

St. Mary's College Dundalk



Substance Use Policy

Approved by BOM 24th October 2016

Mission Statement

St Mary's College is a Catholic secondary school under the patronage of the Marist Fathers. The primary aim of the College, through its spiritual and humanistic endeavours, is to promote and develop a sense of community where those entrusted to its care can be brought to the fullness of their human potential in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel.

The College, through its academic, pastoral and spiritual undertakings strives to provide for the holistic development and welfare of each of the students in its care.

The College policy on substance use applies to the entire College community including teachers, ancillary staff, students, Parents / Guardians and all other users of the College buildings and premises. This policy applies also to anyone involved in College activities both on and off campus.

The Substance Use Policy is part of the pastoral approach of the College which is designed to foster a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment where each student is encouraged and assisted to develop a sense of personal identity, self-esteem, and awareness of her / his own talents and limitations, combined with a respect for the rights of others.

In accordance with its Mission the College asserts its right to protect and promote its Catholic ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and by prohibiting certain practices.

The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol, and drug misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the College community as an important social partner in providing appropriate drug awareness and education on what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

The Board of Management of St Mary's College supports the underlying principles of natural justice, fairness and social responsibility. It recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and, in particular, alcohol misuse.

The College Policy on Substance Use 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 students and provide health education for them having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school (Section 9d).

In response to these concerns the College have adopted various policies all of which are available by contacting the College Principal.

College Policy

St. Mary's College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances and / or drug paraphernalia by any member of the College community, on College trips and outings, or during any College related activity.

However, the College makes an exception for proper use of properly prescribed drugs. The Parents / Guardians of students taking prescribed medication must inform the College of the fact immediately or as soon as possible, depending on the medication.

Programmes for Alcohol, Tobacco, Volatile Substances and Drug Education.

Educational Aims of St. Mary's College:

1. To equip the students with the knowledge and skills to make informed, healthy and responsible choices.
2. To provide students with honest, age appropriate and up to date information on drugs, etc.

Approaches: In St. Mary's College these aims will be met through the following actions:

(1) Cross-curricular Education i.e.

- Social, Personal and Health Education in Junior Cycle
- Civic, Social and Political Education in Junior Cycle
- Home Economics
- P.E. (All students)
- Religious Education (All students)

Specific modules are included in the 5th and 6th year Religious Education programmes. The 5th Year six week module is based on DAY (Drink Awareness for Youth) programme. In 6th Year there is a development of the issues raised in 5th Year, based on various programmes and courses including textbooks.

(2) Guest Speakers:

- When appropriate, visiting speakers will be used to reinforce, supplement and support the College's programme.

(3) Liaise With the Wider Community.

- St. Mary's College acknowledges that Substance use is a social issue. In order to provide an effective programme of Substance Use Education, the College aims to build a network of support through liaising with the HSE, Social Services, Gardaí, voluntary services and others with expertise in the field of Substance Use.

(4) Parental / Guardian Support.

- Since Parents / Guardian are the primary educators of their children, St. Mary's College acknowledge their crucial role in partnership with the College with regard to informing and educating their children about Substance Use
- We welcome consultation with and co-operation from Parents / Guardians in relation to Substance Use.

(5) Information for Parents / Guardians

To support Parents / Guardians in their partnership role we will;

- Inform Parents / Guardians of the College's policy on Substance Use.
- Keep Parents / Guardians informed about the Substance Use provision in the College.
- Inform Parents / Guardians about the procedures expected of students who are taking prescribed medication while in the College. They must notify the College in writing immediately, depending on the medication.
- Supply more information leaflets on Substance Use
- Organise talks for Parents / Guardians on relevant issues
- Provide a listening ear for Parental / Guardian concerns through the College Year Heads, **Form Teachers**, Student Support Services and College Chaplains.

PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, DRUG-RELATED OR SUBSTANCE USE INCIDENTS

In the event of an abuse incident, St. Mary's College will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the individual or individuals involved and the welfare of the College community as a whole and the reputation of the College.

Procedure to be followed in managing and investigating a substance use incident:

- Where it is obvious that there is immediate danger to members or the College community, the College reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the College any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
- A Substance Use Incident Report Form must be filled in (see attached example).
- The College will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident and will take whatever time deemed necessary to do this.
- St. Mary's College will take possession of any banned or prohibited substance and drug paraphernalia associated with an substance use 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, we will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
- A written record will be maintained of the investigation of the 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 College, when necessary liaise with any appropriate outside relevant agency and seek advice or assistance as we deem appropriate in relation to our investigation of an incident. Gardaí and other agencies may need to be involved.
- If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the College will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their Parents / Guardians in the following manner :
 - Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his / her Parents / Guardians at the discretion of the College – in time to permit the student to a reasonable opportunity to make his / her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he / she would wish to make or have made on his/her behalf.

- The College will allow the student concerned and his / her Parents / Guardians reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. We 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.
- We shall shortly thereafter inform the student and his / her Parents / Guardians of the College's findings and the reasons for these. If we find that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, we shall indicate the penalty or the sanctions that we intend 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 College can at our sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions in order to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that we consider should be taken into account. The College asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.
- We will also ensure that the Student Supports Services are offered to the student / students and Parents / Guardians affected by an incident of substance use. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and we will offer the services of a Counsellor or Chaplain in order to demonstrate our Christian commitment in a time of personal crisis.
- If a member of Staff, be it a teaching or ancillary staff member, should be involved in an incident of substance use, then procedures as have been agreed upon by union bodies and management should be carried out. Non-union workers are subject to the Principal.
- Visitors to the College are subject to this policy

The involvement and roles of various parties in an incident investigation:

The Principal or their delegate is the person responsible for all matters relating to this area.

He / She may nominate the Deputy Principal, or Year Head, or other nominated staff member to act on his / her behalf in the investigation of a substance use incident.

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (hereafter to be understood as meaning the Principal or his / her nominee) in this regard include the following:

- The Principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the College.

- All reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal.
- The Principal makes all the decisions regarding investigation of an incident; communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.
- The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments.
- The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storing of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.
- 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.
- The Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, Year Head, Chaplains, Guidance Counsellors in conducting an incident investigation.

In the case of a *suspected* use incident, the College will immediately inform Parents / Guardians – particularly where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of the child – and share any available information that may help Parents / Guardians in attending to their child’s health and wellbeing

These actions will be taken without prejudice to the College’s separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any ‘use incident’.

The College recognises the importance, as far as is practicable, of limiting the number of people involved in investigating and managing a ‘use incident’ and it is the aim of the College only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. Students and Parents / Guardians must accept that:

The duty of staff to the whole College community precludes them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with a substance use incident or suspected substance use incident.

The College may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such agencies as the Gardaí, HSE (Túsła), Probation Service, Voluntary Services or Officers of the Courts.

The College may need to engage the expert advice of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident. The College may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and / or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations, or Department of Education and Skills (DES) guidelines.

As regards to media inquiries into a suspected abuse incident, the College will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing an incident.

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

In the case where a staff member might have concerns about someone being involved in substance use they should inform the Principal of their concerns, outlining the specific grounds for their suspicions. The Principal will then decide what action to take.

Continuous Professional Development

In relation to staff, the College will offer continuous professional development (CPD) education programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drugs. We will provide information on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of a substance use incident.

In relation to Parents / Guardians and the Board of Management the College will provide opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to substance use. We will provide appropriate information, guidance, and support to the Board of Management regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

In relation to the students, the College will offer all student programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco, and will offer drug education within the context of the Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Senior Cycle programmes.

Review of the Policy

The policy will be reviewed as necessary or in the light of changing information.

Evaluation

Teachers, Parents / Guardians, Students and Board of Management and other relevant groups will be involved in the evaluation of this policy.

Three main areas of the policy we will evaluate are:

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents

- Parent / Guardian, Staff and Management information / Training and courses offered to the College Community.

Dissemination of Policy

Copies of the policy will be disseminated to all the College community. It will be freely available on the College Website and from the College's Office.

Young people will be made aware of the policy as part of their drugs education. Parents / Guardians and students aged over 18 years will be asked to sign a statement to the effect that they have read the policy and agree that they are bound by it.

Appendix – Definitions

The College

This refers to College buildings, grounds, play areas, public areas where students congregate coming to and going from the College, and any other specific area that may apply.

Banned / Prohibited substances

This refers to all substances banned by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol, and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land. The College reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the College qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

Drug Paraphernalia

This refers to any banned / prohibited substances as defined above, any items that were deemed to have been used in the taking of illicit substances, and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

An Abuse Incident

This refers to any incident relating to banned / prohibited substances that occurs in the College or during College functions or outings or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the student concerned, to other students, or to the policy or reputation of the College. The College reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the policy.

Parents / Guardians

This refers to natural parents, foster parents, step-parents, or guardian or the student concerned as applicable, or any person acting in *loco parentis*, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of an substance use incident.

Principal

This refers to the Principal for the time being as appointed by the College and defined in the Education Act (Welfare) 2000, or the Deputy Principal where the Principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy Principal.

Whole College Community

In dealing with the whole College community, members of staff are subject to procedures as have been agreed by union bodies and management. Non – union workers are subject to procedures agreed with the Principal.

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management, St. Mary's College

Dated: _____

SUBSTANCE USE INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name(s) of individual(s) involved: _____

Class: _____ Year Head: _____

Details of Incident:

Where it occurred: _____

When? _____

Who was involved? _____

What happened? _____

What action was taken? _____

What follow-up has been planned? _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Parents / Guardians Agreement



(Please detach and return to the College Principal)

We / I have read the College's Substance Use Policy and undertake to support it to the best of our / my ability.

Signed:

Parents / Guardians: _____

Parents / Guardians: _____

Student: _____

Date: _____