

St Mary's Substance Abuse Policy.

Mission Statement.

St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport operates as a Catholic co-educational Secondary School, to provide teaching and learning of the highest quality for the benefit of the community which it serves.

In pursuing this mission we aim,

- **To provide a quality educational experience that caters for the full range of academic aptitude and abilities.**
- **To foster the intellectual, physical, social, cultural, moral and religious development of our students.**
- **To enable pupils to achieve their full potential academically.**
- **To promote the Catholic ethos and faith.**
- **To cater for the needs of the local community in so far as ethos, resources and facilities permit.**

1. Introduction

a) For the purpose of this policy the term SUBSTANCE is defined as “any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally”. This definition includes not only the whole range of illegal substances available in modern society, but also legally available products such as over-the-counter and prescription medicines, tobacco products, e-cigarettes and related products, alcohol and solvents. The list is not exhaustive.

b) This policy reflects the values of the school's Mission Statement. In particular, the school strives to provide a safe, caring, learning environment for its students.

c) St Mary's Newport is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school community in relation to substance abuse education. The school community, Board of Management, staff, parents and students share responsibility to ensure the acceptance and implementation of this Substance Abuse Policy.

d) School Management asserts its right to protect and promote its ethos by promoting high standards of behaviour and by strongly prohibiting the possession, use or sale of the aforementioned substances.

e) School Management recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with substance abuse.

f) Applying sanctions in response to behaviour that takes place outside school, as outlined in our code of behaviour.

The standards and rules contained in the Code of Behaviour apply in any situation where the student although outside the school, is still the responsibility of the school. Examples include school tours,

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games and extra-curricular activities and attendance at events organised by the school. Should a student engage in serious misbehaviour outside school designated activity/timetable, the code of behaviour applies if a clear connection or link can be made with the school and/or if the incident has a demonstrable impact upon the school and its reputation. School management reserves the right to investigate and impose appropriate sanctions where there is significant evidence of student misbehaviour outside of school.

2. School Position on Substance Abuse

a) St Mary's Newport prohibits the possession, use or supply of the aforementioned substances (or equivalent) by any student in the school, on school trips or during any school-related activity.

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- b) Rule 2.4 General of the school's Code of Behaviour reads as follows:

The possession/consumption of illegal substances in school is forbidden by law,² and is considered a serious breach of this Code of Behaviour.

- Smoking in school buildings and grounds is prohibited by law and is considered a serious breach of this Code of Behaviour.

- The possession, consumption or distribution of alcohol and/or other illegal substances in school buildings is prohibited by this Code of Behaviour.

Breaches of these rules on banned substances are dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct.

c) In the case of drugs for legitimate medical use, the parents of students taking prescribed medication are required to inform the school accordingly.

3. Programmes for Education on Substance Abuse

a) St Mary's Newport is very committed to educating young people about the effects of substance abuse, and will provide -within the limited resources available to it- appropriate education programmes for all its students. These programmes will be age-appropriate and will be incorporated into existing programmes already being taught in the school. These programmes are Social, Personal & Health Education, Religious Education, Physical Education and Civic, Social & Political Education.

b) The school, in conjunction with the Department of Education & Skills will facilitate appropriate training for staff relating to banned substances.

c) Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to avail of appropriate in-service training.

d) Where appropriate, the Parents Council/ Guidance/SPHE department provides opportunities for parents to attend information sessions in relation to substance abuse.

² Appendix 2 Document Pastoral Care

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e) Parents will be expected to support the school in its mission regarding substance abuse by: (a) informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse and (b) assisting and co-operating fully with school staff and management should an incident of abuse arise.

f) The School Counselling Service is available to all students on the basis of the school's referral system.

4. Management of Incidents of Substance Abuse

a) In the event of an incident of substance abuse, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student(s) involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school. The School will take all appropriate and necessary steps fully to investigate and assess any Abuse Incident including the various steps set out in this section, and will take as much time as may be deemed necessary and appropriate to the completion of any such investigation; the school is cognisant of the Misuse of Drugs Acts, 1977, 1984.

b) In situations where it is apparent that a student is under the influence of a substance covered by this policy, the student will be removed from class and will meet with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor or Year Head or relevant teacher. Parents will be contacted as a matter of urgency and may be required to come to the school and take their son home. Where deemed necessary, the school will seek medical attention for the student.

c) 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.

d) All incidents and investigations of incidents of substance abuse will be properly recorded.

e) The school will take all steps required to fully investigate and assess any incident of substance abuse. Parents will be informed of such investigations and will be invited to come to the school.

f) Where appropriate, the Garda Síochána will be informed.

g) Unless otherwise instructed by the Garda Síochána, the school will take possession of any prohibited substances and paraphernalia and will record and retain all such items, pending completion of the investigation,

h) 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.

i) In all cases, pastoral and/or school counselling support will be offered to students involved if deemed appropriate.

j) Teachers and other staff cannot offer total confidentiality to a young person who discloses knowledge of substance abuse by himself or other students in the school. Information received will be disclosed only on a "need to know" basis. The School, the Principal, and all persons concerned with the incident shall respect the principle of confidentiality and shall in as far as possible, jointly and individually endeavour to uphold that confidentiality.

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k) The Principal will handle any media queries.

l) Students who are involved in substance abuse incidents will be subject to the school's Code of Conduct. Disciplinary measures involving suspension and expulsions will be taken in accordance with the school's policy on Suspensions & Expulsions.

m) Where expulsion arises, the Board of Management will notify the Education Welfare Officer and will otherwise comply with the provisions of the Education Welfare Act, 2000 (Act No. 22) subject to "and without prejudice to the right of a Board of Management to take such other reasonable measures as it considers appropriate to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the School and the safety of students is secured" in accordance with the law and the provisions of Section 24(5) of the said Act. Such an expulsion is subject to appeal under the provisions of Sections 28 & 29, of the Education Act 1998.

n) In the case of a student being allowed to return to school following a substance abuse incident, the school reserves its right to impose conditions as deemed appropriate and necessary. These conditions may include external counselling, ongoing testing for substance abuse and ongoing consultations with external agencies such as Juvenile Liaison Officer, Garda Síochána, HSE etc.

5. Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating

Senior School Management will ensure that this policy is under regular review and evaluation.

6. Review of Policy

The school authorities will review this policy on a regular basis in order to stay up to date with current best practice and with relevant legislation in this area.

Approval

This policy has been approved by St Mary's Newport Board of Management.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management