



SUBSTANCE USE POLICY.

Introductory Statement:

This Substance Use Policy should be read in conjunction with the *Code of Behaviour* of Saint Nathy's College. Within this policy statement the term 'substance' means anything introduced into the body which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally.

Scope of this Policy:

This policy applies to the whole school community –Board of Management, students, teachers, management, parents, office and ancillary staff. While this policy addresses issues related to substance use by students, the policy applies to teaching and other school staff, parents/guardians and others, insofar as measures under the policy relate to them. The term 'substance' should be interpreted in the widest possible sense to include alcohol, legal/illegal drugs and over the counter/prescribed medication and other dangerous substances. *This policy is designed to be supportive of all parties by giving information about substance misuse and the supports that are available to students and parents and also the clear consequences of substance misuse in the context of the school community.* This policy applies during school time (including break times) and to all school-related activities.

Rationale:

Why a policy on Substance Use?

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their student cohort and respond appropriately to issues that can be both sensitive and emotive.
- The Education Act, 1998 and the Education Welfare Act 2000 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- The National Drugs Strategy, 2001-2008 sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented by Government Departments and Agencies to combat the very serious problem of drug misuse in our society. The strategy, which is Government policy, highlights the important contribution that schools can make in the area of education and prevention, and requires them to have substance use policies in place (Circular 18/02).
- The recent report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled 'Drug use prevention' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.

The Philosophy and Ethos of the school:

Saint Nathy's College was established to act as a Centre of Learning. We strive to achieve this within a fostered Christian environment which equally provides for the faith and personal development of each student. All of our school endeavours and activities are directed towards these activities. St Nathy's College wishes to offer support to those who are experiencing difficulties. It seeks 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 ensure that the reputation for caring which is characteristic of our school is not in any way undermined by the dangerous habits of substance abuse.
- To provide a comprehensive programme of education for all students in substance use issues. This will be done in the formal setting of SPHE and Religious Education classes and through outside speakers.
- 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.
- To clearly state to all parents and students the disciplinary action that will be taken for violation of the substance abuse policy.

Education concerning substance use

As a Diocesan College, Saint Nathy's College is 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.

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme which is developmental and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment. Teachers of SPHE and Religion and other relevant subject areas will be encouraged to invite guest speakers to speak on drugs-related topics. These discussions will take place in the presence of a teacher.

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Drug Awareness and other relevant programmes will be offered to parents and teachers of the school as opportunities arise and the school's resources permit.

Agreed procedures and guidelines for the management of drug related incidents will be issued to all staff.

Managing Drug-Related Incidents

We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the young person(s), the needs of the school community as a whole, the reputation of the school and legal considerations. ·Listening, separating fact from myth and support for the basis of our initial approach to any situation. Disciplinary procedures will be followed if school rules are broken. The usual range of sanctions, including suspension and/or expulsion, will be available. However the school will strive to strike a balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response.

Drug 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
- Possession of a legal drug [other than a legal drug medically prescribed for or required by that particular student¹] or illegal drug on College grounds or on a College-related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- College grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on College property

Assessing a Drug Incident

- Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or to the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any students (or any members of the school community) involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
- In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the student(s), it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding. All staff members need to be aware of the signs of drug use and alert for changes in behaviour (see Appendix 1).

¹Students in this category must obtain prior approval from the Principal, or the Deputy Principal acting on his behalf, to be in possession of such medication within the school grounds or on school-related activities.

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- All incidents will be investigated by the Principal/Deputy Principal or the Principal may seek assistance from the Year Head, Guidance Counsellor or other relevant school

personnel in conducting an investigation. All information should be recorded accurately using an 'Abuse Incident Report Form' (Appendix 2).

- The school will take possession of any banned substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them securely pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- It is important 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 and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all documentation held confidentially. In all cases the College will inform parents/guardians.

Recording Procedure

The school will maintain a record of all the stages in the investigation of the incident. This record will include statements from individuals involved, substances or drug paraphernalia found, communications with any outside agencies, investigation outcome, decisions taken and rationale for these decisions and any disciplinary measures imposed following the investigation.

Confidentiality:

It is important 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 and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all documentation held confidentially.

It is important that students and parents accept that:

- Teachers cannot offer total confidentiality to a young person who discloses drug involvement. It is recognised that care is needed in this area as the student may be coming to the teacher because they trust him/her and need help.
- The school may be required to contact appropriate outside bodies such as the Gardai, Juvenile Liaison Officer Juvenile (JLO) or Health Board.
- The school may need to engage expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
- The School may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and /or the outcome of an investigation under statute regulations or Department of Education and Science guidelines.

Parents

In all cases the College will inform parents/guardians. This needs to be handled sensitively and whatever possible or necessary supports offered to them. Support may be given by the Guidance Counsellor or outside agencies.

Keeping Parties Informed:

On completion of the preliminary investigation and in the event of an investigation continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the student(s) concerned and their Parent(s)/Guardian(s) in the following manner:

Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and her Parent/Guardian, at the discretion of the school. A student will be given an opportunity to make his/her reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he/she would wish to make or have made on his/her behalf. The school will allow the student concerned reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue and will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.

The Principal shall shortly thereafter inform the student and her parent/guardian of the school's findings. If the investigation finds that the student is guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident the Principal will indicate the penalty or sanctions imposed. The matter may be referred to the Board of Management for further consideration. The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account.

In the case of a suspected abuse incident, the school will ensure that pastoral supports are offered to those affected by an incident of substance misuse. The school will inform parents, particularly where there is concern regarding the health and welfare of a student, and share any information that may help parents to attend to the health and wellbeing of their child/children. Such actions will be undertaken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any abuse incident.

In the event of an inquiry from the media, the school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents. It may however in the interests of the reputation of the school be necessary to clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has concluded. The Principal will deal with any/all comments from the media.

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 act 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 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

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- 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 H.S.E. and the Gardai.
- To organise Drug Awareness promotions and displays in the school.

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 monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

POLICY REVIEW SHOULD TAKE PLACE PERIODICALLY.

APPENDIX 1

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR WHICH MAY INDICATE DRUG TAKING

PHYSICAL

- 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

- Decreased 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.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 22nd May 2014.

Appendix 2

Report Form for recording Incidents of Substance Use:

Name of Student:

Date:

Name of Teacher:

What happened?(Include only the facts. What was seen? What was said? Who was involved?)

What are your concerns?(Is this incident related to others? Do you have suspicions aroused by the incident?)

Who has been informed?

What action has been taken?

What further action is necessary?

Signed: