

Substance Use Policy

Introduction

St. Michael's College is committed to the wellbeing, care and protection of the whole school community. The school's mission statement underpins and informs the following policy on substance use.

This policy has been formulated by representatives of the whole school community (staff, students, parents and the Board of Management) in accordance with Guidelines from the Department of Education and Science and the National Drugs Strategy 2001 – 2008. It applies to all school related activities and to the whole school community.

We recognise that legal and illegal substances e.g. alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs etc. are available in the local community and that the school being part of this community has and will have drug incidents, which need to be handled in a consistent and sensitive way. This policy seeks to enable this by offering guidance and procedures to the whole school community for dealing with drug related incidents. It acknowledges the important role the school community plays in drug education.

Upon its adoption, copies of this policy will be disseminated to the whole school community. It will also be freely available from the school office. It will be given to all new staff, new students and their parents.

In this policy, the term '**drug**' denotes '**any substance which changes the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally**' and includes

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Medicines
- Over the counter remedies e.g. paracetamol etc.
- Illegal drugs
- Solvents e.g. glue, Tipp-Ex, etc.
- Cleaning agents
- Gases
- Aerosols
- Laboratory chemicals
- Performance enhancing substances
- Etc.

This is not an exhaustive list.

This policy is focussed on 4 key areas

1. Drug Education Programme.
2. Managing Drug related incidents.
3. Training and Staff Development.
4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.

1. Drug Education Programmes

Our educational aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of students.
- To equip students with personal and social skills.
- To enable students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices.
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs.

These aims will be met through the following

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Religious Education (RE) are core subjects which will deliver the above aims.
- The SPHE Co-ordinator, SPHE Department, Chaplain and RE Department will work together in delivering the above aims.
- All teachers involved in SPHE and RE will be given the opportunity to avail of in-service training.
- The Pastoral Care System (See Code of Behaviour and Discipline) will support these aims.
- All staff will be offered in-service training on Drugs and Drugs Awareness.
- The school will endeavour to provide Drug Awareness Information for students by organising Drug Awareness Days which will involve the use of outside speakers.
- Parents will be made aware of the school's substance use policy through Information Meetings and the use of outside speakers at the Parents' Association Annual General Meeting.

2. Managing Drug Related Incidents

Drug Incidents

Drug related incidents might involve the following:

- Drug related emergencies when the person may be unconscious.
- Possession of a legal / illegal drug on the school premises, on the way to or from school or on a school related activity.
- Use of a legal / illegal drug on the school premises, on the way to or from school or on a school related activity.
- Selling / supplying legal / illegal drugs on the school premises, on the way to or from school or on a school related activity.
- Suspicion of drug use, possession or dealing.
- Intoxication / unusual behaviour.
- Disclosure by another person / person seeking help from a member of staff.
- Legal / illegal drug paraphernalia found on school property.

The School Approach

The whole school community needs to be aware of and alert for the signs of drug use and changes in behaviour. All incidents will be assessed individually. Due care will be taken to discern between allegation, suspicion and direct evidence of drug use.

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. Disciplinary procedures will be followed if the Code of Behaviour and Discipline has been breached (See Code of Behaviour and Discipline). Serious breaches may result in expulsion.

Confidentiality

On health and Safety grounds, total confidentiality cannot always be offered to a person who disclosed a drug related incident. However, every effort will be made to protect the identity of the source of information. It is important in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing

the incident. Information will be restricted to the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain / Guidance Councillor, Year Head and persons directly involved in the case and only on a strict 'need to know' basis. Parents will be informed of all drug related incidents including intoxication / unusual behaviour / suspicion of drug use.

Procedures for Managing Drug Related Incidents:

1. Assess the situation. In the event of a medical emergency, seek medical assistance and if possible do not leave the person on his / her own. Contact a parent / guardian / close relative and inform them that medical assistance has been sought.
2. Taking relevant precautions, remove drugs and drug paraphernalia to the Principal's office, the Deputy Principal's office or other safe place and seek medical assistance.
3. Report the incident to the relevant Year Head, The Deputy Principal, Principal or Chaplain who will investigate (See Confidentiality above) and record the facts of the case (See Incident Report Form).
4. The Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal or Chaplain will inform parents / guardians of the outcome of their investigation and will inform the Gardai if there are illegal drugs / drug paraphernalia involved. During extra-curricular activities the teacher in charge will assume these duties.
5. The Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal or Chaplain will arrange a meeting with parents / guardians / Gardai / JLO and other relevant parties.
6. With due regard for the Health and Safety of all students and to employer Health and Safety responsibilities care will be taken in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response to a drug related incident. Where appropriate, referral to counselling services will be offered / recommended. If necessary, sanctions will be applied as per the Code of Behaviour and Discipline. Students and their parents have the right to appeal a decision to the Board of Management.
7. The Principal or 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.

3. Training and Staff Development

All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training and first-aid training. The school will provide opportunities for parents and members of the Board of Management to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to drugs and the school's substance use policy. The school will offer all of its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE classes.

4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed every three years before the formation of a new Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme and feedback from parents / guardians, teachers and students. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

