



Patrician High School

The very spring and root of honesty
and virtue live in good education

Substance Misuse Policy

Rationale

" This school (See Appendix 3) does not accept the possession, use of or supply of Banned or Prohibited Substance(s) or Drugs Paraphernalia (See Appendix 3) either in the School, on School trips or during any School related activity by any student(s) of the school. A legitimate exception is the use of a prescribed drug in accordance with medical advice and prescription. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) hereby agree to inform the school in writing when their son is on prescribed medicines. This policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, parents/guardians and users of the school building

- The school recognises the possibility of the threat posed to the healthy social and intellectual development of young people by misuse of legal and illegal drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.
- The school recognises the possibility that students may have access to or be offered prohibited substances during their time in the school. This policy aims to provide information and education to young people, their parents/guardians and school staff about the effects of substance abuse.
- The Education Act 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- The High School, as a Voluntary Catholic School, is a place where students feel safe and cared for, where the individual is respected both as a person in his own right but also as part of a larger learning community. This holistic approach to education and the community context in which it takes place, underpins this policy on Substance Use.

This policy aims to:

- provide information and education to students, their parents/guardians and school staff/stakeholders about the effect of substance abuse and its prevention;
- enable students to make wise, healthy and informed choices by increasing knowledge and challenging attitudes;
- increase the self-confidence and well-being of students;
- enable students 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. Due care will be taken in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response.

These aims will be achieved by:

- A co-ordinated approach to the issue of substance abuse through a taught curriculum within SPHE, CSPE (and programmes within Transition Year, Religion and Science);
- Offering training/information on substance abuse for all teachers (within the limited resources available to the school);
- The appropriate use of Psychological Support Services (See Appendix 2), Gardaí, and Social Services to reinforce class work;
- Conducting a student survey on substance use within the school community;
- Providing a healthy living information week on substance misuse and its psychological, social and physical effects.

The Role of Parents/Guardians

- The school sees parents/guardians as essential partners in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse.
- The school expects parents/guardians to be fully supportive of the school policy and approach in relation to substance abuse.
- Parents/guardians are expected to acknowledge the importance of this issue in the lives of their children and the importance of the school's programme in supporting their children.
- The school expects parents/guardians to assist and co-operate fully as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise and in the provision of educational programmes aimed at informing students of the dangers of substance abuse.

To assist parents/guardians in their role the school will:

- Keep them informed of initiatives and programmes in the school which relate to the area of substance abuse.
- Welcome consultation with parents/guardians on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.
- Provide parents/guardians with up-to-date information regarding the school policy in this area.

Confidentiality

The school recognises the importance of limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating a substance use related incident. However, the school can give no guarantee of confidentiality for the following reasons:

- In its duty of care to the whole school community, the school may be obliged to make contact, or to make certain disclosures, as appropriate, to outside authorities, such as the Gardaí, Health Board, Probation Service or Officers of the Courts.
- The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
- The school 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 Science guidelines.
- School staff should be informed about issues relating to confidentiality and may need to be informed of incidents of substance misuse, especially in circumstances where a student (be they a student of the school or otherwise) may be considered to be in danger of harming himself or others.

Substance Misuse Incident

A -substance misuse incident- is any incident involving alcohol, solvents, tobacco and/or drug use. The following are some possible examples of a misuse incident. (See also Appendix 3)

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco on the school premises or during a school-related activity;
- Intoxication/suspected substance use;
- Unusual behaviour where the use of alcohol, tobacco or any Banned or Prohibited Substance(s) is suspected;
- Disclosure about use by a third party;
- School grounds being used for a drugs-related activity;
- Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia;
- Possession and/or supply of such substances on the school premises or during a school-related activity;
- Emergencies when the person may require medical assistance.

The Roles of the Various Parties in a Substance Misuse Incident Investigation

- Any drug-related incident (witnessed by school staff - i.e. teacher and other school staff) will be reported immediately to the Principal, Year Head and/or to the Deputy Principal. Such reporting

should endeavour to guarantee the safety of any individual(s) involved by maintaining surveillance of the situation at all times.

1 As soon as possible, the staff involved will complete the Report Form (See Appendix 1) for recording substance use incidents.

2 The Principal or the Deputy Principal or any person designated on the Principal's behalf is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school.

3 All abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal.

4 The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments.

5 The Principal, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor and person(s) directly involved in the case will be informed.

6 The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an abuse incident.

7 The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug related paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon receiving advice from the appropriate authorities.

8 The Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, Year Head and/or School Guidance Counsellor in conducting an incident investigation.

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 managing incidents.

- In regard to the above, the principal or the Chairman of the Board will act as the designated respondent.

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

Information and Support Provided or Facilitated by School

The school recognises that an effective substance use policy needs to be supported by an ongoing commitment, from the Board of Management and School Trustees, to training and staff development. In relation to staff, the school

- Recognises that the HSE provides a wide range of supports for schools including Health Education and Health Promotion, Smoking Cessation Support and Adolescence Counselling Services.

- Will provide/facilitate professional development relating to substance use so that staff members are aware of the contribution they can make to the prevention of substance misuse.

- Will provide support and development on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of a misuse incident
- Will ensure that all staff and in particular new staff are fully aware of the laws and school policy relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use and how the laws relate to the school, students and the whole school community.

In relation to parents and the Board of Management the school

- In conjunction with the Parents Council will provide opportunities for all parents to attend information sessions in relation to drugs and this Policy.
- The parents of all incoming students will be made aware of the school's policy on substance use.
- The Board will be provided with appropriate information, guidance and support regarding issues relating to the investigation of, and adjudication on, incident investigations.

In relation to students

- It is the school's policy in this area that all students will be offered programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug education.

Dealing with Parents/Guardians

The school recognises that the issue of contacting parents/guardians is likely to emerge as an early consideration. The school will support and encourage a student in any decision to inform his parents/guardians of the problems he is experiencing. The school would hope that this may be done with the student's co-operation. When meeting with parents/guardians the school will be aware of the concerns and fear and in some cases anger that a parent/guardian may experience when such a meeting is called. The school will make them aware of its support in providing assistance to them, where possible, including follow-up meetings and also of the external support services that are available to them should they be required.

Procedures for Managing Alcohol, Drug Related or Substance Misuse Incidents (including Tobacco)

In any abuse incident, the school will endeavour to strike a balance between the welfare of the student(s) involved and the welfare of the school community and the reputation of the school.

To assure the safety of all concerned and to facilitate dealing effectively with the situation, any, or all, of the following steps may be taken:

1 Removal of the individual(s) to a supervised and secure area together with his schoolbag and other belongings and provision of an advocate. (-secure area- to mean an office or other place away from the general student body)

2 Search of any area where it has reason to suspect that harmful substances may have been secreted - including the locker of the individual concerned. (Lockers, although rented out, are on

school premises and are deemed to be essentially school property). The school reserves the right to hold bags and other property until such time as the necessary authorisation e.g. parents/guardians or Gardaí, has been received to search them - if this is deemed necessary.

3 In any case where it is apparent that there is an immediate danger to students or the school community, the School reserves the right, (acting through the Principal) to temporarily suspend or remove any student(s) from the school premises and/or from any specific school activities or to take whatever other action is deemed appropriate and necessary to remove the person into the safety of the relevant authority, pending a further and complete investigation.

4 Having established the correct orderly environment, if such action is necessary, the school will take possession of any drugs or drug related paraphernalia uncovered in the initial phase.

5 A full record of any confiscated items will be kept and they will be retained in a secure place pending the completion of any investigation. The school will notify Gardaí if any illegal substances are found and ask that they be removed for safekeeping. Any such contact with Gardaí will also be recorded.

6 If necessary, the school reserves the right to call immediately on the appropriate outside agency e.g. Gardaí or ambulance services for immediate assistance. Examples of situations when this approach might be taken are:

- Concern for the welfare of the individual(s) involved.
- Extreme resistance/reaction by the individual(s) concerned.
- Immediate danger/health hazard to/from the individual(s) concerned.
- Lack of expertise to deal with the problems presented.

7 A Report Form will be completed as soon as possible.

At the earliest possible stage the school will contact the parents/guardians of the individual(s) concerned. The school anticipates and expects the full co-operation and active assistance of parents/guardians in facilitating a thorough investigation of any such incidents involving their sons and in any subsequent therapeutic intervention required for their successful re-integration into the school community.

If necessary, for any or all of the reasons outlined above, the school will insist on the removal of the student from the premises until such time as a thorough investigation can be carried out. Such a requirement may involve the suspension of the student for a period of time. The school will endeavour to expedite any investigation in order to minimise any such suspensions not imposed for disciplinary reasons.

The school recognises that the ultimate aim of any procedures undertaken is the successful re-integration of the individual into the school community. Nevertheless the ability of the school to continue to serve the greater good of the whole community will be taken into consideration in determining the best course of action for all concerned.

Sanctions

The Board of Management, as the circumstances merit, may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- An oral warning
- A written warning
- A - 3 day Suspension-
- A Suspension of more than 3 days
- Other disciplinary actions short of Expulsion
- Expulsion

Sanctions up to and including expulsion may be invoked in an appropriate case. When 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 of 2000); and will, 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 school and the safety of students is secured-, act in accordance with the laws and provisions of Section 24 (5) of the said Act.

* Example of compliance with the Education Welfare Act

Section 24 (4) A student shall not be expelled from a school before the passing of 20 school days following the receipt of a notification under this section by an Educational Welfare Officer.

This does not mean that the school is prohibited from taking any sensible or reasonable precaution in accordance with and -for the safety of student- etc. as Section 24 (5) mentions. Parents/guardians and the School hereby acknowledge and agree that when such circumstances may be deemed by the school to arise, then independently of any sanction of expulsion or extended expulsion, the School and its Principal may be obliged and compelled to take or continue measures as at Procedures Point 3 above, in the interests of good order and discipline in the School and the safety of students - pending completion of any engagement process with the Education Welfare Act or other parties under the Education Welfare Act 2000, concerning an imminent expulsion.

Likewise, in an appropriate manner, if the School considers the abuse incident(s) to be of sufficient gravity, then it may, again at its sole discretion, postpone the question of penalties or sanctions if it considers it appropriate to do so - in order to take account of any mitigating circumstances or representations that it may deem appropriate to receive and take account of prior to imposing penalties or sanctions in the specific case.

Review

This policy will be subject to review every five years from the date of endorsement by the Board of Management or more frequently if circumstances so determine. Ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy will also be necessary.