a learning and teaching environment conducive to the holistic development of the student and the formation of right attitudes and values. Each member of this community participates in the educational process by example of a Christian way of life and by recognising the dignity of each individual.

### **Mission Statement**

The Mercy Philosophy of Education is carried forward through St. Mary's Mission Statement ie. "St. Mary's School is a community which is proud of its Catholic tradition and is committed to developing each person's full potential in a positive, supportive and Christian environment. We invite everyone to participate and we urge everyone to contribute."

"Ní neart go cur le chéile"

### **Collaboration**

In keeping with our motto, St. Mary's Policy on Substance Misuse was drawn up in collaboration with teachers, parents, students and the Board of Management.

### **Drug Definition:**

For the purpose of this policy, a drug is any substance which changes the way the body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. It includes over the counter and prescribed medicines, tobacco, cigarettes, alcohol, solvents and aerosols as well as the whole range of illegal substances.

### **Substance Misuse Policy:**

This is a document adopted by the school community which describes the acceptable and unacceptable use of drugs. It includes practical, usable guidelines and procedures to be followed in the case of a drug related incident arising in the school, with the health, safety, care, protection and welfare of students and the school community as its central concern.

### **Dissemination of Policy:**

Copies of this policy will be disseminated to all members of the school community. It will be available from the Principal or Secretaries' offices. It will be given to all new staff and to the parents of new children as part of their induction to the school. Students will be made aware of this policy as part of their drugs education within the context of the S.P.H.E./C.S.P.E. programmes.

## Use of Drugs at St. Mary's Secondary School

### **Jurisdiction of Substance Misuse Policy:**

This policy applies to all students enrolled in St. Mary's Secondary School, at all times during the school day, during school organised/supervised activities/events, regardless of whether or not these activities/events are on or off the school premises and grounds. It also applies travelling to or from these school organised and supervised activities and events.

The policy also applies to teachers, ancillary staff, parents, Board of Management and to any worker or visitor in the school or attached to school related activities/events or excursions. The co-operation of all these parties is essential for the acceptance and successful implementation of this and all other school policies.

### **Legitimate Medicinal use of Drugs:**

St. Mary's School does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs in the school at any time during the school day or on school organised trips/activities during non-school time by any member of the school community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the school should be informed in advance.

An increasing number of students are being prescribed a range of medications that need to be taken during the school day. Common examples are treatments for Asthma and Diabetes. The Principal should be informed of any students who are on prescribed regular medication and these students are expected, in the normal course of events, to be independent managers of their own medicines. Students are absolutely forbidden to share with others, prescribed/over-the-counter medication.

## Drugs Education:

The school acknowledges that it has a vital role to play in drugs education especially in the prevention of substance misuse.

This policy is focused on four main areas:

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes
2. Managing Drug Related Incidents
3. Training and Staff Development.
4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

## Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes

St. Mary's School is committed to providing a comprehensive timetabled drug education programme for all students.

At Junior Cycle this will be incorporated into the S.P.H.E. and C.S.P.E. programmes currently running in the school.

At Senior Cycle level it will be incorporated into the R.E. programme until S.P.H.E. and C.S.P.E. are introduced at all levels.

Our education aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- **To increase the self esteem and confidence of our students.**
- **To equip our students with personal and social skills.**
- **To enable students to make healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge and by challenging attitudes.**
- **To increase understanding of the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse.**
- **To minimise any harm which might be caused by involvement in a drug incident by offering supportive interventions**

These aims will be met in the following way:

- **St. Mary's School will continue to encourage its students to become involved in projects, activities or organisations which may provide ideas, initiative, support, leadership skills, self esteem or social facilities. Examples include:**  
**Meitheal Leadership Programme**  
**No Name Club**  
**Peer Education Programmes**  
**Youth Clubs**  
**Comhairle na nÓg agus Dáil na nÓg**  
**Young Social Innovators Project**  
**Young Entrepreneur Scheme**  
**Social Care ie, Hospital Visitation and Meals on Wheels etc.**
- **All teachers who wish to be involved with SPHE/CSPE will be actively encouraged to seek appropriate training and will be given the opportunity to avail of it.**
- **A Substance Misuse Officer will be appointed.**
- **Any teacher teaching any Drug Education Programme will be given the opportunity to avail of training.**
- **All teachers will be offered Drug Information and Drug Awareness training through regular in-service training.**

#### **Guest Speakers**

**We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to carry out drug education but sometimes it may be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in class.**

#### **Parent/Guardians**

**Regular opportunities to participate in Drug Awareness Programmes will be made available to parents.**

## 2. Managing Substance Misuse Incidents

Pastoral principles and practice as well as the use of fair and consistent actions and disciplinary procedures will be used. We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school. As with all situations, listening, separating fact from myth and providing support will be the school's initial approach. Disciplinary procedures will be applied if school rules are broken including permanent exclusion.

### Substance Misuse Incidents:

The following are examples of a drug incident:

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Suspicion/rumour of drug use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure by another person
- Failure to disclose knowledge of a drug incident to the appropriate authorities
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- Person attempting to procure drugs on school premises
- Person seeking help from a member of staff
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- Misuse of aerosols, including spray deodorants.
- Possession of Tippex thinners, petrol, lighters, or any other solvent.
- Possession of steroids, stimulants, etc.

### Banned Substances and Disciplinary Procedures:

Smoking is absolutely prohibited as is the possession of cigarettes, lighters and matches on the school premises, its vicinity and during school functions and activities. Breach of this rule will involve the loss of 20 merits and may lead to immediate suspension from school. The Board of Management will be informed and expulsion will be considered where a student has been suspended twice.

Students are prohibited by law from smoking on the school premises and grounds. The names of any students in breach of this legislation will be passed on to the relevant authorities who may then impose fines of up to €3,000

The possession, purchase, supply to another or drinking of alcohol is absolutely forbidden on the school premises, its vicinity and during school functions and activities. Breach of this rule will involve the loss of 20 merits and immediate suspension from school. The Board of Management will be informed and expulsion will be considered.

In St. Mary's School, the possession, purchase, supply to another, or consumption of illegal substances (drugs) during the school day or during school activities, events or trips is strictly forbidden and breaches of this rule leads to immediate suspension. The Board of Management will be informed and expulsion may be pursued. The Gardai may be informed.

Students found in the company of anyone consuming illegal substances may be subject to the same sanctions as the perpetrator

Aerosols, tippex, solvents and indelible markers are not to be brought to school.

## **Suspicion of Misuse.**

All staff will receive training so as to be aware of the signs of drug use. Insofar as possible staff are always alert to changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumour will not be taken as evidence of drug use but it will be investigated. Where a student is suspected of being in possession of illegal substances, the school reserves the right to request students to empty pockets and to open lockers, bags etc. so that a search can be carried out. The search will be carried out by the principal/ Deputy Principal plus a female senior member of staff. Parents/guardians will be informed.

## **Procedure to be followed in the event of a Substance Misuse Incident:**

**Do NOT panic! Deal only with the facts.**  
**Assess the situation - Is acute medical intervention necessary?**

Where there is an immediate danger call a doctor and the Ambulance immediately. If at all possible do not leave the person unattended.

Contact details for local doctors:   Dr Mark Walsh,   Airmount, New Ross   051 421250  
  Dr Terry Rogers,   Priory Place                               051 421997  
  Dr. Aidan Horan,   South Street                              051 421257  
  Dr Kelleher,        South Street                               051 421257

Ambulance/Gardai 999 or 112

Find out what has happened, who was involved, what was involved and where did the incident take place but do not attempt to analyse or taste unknown substances.

Inform the Principal, Deputy Principal or an Assistant Principal.

The parents/guardians should be notified as soon as possible.

In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the person/s, it is important to assess the situation thoroughly.

A drug incident report form should be completed and given to the Principal/Deputy Principal. A written recording procedure will ensure that a fair process of challenging the student about behaviour of concern is in place.

## **Health and Safety Guidelines for dealing with a drug misuse incident.**

Great attention should be taken for personal health and safety when dealing with a confirmed incident involving illegal substances and drug paraphernalia. It is expected that the JLO will deal with all drugs and paraphernalia. In the event that it is necessary (for safety reasons) to remove drugs or equipment prior to the arrival of the JLO then the following should apply;

- Gloves must be worn
- Two people should be involved in removing the drugs, paraphernalia etc.
- No attempt should be made to analyse or taste unknown substances.
- Drugs should be sealed in a bag and kept in a safe place.
- Sharp objects ie. needles and syringes should be placed in a sturdy, secure container ie. a tin with a lid.
- Disposal should then be arranged with the JLO.

## **Returning to school following a confirmed Substance Misuse incident**

Any student accepted back to school following involvement in a confirmed substance misuse incident may be asked to comply with a six month period of assessment during which the student may be required to

- (a) Attend special counselling sessions.
- and/or
- (b) Provide blood and/or urine samples for drug testing.

## **Confidentiality**

The prime focus in any incident relating to a student is the well being of the student, the teacher and the reputation of the school. No member of staff can never offer total confidentiality. The need for care in this area is recognised as the student may approach a teacher because they trust her/him and need help. How this situation is handled will have an important bearing on the outcome. It is important that in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed on a “Need to Know” basis. The Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal. The student will be informed about what is happening and why.

## **Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians will always be involved if there is a substance misuse incident in the school. In the case of tobacco the parents/guardians will be involved after a preliminary investigation. In all other cases involvement will be immediate. This will be handled in a sensitive manner and whenever possible support will be offered. In the first instance, this support will be offered by the Guidance Counsellor.

## **Gardai**

It is agreed that the principal or a designated person will contact the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.

## **Counselling and Pastoral Care:**

The school may ask that other agencies be involved once confirmation of an incident has taken place: i.e. HSE. Drug testing; Counselling; G.P. etc.

It is a natural reaction when faced with an incident to feel a range of emotions: anger, anxiety, disappointment with those involved etc. It may also appear very urgent to resolve the situation very quickly. The pastoral care of all - students, parents/guardians, staff - involved with a drug incident must be a primary concern. In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered and in some cases referral to a substance misuse counsellor may be required.

## **The Media**

A drug incident in a school can draw adverse media attention. The Principal or his/her representative will act as spokesperson. No comment will be offered on individual cases but clarification where necessary will be given, for example: “The school has a policy in place to deal with any substance misuse related incidents and in all cases the appropriate support services will be provided or accessed.”

### **3. Training**

The Board of Management of St. Mary's School has a strong commitment to ongoing staff training. Up to date information and resources need to be available to the whole school community.

#### **Staff**

The school will make available training to staff involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education Programmes. All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training on a regular basis.

Detailed and specific training will be made available to key staff in relation to managing drug incidents.

First-Aid training will be offered to all staff.

#### **Parents/Guardians and Board of Management:**

The school will continue to provide opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to drugs and substance misuse. As part of the induction for parents/guardians of students new to the school this policy will be examined annually on 1<sup>st</sup> Year Parent's Night.

#### **Students:**

St. Mary's will continue to offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE/CSPE classes and other classes as the opportunity arises.

### **4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of this Substance Misuse Policy**

#### **Monitoring:**

Monitoring the substance misuse policy is an ongoing process, which will take place on a regular basis. The Principal and Deputy Principal of the school will monitor the policy once a term to ensure that it is of practical benefit to the school. The results of the monitoring will be recorded and made available in the school office.

#### **Review:**

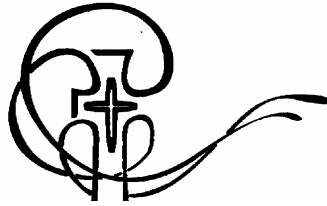
The policy will be reviewed annually, or in the light of changing information, by the Substance Misuse Policy Working Group. This group has equal representation of Staff, Students, Parents, Board of Management and is chaired by the Principal. Review will take place in consultation with the wider school community.

#### **Evaluation:**

Teachers, Parents, Students and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy when it has been in place for one year - First Term, 2006 – 2007. Any changes will be incorporated into the amended policy.

Three main areas of the policy to be evaluated are:

Drug Education Programmes  
Drug Related Incidents  
Parent, Staff and Management Training.



**St. Mary's Secondary School  
Irishtown  
New Ross**

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**2005**

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