



# MOUNT MERCY COLLEGE

## SUBSTANCE USE / ABUSE POLICY

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### INTRODUCTION:

In line with the spirit of both the Mercy philosophy of education, our own mission statement and the Education Act., we set out to ensure that all the partners would be represented in the development of the policy. Staff, parents, prefects and Board of Management were consulted.

### The concerns which informed our work were:

- to promote the health and welfare of the whole school community
- to provide the protection necessary to all members of the school community
- to outline procedures to be followed in the event of a drug related incident

The Policy is part of a general pastoral approach adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment. The school asserts its right to protect and promote its ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

The Board of Management recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and in particular alcohol misuse.

The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse pose challenges and the school community is an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.

Our policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the Government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008.

In line with the Education Act 1998, we aim to promote the social and personal education of our students and to provide health education for them.

**Our educational aims in relation to Drug Education are:**

1. To provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs, tobacco and alcohol
2. To enable the students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices
3. To equip the students with personal and social skills necessary to cope with substance abuse
4. To minimise the harm caused by substance abuse by offering supportive interventions

**SCHOOL POLICY**

Mount Mercy College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances and/or drug paraphernalia, by any individuals, (students, teachers, parents, workers, visitors), in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school related activity. The only exception to this is the use of properly prescribed drugs. We insist that parents of students taking prescribed medication must inform the school immediately, in writing, of the fact.

Our policy consists of a definition of what constitutes a drug related incident together with an outline of the management and organisation of any such incident.

**DRUG RELATED INCIDENT:**

- Use, or suspected use, of alcohol, tobacco or drugs by individuals (young people, teachers, parents and any worker or visitor in the school or attached to school related excursions) on the school premises.
- Bringing, sharing or selling alcohol, tobacco or drugs on the school premises/on educational school trips.
- Disclosures about alcohol, tobacco or drug use to teachers.
- Individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including emergency situations where the individual is unconscious or seriously ill.
- Finding alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia on the school premises.

PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, DRUG RELATED OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE INCIDENTS:

In the event of any suspected abuse incident, the school will endeavour to strike a balance between the welfare of the student/students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole.

PROCEDURE:

1. Incident reported to Principal / Deputy Principal
2. Principal / Deputy Principal assess the situation. The response to assessment should be based on:
  - A) *non responsive state or displaying erratic/unusual behaviour*
  - B) *drug related paraphernalia or possession of illegal substances on school premises*
  - C) *appropriate steps will be taken by Principal / Deputy Principal which may, if necessary, include the following:*

3. In the event of (A) above:
  - (i) Medical assistance will be sought.
  - (ii) Incident Report Form completed.
  - (iii) Statements sought from those involved.
  - (iv) Parents will be informed.

In the event of (B) above, the following steps will be taken:

- (i) School takes possession of suspicious material.
- (ii) An incident report form will be completed.
- (iii) Statements will be sought from those involved.
- (iv) Parents and Gardaí informed.
- (v) Gardaí will contact Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the case of a confirmed drug incident and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.

4. COUNSELLING & PASTORAL CARE:

- ◆ In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered to Parents and Staff involved in the incident.
- ◆ If the person has a serious drug problem, then referral to a drug treatment centre will be recommended.

### DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES:

Where school rules regarding drugs are broken, sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature and severity of the offence. These will be consistent with school rules regarding other breaches of conduct as laid down in agreement with the Board of Management.

### CONFIDENTIALITY:

Teachers cannot offer total confidentiality to a young person who discloses drug involvement.

The well being and welfare of the young person and the teacher must be the prime focus.

### MEDIA:

The Principal or nominated spokesperson will handle all media queries. The school will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and the procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.



## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The school will provide information for Staff, Board of Management, Parents and Students.

### Staff:

- ❖ the school will facilitate education programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- ❖ specific training on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of an abuse incident

### Parents & Board of Management:

- Opportunities will be provided to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and the Policy.
- Appropriate information, guidance and support will be provided to the Board regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication of incident investigations.

### Students:

- Programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and Drug Education will be offered to students within the context of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes.

## MONITORING, REVIEWING & EVALUATING OF THE POLICY

The school will monitor, review and evaluate the Policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

## APPENDIX - DEFINITIONS

THE SCHOOL:

For the purposes of this policy "School" shall include school buildings, grounds, play areas and any other areas of school based activities.

BANNED OR PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES:

Includes all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land.

*The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.*

AN ABUSE INCIDENT:

Is defined as any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occurs in the School or during school 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 School.

PARENTS:

Parents include natural parents, foster parents, step parents or guardian of the student concerned as applicable, or any in loco parentis, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of an abuse incident.

PRINCIPAL:

Reference to the Principal means the Principal for the time being as appointed by the school and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the Deputy Principal where the principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy Principal.

# ALCOHOL /SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROCEDURE

INCIDENT REPORT



PRINCIPAL / DEPUTY PRINCIPAL



**A**

## PERSON

Those involved, including parents,  
will be given opportunity to make  
representations on the incident.  
Medical assistance sought.  
Incident report form completed  
Statements  
Parents informed



**B**

## PARAPHERNALIA

Confiscation  
Incident Report form  
Completed  
Statements  
Parents & Gardaí  
informed

# WORK PLACE SMOKE FREE POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

Second hand smoke, also known as Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) or passive smoke is a cause of disease including lung cancer and heart disease, in third parties. Neither the simple separation of smokers and non-smokers with the same air space, nor the provision or ventilation, can eliminate exposure to second-hand smoke and the consequent health effects of such exposure. This policy has been developed to protect all employees, service users and visitors from exposure to second-hand smoke, to ensure compliance with legal obligations and to ensure a safe working environment.

## POLICY

It is policy of Mount Mercy college that all of its workplaces are smoke-free and that all employees have a right to work in a smoke-free environment. Smoking is prohibited throughout the workplace with no exceptions. This policy applies to all employees, consultants, contractor and visitors.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Overall responsibility for policy implementation rests with the Principal and Board of Management. All staff have an obligation to adhere to, and facilitate the implementation of this policy.

The Principal shall inform all existing employees and others of the policy and their role in the implementation and monitoring of the policy. All new and prospective employees shall be given a copy of the policy on recruitment/induction by the Principal.

## POLICY REGARDING INFRINGEMENTS

Infringements by staff will be dealt with, in the first instance, under employee disciplinary procedures. Employees and others, including students, who contravene the law prohibiting smoking in the workplace are also liable to prosecution.