

Saint Louis Secondary School

Substance Use Policy

This policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, pupils, parents/guardians and all users of the school buildings/facilities.

In line with our Mission Statement and the ethos of a Saint Louis School, members of our school community co-operate in an educational experience that promotes the formation of young people in a value-based, Christian education in the Catholic tradition. This Substance Use Policy is part of our overall approach to pastoral care, which seeks to ensure a healthy, caring, and supportive environment where pupils can feel safe and valued and where learning is actively facilitated. Saint Louis Secondary School asserts its right to take whatever steps are necessary to protect and promote those values that are central to its mission by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices that are inimical to its ethos.

Rationale

- The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education
- The Board of Management recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and, in particular, alcohol misuse.
- The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001- 2008 and made mandatory for schools in circular 18/02
- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of pupils and provide health education for them.

School Policy

Saint Louis Secondary School does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances or Drugs Paraphernalia by any pupil in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school-related activity. A legitimate exception is the use of a prescribed drug in accordance with medical advice and prescription. There is a responsibility on parents/guardians to inform the school if/when a pupil is using prescribed medicines.

This policy aims to:

- Provide information and education (within available resources) to pupils, their parents/guardians and school staff/stakeholders about the effects of substance abuse and its prevention
- Enable pupils to make informed decisions by increasing knowledge
- Increase the self-confidence and well-being of pupils
- Help pupils to identify sources of support and intervention
- Help adult members of the school community to recognise the symptoms of substance misuse

- Develop a planned and considered response to incidents involving substance abuse with a view to the protection of the person involved and the maintenance of a safe environment for the wider school community.

These aims will be achieved by:

A co-ordinated approach to the issue of substance abuse through a taught curriculum within SPHE, CSPE, Transition Year Modules, R.E. and Science.

Within the limited resources of the school, providing training and information on substance abuse for all teaching staff.

The appropriate use of Psychological Support Services, An Garda Síochána and Social Services

The role of Parents/Guardians

- The school views parents/guardians as essential partners in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse
- Parents/Guardians are expected to acknowledge the potential importance of this issue in the lives of their children and the importance of the school's substance abuse policy in supporting their children.
- The school expects the active support of parents/guardians as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents of substance abuse that might arise

Procedures for dealing with Substance Abuse Incidents

In the event of an abuse incident or suspected abuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the pupil involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school. The school recognises the importance of limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating a substance abuse incident. However, the school can give no absolute guarantee of confidentiality for the following reasons:

- In discharging its duty of care, the school may need to make contact and/or disclosures to outside agencies such as An Garda Síochána, and the Health Board.
- The school may need to engage the expertise of an appropriate third party in properly investigating the 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
- The duty of teachers and other staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any pupils when they come in contact with an abuse incident or a suspected abuse incident
- At the earliest possible stage, the school will contact parents/guardians of the individuals involved. The school anticipates and expects the full co-operation and active assistance of parents/guardians in facilitating an investigation of an incident of substance abuse

Media Enquiries

The school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for dealing with incidents.

However, in the interests of the school's reputation the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been concluded.

In dealing with media enquiries, the Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Management will act as Spokesperson on behalf of the school.

A Substance Abuse Incident

- A Substance Abuse Incident is any incident involving alcohol, solvents, tobacco, or drug use. This might include:
- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco or solvents on the school premises (including grounds) or on a school-related outing or activity
- Intoxication arising from suspected substance use or behaviour that suggests the use/misuse of alcohol, drugs, solvents or tobacco.
- Findings these substances and/or associated paraphernalia.
- Possession/supply of such substances/paraphernalia on the school premises (including grounds) or on a school-related activity.
- Medical emergencies where substance abuse is suspected in school or on a school-related activity

Procedures for managing and investigating an abuse incident:

- Where it is apparent that there is an immediate danger to pupils or the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any pupil involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a full investigation of the incident
- An Abuse Report Incident Form (see Appendix 1) must be completed
- The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
- The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drugs paraphernalia associated with the incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
- The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
- The school, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- If the circumstance merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the pupils concerned and their parents/guardians in the following manner:
 - (a) Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the pupil concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a

pupil is facing will be made available to the pupil and her parents/guardians (at the discretion of the school) in time to permit the pupil reasonable opportunity to make her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that she would wish to make or have made on her behalf.

- (b) The school will allow the pupil concerned and her parents/guardians reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school 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.
 - (c) The school shall shortly thereafter inform the pupils and her parents of the school's findings and there reasons for these. If the school finds that the pupils have been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
- In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
 - The school can, at its own discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The school asserts the right to exercise clemency if it deems it appropriate.
 - The school will ensure that appropriate pastoral supports are offered to the pupils affected by the incident of substance abuse.

The Role of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation

1. The Principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising in the school.
2. All reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be made to the Principal
3. The Principal may nominate the Deputy Principal, or Year Head or other member of staff to act on his behalf in the investigation of a substance abuse incident
4. The Principal makes all decisions regarding the investigation of the incident; communication with the relevant parties and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.
5. The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with the incident
6. The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.
7. The Principal may seek the advice of the Deputy Principal, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor or any other relevant person in conducting the investigation.
8. Where substance abuse is suspected the Principal should immediately inform parents/guardians, particularly where there is a concern

regarding the health and welfare of a pupil and share any available information that may help parents/guardians in attending to their child's health and well-being. This action will be taken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any abuse incident.

Training and Development

The school is committed to raising awareness of the dangers of substance abuse among all stakeholders: pupils, parents, teachers and other staff and members of the Board of Management

In relation to staff, the school will:

- Deliver training in delivering education programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- Provide specific training on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of an abuse incident.

In relation to parents/guardians and members of the Board of Management the school will:

- Provide opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and the Policy
- Provide appropriate information, guidance, and support to the Board regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations

In relation to pupils the school will:

- Offer all pupils programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and
- Provide drug education within the context of the Junior Certificate, Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate Programmes.

Monitoring Reviewing and Evaluating

This policy will be subject to review. The interval between reviews will not be greater than five years. Ongoing monitoring of the policy will occur to ensure that its provisions are adequate to meet the challenges posed by substance abuse and to ensure congruence with other relevant school policies such as the school's *Code of Behaviour*.

Appendix 1

Report Form – Substance Abuse Incident

Date: _____

Time: _____

Person Reporting: _____

Persons involved: _____

Witnesses: _____

Description of incident:

Steps taken:

Items confiscated:

Further action advised:

Signed: _____

Date: _____