

Mercy Secondary School **Substance Abuse Policy**

Introduction

At Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, the Management and School Staff are dedicated to the care of the whole school community. We strive to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

Goals/Rationale

This Policy applies to the entire school community, including Teachers, Students, Parents/Guardians and users of the school buildings.

It is important to stress that while not all young people are using substances, all young people are living in a substance-using society. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of our students, we must prepare and implement a Substance Abuse Policy. Furthermore, we need to provide consistency in responding to incidents, if they arise and, most importantly, we need to promote a Substance-Abuse-Free School.

Policy Content

(a) Education for all School Members

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs will be introduced under the broader context of the S.P.H.E. Programme, which in turn is developed and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment. We need to be clear about what a drug is. A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels. Education will take place through specific modules and programmes in S.P.H.E., as in existing subjects, e.g. science, religion and through special projects (e.g. T.Y.). The use of outside visitors/speakers will be incorporated to enhance the work done in class. This will take place on separate occasions, first with parents/guardians in the form of an information night and then the students as part of the school day. This integrated community-based approach is required if the Policy is to be effective.

Education on healthy lifestyles is also incorporated and the students are encouraged to participate and get involved in sporting and other extra-curricular activities during their time in the school.

Training of staff would be seen as essential in identifying potential problems and would be introduced again in the form of an Information Day run by outside experts. This training would be complimented and supported by School Management and the S.P.H.E. Team.

(b) Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents

This school does not condone the misuse of **legal or illegal** substances on school premises or school activities but our policy is to put the young person's welfare first. Under the Tobacco Control Act 2003, smoking is now illegal in any public place. Students found **smoking** in school will meet with their Principal or Deputy Principal. The students will then be subject to disciplinary sanctions as set out in the school's Code of Behaviour.

Alcohol may not be brought into the school or used while involved in school activities, except with the permission of the Principal. In the event of a student misusing alcohol the parents/guardians will be informed and appropriate action taken to promote the young person's welfare. Misuse of alcohol by any member of the school community in/on school grounds is prohibited.

Signs of misuse of other substances are easily confused with other problems; particularly those associated with adolescence. It is important not to jump to conclusions. Our Policy is to discuss students' problems sympathetically to find out the extent of the problem, explain the limits of confidentiality and establish what help the student needs. A teacher suspecting substance misuse should discuss this with the Principal. If there is evidence that a student is misusing substances the teacher must inform the Principal, who will contact the parents. If it seems that **illegal substances** are being brought into school, the school can discuss this with the Juvenile Liaison Officer, An Garda Síochána or the Health Board. If illegal substances are found, the Principal will pass them on the Gardaí to prevent an offence being committed. The Gardaí will be informed if illegal drugs are used or sold in school.

Any student attending school with any form of medication must inform the Principal of this in writing

(c) Evaluation

Evaluation of school policy is essential if it is to continue to meet the needs of future students. It can act as an awareness raising exercise in the school and enables some measurement of the change resulting from implementing a new or revised drug policy in the school.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

Signed _____ Chairperson

Next review date : _____