

OUR LADYS SECONDARY SCHOOL



Abuse of Illegal Substances & Alcohol Policy

Our Lady's Mission Statement

Our Lady's Secondary School is a holistic centre of development and learning where each person is special and treated as such. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realize our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. Christian community is our heritage and goal, the Good News of the Gospel is our story.

School Context

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic School under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school is Co-Educational and currently has approximately 715 students and over 60 teachers as well as a range of ancillary and support staff. The school has a Board of Management comprised of Trustee Nominees, Teacher Nominees and Parent Nominees. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and parental choice in relation to enrolment. In supporting these principles it also recognizes the rights of the Trustees CEIST, the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy and the funding and resources available.

Mercy Philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

CEIST Core Values

The Core Values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

Introduction

The aim of substance education is to enable pupils to make healthy informed choices. The school aims to promote the wellbeing of all pupils by providing information and coping strategies to deal with all illegal substances. The aim of this policy is to acknowledge and clarify the schools' role in drug education and prevention and ensure it is appropriate to pupils' needs. The policy provides information and guidance about drug education, as well as procedures to respond to any drug/alcohol-related incident for pupils, teachers, support-staff and outside individuals. This policy should be read in conjunction with the SPHE policy and discipline policy within the school. This policy applies to all school related activities as well as school fieldwork or trips.

Rationale:

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

- The Education Act 1998 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

Definitions

For the purpose for 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 substance such as solvents and legal highs.

Alcohol: any liquor, wine, beer or other beverage with alcoholic content.

Drug Paraphernalia: equipment or apparatus designed for, or used for the purpose of measuring, packaging, distributing or facilitating the use of drugs.

Substance Abuse: the use of drugs or alcohol in violation of state law, or in violation of School Board policy.

Evidence of Prior Use: observable impaired mental or physical abilities resulting from substance abuse.

The drugs/substances covered by this policy are not to be bought, sold, exchanged or brought onto school premises during the school day, or during school trips (these include all school related activities- day trips and overnight tours) The school reserves the right to search any part of school property, school bags, vehicles or other belongings on school property or at any school event or school trip. Students may be given the opportunity to surrender the drug / substance prior to the search. Where there is

reasonable belief that a student or person is in possession of a drug and refuses to surrender the drug, the Gardai may be contacted and asked to conduct the search. Two staff members are required to be present during any form of search. Every effort will be made to notify the parents/guardians of any student prior to a search being conducted.

Individual exceptions may be made for pupils who require prescription medicines where appropriate subject to prior approval having been received from the principal.

Where it is brought to the attention of school management that a student has been formally cautioned by the Gardai for the possession or supply of an illegal drug the Board of Management reserves the right to pursue sanctions up to an including expulsion.

Objectives

- To fully inform students of the dangers of smoking, consumption of alcohol and substance abuse.
- To provide students with the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to avoid the misuse of illegal substances.

Aims of Substance Abuse Policy

Our school's aims for our drug education programme are as follows:

- To improve student's knowledge of drugs and their effects on the human body
- To support parents in their effort to educate their children in alcohol and substance abuse.
- To raise student's awareness of the consequences of drug use and misuse to the individual, the family, peers, local communities and society
- To increase awareness of ways of minimising the risks and unwanted consequences of drug use.
- To enable student's to develop a range of skills and techniques appropriate for handling situations related to drugs and drug use.
- To promote student's understanding of the reasons why drugs are used and misused.
- To encourage students to find satisfaction, challenge, pleasure, emotional variety, and excitement through a range of activities.
- To help student's to explore and develop their own attitudes to drug use.
- To enable student's to identify sources of information and appropriate personal support and be able to make use of these sources if they require them.

Drug Education

First Year: The SPHE / Wellbeing programme will cover the topics of alcohol and tobacco including the viewing of a DVD.

Second Year: Students will receive their first drug education talk in conjunction with their SPHE / Wellbeing classes in addition to viewing a relevant DVD.

Third Year: The topic will be covered as part of the SPHE / Wellbeing course which may include a visit from the Garda Liaison Officer.

Transition Year: A staff member will give a third drug and solvent awareness talk.

Senior Cycle: Additional programmes will be covered where appropriate. These may take the form of DVDS or Guest Speakers.

Parents: The Parents' Association will organise, at regular intervals, Drug Education Talks for parents by either a doctor or member of an Gardai on warning signs and effects of drug and alcohol use as part of their programme.

Staff: The school will facilitate training for staff involved in the SPHE programmes and Wellness programmes. Specific training may be made available to key staff in relation to managing drug related incidents.

The drug education programme will be delivered by teachers but may be supplemented by outside agencies or individuals who have specific expertise. The contributions of such agencies and individuals will be subject to review.

SCHOOL PRACTICE ON THE MISUSE OF SUBSTANCES

1. The rules regarding illegal substances are outlined in the schools Code of Behaviour.
2. Parent/Guardians will be contacted in the event of their son/daughter misusing any illegal substance.
 - a. After a process of consultation with the parents/ students a programme of support will be recommended.
 - b. The school insists that if the student is to remain in the school he/she must participate in the agreed programme of support. This does not prohibit the school from imposing sanctions which it considers appropriate in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.
 - c. A student who then continues to misuse illegal substances will be asked to leave the school either temporarily or permanently.
3. A student who supplies illegal substances to other person(s) in the school may be suspended or permanently excluded.
4. A student found to be in possession of drugs (as defined above), alcohol, illegal substances or psychotropic substances during school hours, on school grounds or during a school trip or excursion may be suspended or permanently excluded. Students found to be in possession of prescription medication without a

prescription or explanatory note from their doctor may also be suspended or permanently excluded.

5. Where a member of staff or a student finds or is alerted to the existence of a suspicious substance, such finds must be reported immediately to the Principal. Any suspicious substance will be stored by the school in a secure location. The Gardaí will be contacted in order to remove the substance; establish its nature and arrange for its disposal. The school will maintain a record of all items confiscated.
6. Parents/Guardians or any other interested groups are welcome to make an appointment to visit the school and discuss any aspect of the policy.
7. The B.O.M of the school recognises that a disclosure of a drug related issue can be seen as a request for help and support and thus will be taken into account when dealing with the matter.
8. The B.O.M. will, at its discretion, distinguish between information received through disclosure and information obtained in another way. A written record of all communications may be taken,

Drug situations – medical emergencies

Before assistance arrives:

If the person is conscious:

- Ask the person what has happened and try to identify any drug used
- Collect any drug sample and any vomit for medical analysis
- **Do not** induce vomiting
- Keep the person under observation

If the person is unconscious:

- Ensure that the person can breathe and place in the recovery position
- **Do not** attempt to make the person stand or sit
- **Do not** move the person in the event of any possible injuries sustained when the person collapsed
- **Do not** attempt to give a drink or food by mouth until medical help has arrived

APPENDIX 1

Procedure

- (a) Emergencies when the person may be unconscious or incoherent.
- (b) A situation where a person exhibits unusual behaviour possibly due to drugs or alcohol.
- (c) Response to use or suspected use.
 - 1. Secure the person's safety.
 - 2. If possible ascertain what he/she has taken/consumed.
 - 3. If the person is unconscious or incoherent call an ambulance.
 - 4. Inform the Principal\Deputy Principals\Year Head.
 - 5. Inform parents and require that they take responsibility for the person by taking him/her home.
 - 6. If a parent/guardian is not immediately available the person may be left with a responsible adult providing that adult agrees to assume the responsibility.
 - 7. Refer to Procedures (Appendix 2 a, 2 b) which while invoking a spirit of support and advice will have due regard for the school code of discipline as outlined under The Management of Alcohol, Tobacco, Solvents and Drug Related Incidents – The School Approach.
 - 8. With regard to (c) above, such procedures as outlined in Appendix 2a, 2b will be applied as necessary.

APPENDIX 2(a)

Procedure re: Actual Possession of Drugs, Solvents, Alcohol.

- 1. Confiscate substance where possible in the presence of another teacher.
- 2. Students are accompanied to the Principal / Deputy Principal /Year Head.
- 3. Mindful of obligations regarding Storage, Preservation and Disposal the school will:
 - (i). Take possession of the substance, record details and ascertain whether the student has taken/used the substance.
N.B. If the situation is deemed serious enough as to constitute an emergency, then the procedure outlined in **Appendix 1** is to be followed.
 - (ii) Seek to verify the exact nature of the substance. This may involve the Gardaí or outside expertise available to the school.
 - (iii) Contact parents, inform them of the circumstances and all procedures regarding possession of drugs, solvents, alcohol as per school policy.
 - (iv) Contact Social Services/Gardaí as appropriate.

4. The student may be required to meet with the School Counsellor and may be required to undertake specific tasks e.g. linking with outside drug addiction counsellor, doctor, Gardaí, project as appropriate to the circumstance. Parents and students to be advised as to specific services available locally.

5. Mindful of the school's duty of care and while invoking a spirit of support and advice, disciplinary procedures may be invoked if school rules are broken. The school reserves the right to exclude a student from the school. In such circumstances parents/guardians have the right to appeal such exclusion, under Section 29 of the Education and Welfare Act 2000.

6. The school will keep a record of all details regarding the incident

APPENDIX 2(b)

Procedure re: Suspected Possession of Drugs, Solvents, Alcohol

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1. Student is accompanied to the Principal / Deputy Principal or Year Head.
2. The Principal / Deputy Principal or Year Head will outline the allegation to the student and seek his/her co-operation in establishing the truth.
3. Parents will be contacted.
4. Mindful of the schools duty of care, the school reserves the right to take appropriate action to investigate the allegation and establish the truth.
5. Should possession be confirmed, then reference will be made to Appendix 2(a) relating to actual possession of drugs, solvents or alcohol.

APPENDIX 3

Procedure re: Disclosure of information pertinent to any substances referred to in this policy.

Mindful of the duty of care which applies to school personnel and that teachers act in loco parentis (in place of parents) the school will fully investigate any matter brought to the attention of school authorities in relation to Drugs, Solvents, Alcohol and Tobacco.

Subject to the outcome of the investigation, procedures as outlined in this policy will be followed.

Ratified by the Board of Management on: March 25th 2019

Date of Review: June 2021

Chairperson of Board of Management: Gary Carville



