

# **St. Mary's National School,**

## **Substance Use Policy**

### **Introduction**

St. Mary's aims to create an inclusive, respectful, safe, caring and happy environment in which all children will be enabled to reach their full potential. We recognise the uniqueness of each child and we aim to nurture and promote the value and dignity of each person in the school and in so doing, develop a respect for diversity and difference.

The aim of this Substance Use Policy of **Saint Mary's NS** is primarily prevention. We aim to protect our pupils from the harmful effects of substance misuse and try to prevent them from using tobacco, alcohol, solvents and illegal drugs. We aim to develop in our pupils' better self-esteem, through providing a positive school climate and atmosphere and giving our pupils age-appropriate information from education programmes.

### **Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to students, teachers, auxiliary staff members, users of the school premises, visitors, i.e. every person who enters the building. It is applicable during school-time – including breaks and to ALL school related activities. It applies to the school building and grounds and to any area where a school related activity takes place, e.g. School Tour.

### **Aims**

- To set out a framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use.
- To educate, inform and prepare children for the world in which we live, which presents them with many challenges that affect their health and well-being.
- To adhere to current strategies – National Drugs Strategy and National Advisory Committee on Drugs.
- To implement the aims of the SPHE programme.
- To educate the relevant members of the school community in regard to alcohol, tobacco and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.
- To educate the relevant members of the school community in regard to the use as well as misuse of drugs – e.g., medication stored in school for particular children.

### **Rationale**

Why is this policy necessary?

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges which 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 what are sometimes sensitive and emotive.

- The Education Act 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- The National Drugs Strategy ‘Building on Experience’ is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- 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 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average.
- According to the latest OECD figures, alcohol consumption in Ireland has decreased, however, misuse of alcohol in Ireland remains a problem with research showing that in 2013, 75% of alcohol was consumed as part of binge drinking session.

## **Definition**

The definition of “alcohol and/or drugs” is any substance, legal or otherwise, which alters how the mind and body works, or how the person behaves, thinks or feels.

When using the term “drug” in this policy, it is to include but not limited to:

- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Solvents
- Tobacco
- Misuse of prescribed medicines
- Legal but undesirable substances

## **Current Practice**

- Smoking – Smoking is prohibited on school premises in compliance with the National Directive.
- Alcohol Education – including during preparation for Confirmation.
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is included on the Curriculum. At each class level specific lessons have been selected from SPHE Programmes to target specific curriculum objectives.
- Visiting speakers have contributed to drug education.
- School environment supportive of a Substance Use Policy.

## **Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents**

Incidents relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use are addressed in the school's Code of Behaviour and pupils may be suspended or expelled if involved in any drug related incident.

The school's shared understanding of a 'drug related incident' is:

- Any unusual or unbecoming behaviour resulting from intake or use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs
- The possession or passing on of any illegal substance
- The possession of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs on school grounds or at school related activities
- Disposal of drugs or related items (e.g. syringes) found on school property

The reporting procedure for such incidents is:

**Step 1:** Witness to drug related incident informs teacher/staff member/Principal

**Step 2:** Principal informs parents/guardians

**Step 3:** Principal informs Chairperson of Board of Management

**Step 4:** Gardai informed depending on the principal's and/or Chairperson's assessment of the seriousness of incident

**Step 5:** Area Health Board informed for disposal of items if applicable

## **Management of Persons in the Workplace Under the Influence of Drugs and/or Alcohol**

The Board of Management shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that pupils and other persons in the workplace are not exposed to risks to their safety, health or welfare from persons under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The term "in the workplace", in the preceding sentence includes all school related activities taking place under the supervision of a teacher, with the Board's approval, and both within and away from the school premises.

Every school employee shall, while at work, ensure that he or she is not under the influence of an intoxicant as required by Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that a staff member is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace, in the interests of the safety, health and welfare of the employee and others.

In the case of employees who are at work under the influence of an intoxicant, disciplinary procedures may be implemented.

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that an employee of any contractor is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask the contractor to remove his/her employee from the workplace.

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe any person, other than a staff member or employee of a contractor, is unfit to be on the premises, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the staff member shall report his/her belief promptly to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal, who shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace.

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe that a parent or adult collecting a pupil from school or presenting themselves on the premises for another reason is unfit to be on the premises or to take care of the said pupil, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal will be informed. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the pupil and safeguard their best interests.

In the event that a staff member or any other person, referred to above, refuses a reasonable request to remove him/herself from the premises, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal may call the Gardaí to forcibly remove the person in question.

In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the teaching staff, the Board of Management may request such staff member to contact the Employee Assistance (telephone: 1800 411 057 or e-mail: [eas@vhics.ie](mailto:eas@vhics.ie)).

The Board of Management also acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of all other staff members. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the non-teaching staff, the Board of Management may request such staff member to seek counselling or other professional intervention.

All incidents, relating to the presence of persons at school, under the influence of an intoxicant, shall be recorded and reported as soon as possible to the Board of Management.

The Board of Management shall consider all such reports and decide on the appropriate action to be taken in the circumstances of each particular case.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- A copy of the Substance Use Policy will be issued to all staff members.
- The policy will be available to all members of the school community.
- The Substance Use Policy will be posted on the school website..
- The policy will be implemented by all members of staff, and any adult working within the school environ.
- The policy will be regularly evaluated and updated where necessary.

## **Education Concerning Substance Use:**

### **Social Personal and Health Education Curriculum (SPHE)**

#### *Self-awareness*

- Recognise and appreciate that each person is a unique individual and that this individuality is expressed in many different ways
- Accept his/her own body image and explore some of the factors that affect his/her self-image and beliefs about himself/herself

#### *Developing self-confidence*

- Develop further the ability to express personal opinions, thought and ideas and listen to, respect, think about and comment critically and constructively on the views of others

#### *Health and well-being*

- Recognise and examine behaviour that is conducive to health and that which is harmful to health
- Recognise causes of personal worry and identify appropriate coping strategies
- Distinguish between legal and illegal substances, identifying those that are most commonly used, and examine and understand the effects they can have
- Explore some of the reasons why people smoke, drink alcohol, misuse any kind of substances or take drugs that have no medical use
- Explore the role of personal choice, risk factors and the influence of others when choosing to use non-prescribed substances
- Explore and examine attitudes towards the misuse of substances and towards those who misuse substances of any kind
- Identify and discuss the roles of various people who are concerned with the health of others
- Realise that there is a personal and communal responsibility for the health and well-being of himself/herself and others

#### *Knowing about my body*

- Recognise the importance of treating his/her body and that of others with dignity and respect
- Identify and be aware of the different ways in which the body may be protected against disease and infection

#### *Feelings and emotions*

- Acquire the ability and confidence to identify, discuss and explore a range of feelings, especially those that are difficult to express
- Discuss and practise how to express and cope with various feelings in an appropriate manner
- Understand how feelings help in understanding himself/herself
- Identify and learn about healthy ways to help him/her feel positive about himself/herself

### *Personal Safety*

- Explore rules and regulations at home, in school and in society and the importance of adhering to them
- Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety
- Discuss a variety of risky situations and behaviour and assess and evaluate how these risks may be avoided or minimized and the implications of taking risks
- Realise that as independence increases, responsibility for personal safety increases and that a strategy for keeping safe has to be developed and adhered to by each individual

### *Safety Issues*

- Identify the substances in the home and school or on the farm that may be dangerous if not used properly and ensure that he/she has learned a safety strategy for dealing with unknown and dangerous substances
- Explore and examine the use of medicines

### *Making Decisions*

- Acquire a growing sense of the importance of making informed decisions at many levels and identify some of the decisions he/she has to make
- Explore and learn to examine critically the factors and levels of thought that influence decisions and choices
- Recognise that decisions have consequences and that not all people will make the same decisions all the time
- Recognise the important and legitimate role that adults have to play in making decisions and setting boundaries for young people
- Recognise that opportunities to exercise choice can increase as responsibilities are accepted and as the trust of other is earned
- Discuss and practise a simple decision-making strategy
- Distinguish between assumption, inference, fact, rumour and opinion in making a decision
- Identify sources of help in solving problems

### *Media Education*

- Explore and understand how information is conveyed and practise relaying messages using a variety of methods
- Become aware of the different forms of advertising, its purpose and the messages it promotes
- Become increasingly critical and discerning in his/her own attitude to advertising and the techniques used to promote products, life-styles and ideas

**Phone numbers:**

Drugs Advisory and Treatment Centre Trinity Court, 30/31, Pearse Street, Dublin 2	01 677 1122
National Helpline for alcohol or drug abuse (freephone)	1850 459459
HSE Information	1850 241850
Substance Misuse Prevention Programme	01 4528017
Aisling Centre	046 9074300

**Ratification of the Policy:**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

**Implementation and review:**

- This Substance Use Policy will be implemented from the date of its ratification (see above).
- A record will be kept in school of all substance use incidents.
- This policy will be reviewed in the 2019/20 school year or before should circumstances arise which necessitate an earlier review of this policy.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal