

ST. JOSEPH'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

DROGHEDA

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE
POLICY**

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Definitions:

(1) For the purpose of this policy drugs shall be taken to mean all non-prescribed drugs whose use by school children is prohibited by law – alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. Illegal drugs include, but are not limited to, cannabis, heroin, cocaine, LSD and amphetamines. Prohibited substances include all mind and mood – altering substances such as solvents.

(2) A reasonable suspicion is a suspicion backed by evidence such as comments made by students, incriminating evidence left by students during lunch breaks, strange and bizarre behaviour in class associated with drug use.

Scope:

This policy applies to all members of staff and students and to all those outside groups who use the school and its environs with the permission of the school management. It also applies to students, teachers, parents/guardians who are involved in school related activities such as tours and outings.

School Aims:

St Joseph's Secondary School Drogheda is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all its employees and students. The school recognises that substance abuse has become an increasing serious problem affecting all aspects of society, including school. Substance abuse can seriously impair academic performance, jeopardise the safety of the abuser and pose serious physical and psychological health risks to the abuser.

The school is conscious that experimentation with drugs during adolescence is common. Unfortunately, teenagers often don't see the link between their actions today and the consequences tomorrow. They also have a tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the

problems that others experience. Likewise, using alcohol and tobacco at a young age increases the risk of using other drugs later.

Consequently, the primary focus of the school's substance abuse programme is education. As part of this programme, the school will provide students with educational modules, which will address the medical, health, psychological and legal ramifications of illicit drug and alcohol use.

Our Pastoral Care Team under the leadership of our Senior Guidance Counsellor will be available to offer assistance to students who may need help with personal, emotional or substance abuse problems.

Rationale:

The school is aware of its responsibility under legislation in regards to substance abuse.

- The Education Act with its emphasis on the social and personal development of the students including healthy living.
- The National Drugs Strategy
- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and 1984
- Tobacco Regulations 1995 and Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002

Consistent with its concern for the well-being of staff and students, it is the policy of St. Joseph's Secondary School to maintain a work and academic environment free from substance abuse. It is the school's aim to promote a sense of collegiality among all the stakeholders in relation to substance abuse in order to create a drug free environment amongst all users of the school.

Goals:

To ensure that the reputation for caring which is a characteristic of our school is not in any way undermined by the dangerous habits of substance abuse.

To promote and maintain the school and its environs as a Drug Free Zone. This is to be done in conjunction with all the stakeholders in the school.

To promote a positive attitude to health by encouraging as many students as possible to participate in one of the many sports available to students in the school.

To help our students develop personal strengths and values that can reduce the likelihood that they will become involved in drugs. This will be done in the formal setting of SPHE and Religious Education classes and informally by art and essay competitions, wall displays, debates etc.

To provide education regarding the harmful effects of drugs and the legal ramifications of having a drug conviction.

To clearly state to all parents and students the disciplinary action that will be imposed for violation of the substance abuse policy.

Education Concerning Substance Abuse

As an ERST school we are committed to the moral, spiritual social and personal development of all our students. As part of this commitment, the school will provide the education necessary for our students to develop personal strengths and values that can reduce the likelihood that they will become involved in drugs.

The school will put in place a SPHE module, which will deal with "Drug Prevention". The SPHE Co-ordinator will keep the teachers of the subject briefed on new resources as well as keeping management informed of the training needs of teachers. (See appendices 2, 3 & 4)

The management of the school will release the teachers of SPHE for In-Service training on a regular basis. Whole School training will also be provided from time to time.

Teachers of SPHE will be encouraged to invite guest speakers. However, all such speakers must be vetted in advance by the principal.

Communications:

The school's Substance Abuse Policy will be made available to each parent /guardian at the time of enrolment. It is also available on the school's website. In addition, reminders of our Substance Abuse Policy will be published in the school's Newsletter from time to time.

Sanctions:

Harmful substances are banned in the school and its environs and on any school-related activities such as Tours and Outings.

"Smoking is illegal on the school premises and pupils may not smoke in the vicinity of the school. The possession of drugs or alcohol for personal use for the supply of others will result in automatic suspension and may have serious consequences, up to and including expulsion"

Rule 6: St Joseph's Secondary School, Code of Behaviour

The penalty for smoking in, or in the vicinity of the school, is an automatic suspension of one day for a first offence and two for a second or subsequent offence. In all cases the parents/guardians will be asked to meet the students Form Tutor in the presence of the student.

Sanctions for possession or use of, or dealing in, harmful substances will range from short-term suspensions to expulsion from the school. Sanctions will be at the discretion of the Board of Management.

The Board of Management may demand, as condition of returning to school, that the student(s) involved undertake a series of counselling sessions with a Drug Addiction Counsellor.

The Board of Management reserves the right to expel a student if the offence warrants it. Having drugs for the supply of others constitutes a grave offence punishable by expulsion.

Procedures for dealing with substance abuse

The school is a drug free zone. All members of the school community, visitor to the school and casual workers are obliged to respect this status.

Anyone who has a reasonable suspicion that an individual or group is engaged in the use or supply of illicit substances are required to bring the information to a member of the teaching staff or directly to the deputy principal or principal. All such information will be treated in a sensitive manner. The principal/deputy principal or senior member of staff appointed by the principal will then carry out an investigation. The person to whom the information is brought is required to write a brief note, which must be furnished, to the person carrying out the investigation. The student(s) who are the subject of the investigations will be interviewed and will be given the opportunity to present his/their version(s) of events. The student(s) will be asked to give an account in writing.

If the principal, or in his absence, the deputy principal, is satisfied that the student(s) concerned has /have a case to answer, he/they will be suspended from the school until parents/guardians meet with the principal to discuss the matter. Subsequently, the accused student and his parent/guardian will meet with the Board of Management where appropriate sanctions will be imposed if the Board deem that the offence has been committed. If the principal deems that the case to be answered is such that expulsion is being considered then the procedures to be followed will follow those outlined IN St. Joseph's Secondary School's Code of Behaviour.

Appendix 1

Role and Responsibilities in developing and implementing the Substance Abuse Policy

Role of the Board of Management:

- To Contribute to the formulation of the policy
- To finally approve the policy
- To ensure that the policy is implemented in its entirety.
- To provide the resources necessary for the implementation of the policy.
- To take a proactive approach to reviewing the policy on a bi-annual basis.
- To consider each case referred to it by the principal and to take appropriate action.

Role of the Principal/Deputy Principal:

- To Work with the Board of Management, teachers, parents and students in the school in the preparation of a Draft of Substance Abuse Policy.
- To investigate all incidents of reported Substance Abuse in the school and to take appropriate action in accordance with the school's Substance Abuse Policy and the school's Code of Behaviour.
- To liaise with parents/guardians and outside agencies.
- To be as a resource to the teaching staff.
- To provide whatever support, including training is required to make the policy effective.
- To closely monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to note the recommendations of teachers, students and parents. These observations to form the basis of the bi-annual review.

Role of the Teaching Staff:

- To implement the policy in its entirety.

- To report to management any incident of Substance Abuse or any behaviour which gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of same.
- To encourage students to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- To be aware of the signs and symptoms of Substance Abuse. See Appendix
- To participate in Substance Abuse Training programmes designed to prevent drug taking among young people.

Role of the Pastoral Care Team:

- To identify and respond sensitively and supportively to students who have abused drugs.
- To offer advice and assistance to parents.
- To co-operate with the Parents' Council in organising Drug Awareness talks for parents.
- To liaise with outside agencies such as the North Eastern Health Board and the Gardai.
- To organise Drug Awareness promotions and displays in the school.

Roles and Responsibilities in developing and implementing the Substance Abuse Policy (Continued)

Role of the Student Population:

- To abide by the terms and conditions of the Substance Abuse Policy.
- To report to the principal/deputy principal any information of Substance Abuse or any suspicion of same.

Role of the Parents:

- To appraise themselves of the school's Substance Abuse Policy.
- To support the school's Substance Abuse Policy.
- To co-ordinate with the implementation of the programme.
- To monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Appendix 2

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Teenagers at risk for developing serious alcohol and drug problems include those:

- With a family history of substance abuse.
- Who are depressed.
- Who have a low self-esteem.
- Who feel that they have no future in school.
- Who feel that their parent(s) have no time for time.
- Who feel lonely and isolated.
- Who are bored and have nothing better to do.
- Whose friends are doing them

Appendix 3

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR WHICH MAY INDICATE DRUG TAKING

PHYSIICAL

- Fatigue
- Repeated health complaints
- Red and glazed eyes
- Lasting cough
- Unexplained feeling of being generally “under the weather”
- Rashes around the mouth
- Slurred speech
- Loss of appetite

EMOTIONAL

- Personality changes
- Sudden mood changes
- Irritability
- Irresponsible behaviour
- Low self esteem
- Poor judgement
- Depression
- General lack of interest

FAMILY

- Starting arguments
- Negative attitude
- Breaking rules
- Withdrawing from family
- Secretiveness

- **SCHOOL**

- Decreases interest
- Negative attitude
- Drop In grades
- Absenteeism
- Truancy
- Discipline problems

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- New friends who have anti-social tendencies
- Problems with the law
- Changes to new and different styles in dress and music

Note: some of the warning signs listed above can also be signs of other problems.

Appendix 4

INFORMATION ABOUT COMMON DRUGS

1. CANNABIS

Other Names: Pot, ganje, grass, weed, hash, herb, dope, draw, shank.

Appearance: Black or Brown resin or herbal leaf.

How Taken: Smoked, cooked in a cake, brewed as a tea.

Effects: Causes relaxation or drowsiness, talkativeness, hilarity, increases appetite. May
Also cause apathy, lethargy, anxiety, paranoia and hallucinations, among other effects.

2. ESTACY

Other Names: Doves, Strawberries, disco burgers, love hearts, snowballs, apples.

Appearance: Small coloured pills with pictures imprinted on them.

How Taken: Orally.

Effects: Dilated pupils, feeling of euphoria, love, unbounding energy interspersed with calm. Also nausea, sweating, loss of appetite and tightening of jaw, arm and leg muscles and a desire for water. Higher doses include hallucinations, anxiety, panic, insomnia. After effects include lethargy, exhaustion and depression.

3. COCAINE

Other Names:	Coke, Snow, Charlie.
Appearance:	A White crystalline powder.
How Taken:	Usually sniffed but also is dabbed under the tongue and on gums, injected and smoked.
Effects:	Increases energy and confidence and keeps users awake for hours. Dilated pupils and decreased appetite. Incessant talking about nothing specific is common. Also can cause irritability, anxiety, restlessness, tightening of the jaw muscles and grinding of teeth. After effects include extreme tiredness, ravenous appetite, listlessness and depression.

4. CRACK COCAINE

Other Names:	Rock, Wash, Stone.
Appearance:	Small, raisin-size crystal rocks.
How Taken:	Smoked using pipes, drink cans or tinfoil.
Effects:	Causes a euphoric rush followed by manic or wild behaviour.

5. AMPHETAMINE SULPHATE

Other Names:	Speed, billy, sulph, uppers, fast, whiz.
Appearance:	White or brightly dyed powder.

How Taken: Sniffed, eaten, injected.

Effects: Similar to Cocaine.

6. HEROIN

Other Names: Smack, H, Junk, Horse, Harry, Skag.

Appearance: A fine off-white or brown powder.

How Taken: Smoked, injected or occasionally sniffed.

Effects: in low doses, users are lively, agitated and talkative, Higher doses cause drowsiness and slurred speech.

7. LSD

Other Names: Acid, L, Lucy, stars, blotter, tab, trip.

Appearance: Is usually impregnated into squares of blotting paper featuring coloured motifs or cartoon characters but is also available as coloured tablets or capsules.

How Taken: Orally.

Effects: Distorted vision and hearing, anxiety hallucinations, paranoia, flashbacks.

8. TRANQUILLISERS

Other Names: Downers, jellies, tranx.

Appearance: Various coloured tablets- legal if prescribed by a doctor. Valium, Librium etc.

How Taken: Orally.

Effects: Taken by drug users to help them come down-usually after Ecstasy or Cocaine. Can make user drowsy and disorientated.

9. AMYL NITRATES

Other Names: Poppers, rush, ram. Thrust, Locker room.

Appearance: Clear or yellow liquid in small screw or plug top bottles or glass vials.

How Taken: Inhaled.

Effects: Causes dizziness, headaches, and vomiting with skin problems around nose and mouth from prolonged use.

10. HALLUCINOGENIC MUSHROOMS

Other Names: Magic mushrooms, Mushies, Liberty caps.

Appearance: Small pointed mushrooms with pointed caps.

How Taken: Swallowed raw, cooked or brewed like tea.

Effects: Symptoms similar to mild LSD; often induce fits of Giggling, stomach cramps, vomiting and paranoia.

11. SOLVENTS & GASES

Names: House hold items such as glues, paint, nail varnish remover, cleaning fluid, aerosol

How Taken: Inhaling directly or from bags.

Effects: Giggling, confusions, euphoria, hallucinations, tiredness.

(Taken mainly from North Eastern Health Board Promotions Publications.)