



**OUR
LADY'S
SCHOOL**
TERENURE



Substance Use Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Date: 27th September 2021

Signature: 

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Commenced: 2013
Date of last Review: 2021
Review due: 2023

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to students, staff, parents, users of the school building and visitors. It applies before, during and after school time, in the building and on the school grounds, on school trips, tours and at school activities.

Relationship to Our Mission Statement

The school realises that the exposure to tobacco, alcohol, illegal behaviour altering substances and drugs is a reality for many young people today. The school acknowledges that it can make a positive contribution to the prevention of substance misuse. The welfare and protection of our students is central to our Mission Statement:

Our Lady's School is a community that embraces Christian values. The education it provides is rooted in a deep sense of faith.

We aim to create a positive inclusive environment which enables everyone to reach their full potential. We promote mutual respect within the school community and strive to provide a happy and secure atmosphere which fosters a love of learning.

We encourage the development of the whole person, by fostering the personal, spiritual and moral development of every student. The realisation of individual talents and academic excellence is paramount.

We aim to create a friendly, healthy, safe and caring environment which affirms our pride in the school.

We promote the development of the necessary skills so that students may become responsible members of society. It is our wish to see every student leave Our Lady's School with moral integrity and a heightened sense of social conscience.

Objectives of this policy

In Our Lady's we endeavour to promote the social and personal development of our students and strive to provide a safe and healthy school environment. This includes education to enable pupils to make informed, healthy, responsible choices and to create awareness of the dangers of substance misuse among the school community.

This policy also outlines procedures that the school will follow in the event of substance use taking place in the school at any time or during school activities that are held inside or outside the school.

This policy has been formulated to protect all the pupils, staff, visitors and users of the school building.

Rationale

- The Education Act, 1998, provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide them with health education.
- The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008, 'Building on Experience', is Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place (the DES Circular 18/02).
- Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of life today. Schools need to provide their students with the knowledge, advice/attitude, skills necessary to make informed choices about substance use.

This policy sets out the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use.

Definition

The substance referred to in this policy denotes 'any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally.' These include

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Medicines
- Over the counter remedies e.g paracetamol, etc
- Illegal drugs
- Solvents e.g glue, Tippex etc
- Cleaning agents
- Gases
- Aerosols
- Laboratory Chemicals
- Performance enhancing substances

This list is not exhaustive.

School Substance Use Policy Statement

The school does not tolerate the use, possession or supply of prohibited drugs, drug paraphernalia, non-prescribed, behaviour altering, illegal substances or alcohol, by anyone in the school, on school trips or during any school related activities. This policy should also be adhered to while in school uniform, on the way to or from school.

Smoking on school grounds is forbidden by law. Students are expected not to smoke on their way to and from school and are prohibited from doing so on school trips or on any other school related activity.

Parents are required to inform the school in writing if students must take prescribed medication during school time.

No staff member will give a student any prescribed or “over the counter” medication except in exceptional circumstances and with the prior consent of the parent.

Students may not give another student any prescribed or “over the counter” medication.

Education concerning substance use

Students:

The educational aims of Our Lady’s School in relation to substance use are:

- To enable students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on substance use
- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of students
- To equip students with social and personal skills
- To minimise harm by offering supportive and appropriate interventions

In the Junior Cycle the issue of substance use is covered as part of the SPHE programme. The following topics are covered in the different years:

1st Year

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate the personal and social skills to address pressure to smoke, to drink alcohol and/or use other substances
- Reflect on the personal, social and legal consequences of their own or others’ drug use

- Critique information and supports available for young people in relation to substance use

Lessons:

- Explore the nature and use of drugs in modern life
- Understand the role and safe use of medicines and how to store and dispose of them
- Identify and explain the personal, social and legal consequences of smoking and misusing alcohol and solvents
- Become familiar with the role of help agencies that deal with substance abuse
- Understand what peer pressure is and the role it plays in young people smoking and drinking alcohol
- Practise strategies for dealing with peer pressure

2nd Year

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate the personal and social skills to address pressure to smoke, to drink alcohol and/or use other substances
- Reflect on the personal, social and legal consequences of their own or others' drug use
- Critique information and supports available for young people in relation to substance use

Lessons:

- Understand how the main categories of drugs work on the body and mind
- Learn about cannabis and its effects
- Become aware of the personal, social and legal consequences of your own and others' drug use, focusing on alcohol

3rd Year

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate the personal and social skills to address pressure to smoke, to drink alcohol and/or use other substances
- Reflect on the personal, social and legal consequences of their own or others' drug use

- Critique information and supports available for young people in relation to substance use

Lessons:

- Understand how the main categories of drugs work on the body and mind
- Become aware of the link between substance use and mental health
- Explore the personal and social resources needed to avoid substance use problems
- Investigate what information and supports are available for young people in relation to substance use in their area

Pastoral care, Religion and CSPE classes may also be used to support and reinforce the work done in SPHE class.

At Senior Cycle the issue of substance use is dealt with in Religious Education classes and at Pastoral Care class by form teachers and visiting speakers.

Pastoral and Support Services:

- Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads and Care Team
- Wellbeing Coordinator responsible for planning awareness initiatives
- Referrals to outside agencies
- Training programmes for students (such as Peer Youth Educators) as they become available and are considered appropriate
- Guest Speakers from outside agencies

Parents:

The school requests parents to assist and co-operate fully with the school in dealing with any incident relating to substance use/misuse.

The school will support parents by ensuring that students have access to information on substance use/misuse and that parents are provided with details on current educational and information programmes offered.

The Parents Council may organise substance education meetings as deemed appropriate.

Parents/guardians concerned about substance use are invited to contact the school and will be referred to outside agencies as appropriate

Staff:

Teachers involved in SPHE are given the opportunity to avail of in-service training where available. School management will respond positively where requests are made by teachers for training in this area.

Internal CPD is also provided in the area of SPHE. The school will endeavour to engage with any substance abuse prevention programmes offered by the HSE or other national agencies

Management of Substance Use incidents

We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community, the reputation of the school and legal considerations.

a) Definition of substance use incidents:

- Emergencies where the person may be unconscious
- Intoxication/Unusual Behaviour.
- Suspicion/rumour of substance use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure of a person involved in substance by a third party.
- Possession of substances on the school premises or on a school related activity.
- Selling/supplying legal or illegal substances.
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property.

b) Exceptions are:

- The correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum related materials or ingredients as specified by the staff member involved
- Alcohol may be provided for adult use at special school events or occasions with the prior consent of school management.

c) Protocols:

1. A student considered to be involved in a substance use incident, will be immediately put into the care of the principal, deputy principal or their nominee. The student's parents/guardians will be contacted and as a matter of urgency will be required to

collect the student from school. If necessary, medical attention will be sought for the student. An Incident Report Form will be completed.

2. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to any member of the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
3. The school will take all steps necessary to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident. 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 liaise with parents. The Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head will retain written documentation recording all stages of the investigation confidentially.
4. The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments.
5. The school will inform, liaise and consult with the Gardai regarding all school incidents involving illegal substances.
6. The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with a drug incident, recording such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by the appropriate authorities.
7. The school, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority such as the HSE or other professional agencies.
8. In all identified cases every effort will be made by the school to help the affected student and to seek pastoral and counselling support.
9. Students who are involved in alcohol or drug related and smoking incidents are subject to the school's Code of Positive Behaviour policy. Disciplinary measures may involve suspension and reference to the Board of Management for expulsion.
10. Any student using, supplying or possessing illegal substances during the school day or on school trips will be suspended immediately and may possibly be permanently excluded.
11. In the case of a student attending the school following a drug or alcohol related incident, the school reserves the right to stipulate conditions and interventions which it deems necessary to assist the student. These conditions may include external counselling, ongoing testing for drug abuse and ongoing consultations with external agencies, such as Juvenile Liaison Officer, social worker etc.

12. The voluntary disclosure by a school member about his or her own problematic substance use will be treated as an approach for help and will not necessarily be subject to disciplinary procedures.
13. For the health and safety of all students in the school, a student may be asked to empty her pockets or the contents of her bag where there is a reasonable belief that the student is in possession of illegal/prohibited substances. Reasonable belief might be established through an informant or by observation of an event or because someone is acting suspiciously. Given the above where there is a need to search a student's property the student will be invited to have present her parent or a teacher of her choice or a student of her choice. The search will be carried out in the presence of the Principal or Deputy Principal. In the absence of the Principal or Deputy Principal it will be carried out in the presence of a Year Head. If a student refuses to turn out her pockets etc she may be prompted to do so by her parents, but in circumstances where there is suspicion of a crime, the assistance of the Gardaí will be sought.

Lockers:

Lockers are school property and management reserves the right to search lockers in circumstances such as when there is reasonable belief that the student is in possession of illegal/prohibited substances. When a locker is being searched it should take place in the presence of the Principal or Deputy Principal as above and where possible, in the presence of the student to whom the locker has been assigned.

Disciplinary Procedures

Substance use incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding drugs are broken, sanctions and punishments will be implemented, up to and including suspension/expulsion, depending on the nature of the offence. These will be consistent with school rules (see the Code of Positive Behaviour).

Review of Policy

This policy will be available on the school website and also in hard copy at Reception, upon request. Students will be made aware of the policy within the context of the SPHE programme. The school will monitor, review and evaluate this policy on an ongoing basis. Teachers, parents/guardians, students and the Board of Management will be involved in the review of this policy.