

## **Section A**

### **1. Introduction**

St. Mary's Secondary School is an all girl's voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Le Chéile. Within the context and parameters of the Department of Education and Science regulations and resources, as well as the ethos of Margaret Aylward, St. Mary's supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and participation and a respect for diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life. Our school is committed to the holistic development of each student.

#### **1.2 Why a Policy on Substance Use?**

- We recognise that drugs - both legal and illegal - are available in the local community and that the school, being part of this community, may have drug incidents which would need to be handled in a consistent and sensitive manner. St. Mary's is committed to addressing how it provides for the needs of the whole school in relation to drugs. It is paramount that all stakeholders – the Board of Management, staff, students and parents/guardians - work together in the development and implementation of the Substance Use policy.
- We acknowledge that St. Mary's has an important role to play in both educating students in the area of substance use and creating awareness around the supports available to students should they require them.
- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- The school Substance Use policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy (2017).
- The National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol Report on drugs entitled 'Drug Use Prevention' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.

#### **1.3 A Drug Definition**

A drug can be defined as a chemical that causes changes in the way the human body functions, whether mentally, physically or emotionally. For the purpose of this policy, we are concerned with drugs which have the power to change a previous mood and the way a person thinks. We are also concerned with drugs upon which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent. These include alcohol and tobacco, as well as all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (2016) and all non-validated prescription medication. The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

St. Mary's accepts the medicinal use of properly prescribed drugs. Parents are asked to inform the school, in writing, if their daughter is prescribed any such medication.

## **Smoking**

The school is a smoke-free area. It is against the law for students to smoke or possess cigarettes or tobacco on the school premises or while engaging in any school-related activity away from the school premises. Students found smoking on school premises will incur an appropriate sanction.

## **Alcohol**

The school is an alcohol-free area, except for designated adult functions, where prior notice is given to the Principal. Students are forbidden to bring alcohol into school or to consume alcohol in school, or on school trips or tours, or during any school-related extra-curricular activity.

If a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, her parents/guardians will be called in to take her home. Students breaking these rules will incur the full weight of the school's Code of Behaviour.

## **Illicit Drugs and Solvents**

The possession, use, promotion for sale or sale of controlled drugs or solvents is strictly forbidden in St. Mary's school, grounds, or during any school related trip, tour or extra-curricular activity. Any infringement of this rule will be treated with the utmost seriousness and may involve suspension or permanent expulsion from the school. The procedure to be followed in the investigation of any such incident is detailed in the school's Code of Behaviour.

The possession of alcohol by persons under eighteen years old, or of illicit drugs by any person must be investigated fully and notified to the Gardaí by the school authorities.

## **Section B**

### **2. The Focus of the Substance Use Policy**

The Substance Use policy is focused on four key areas:

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Substance Education Programmes
2. Managing Substance Use Related Incidents
3. Training and Staff Development
4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

#### **2.1 Alcohol, Tobacco and Substance Education Programmes**

St. Mary's is committed to providing a comprehensive and time-tabled substance use education programme for all students which will be incorporated into the Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE) programme currently running in the school. Both the Home Economics programme at junior cycle and the Religious Education programme at senior cycle provide further education to students on substance use. TY students participate in a workshop during the academic year relating to substance use.

### **External Agencies / Outside Speakers**

Trained teachers are in the best position to carry out substance use education but sometimes it may be appropriate to use external agencies/outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in St. Mary's. The contribution of external agencies to the substance use education programme complements the teaching that takes place across the curriculum. External agencies provide specialist advice and guidance to young people who may be using substances and are used as a means of ensuring appropriate information and services are on offer to young people. Care will be taken to ensure that the external agencies/guest speakers are qualified to provide appropriate information on substance use to our students.

### **Our educational aims in relation to substance use education are:**

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

## **2.2 Managing Substance Use Related Incidents**

### **Pastoral Care**

The Principal, Deputy Principals and all teaching staff of St. Mary's offer our students on-going encouragement and support in their personal and academic development. We aim to maintain a safe environment in which each student can feel secure as she learns and grows towards full maturity.

In St. Mary's, each student has a Year Head and Class Tutor with whom she can discuss any problem or pressure that may arise or may worry them. These are pastoral and caring roles, in which the Year Head and Tutors make themselves available every day, to deal with the concerns of the students entrusted to them, in a positive and supportive spirit.

Two counsellors are available to offer help and guidance, if necessary, on an ongoing basis, to any student who is experiencing difficulties, whether personal or academic. Counsellors may also guide parents towards appropriate outside agencies, if more specialised help and support are needed.

### **Code of Behaviour**

The school's Code of Behaviour provides a clear statement, under the heading of "Illegal Substances" of the school rules, indicating that students should not use or be in possession of illegal substances when they are in school, going to or from school or

when they are representing the school. Students are clearly warned that a breach of this school rule is liable to serious disciplinary action.

### **Procedures**

In the event of any incident of illegal substance possession or use in St. Mary's, the school's Ladder of Referral, as outlined in the Code of Behaviour, will be followed.

### **Media Enquiries**

With regards to any media enquiries regarding a substance abuse incident, St. Mary's will not comment on any individual matter, other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents. However, in the interests 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. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

## **2.3 Training and Development**

### **Staff**

St. Mary's will encourage and support staff involved in delivering alcohol, tobacco and drug education programmes to attend detailed and specific training in relation to the identification, management and investigation of substance use incidents.

### **Students**

The school will offer all students, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs education programmes within the context of their Junior Certificate/New Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Leaving Certificate programmes.

## **2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Substance Use policy will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and that the maintenance of best practices is up to date. Teachers, parents, students and the Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of the policy and any necessary changes will be incorporated into the amended policy.

### **Dissemination of Policy**

The Substance Use policy will be freely available on St. Mary's website and SharePoint for staff. All new staff and parents of new children will be made aware of the policy's availability, as part of their induction to the school.

Students will be made aware of the policy as part of their substance use education within the context of the various programmes previously outlined.

### **Policy Review**

The date from which the policy will apply is the date of adoption by the Board of Management. Implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Principal of the school.

Policy adopted by the Board of Management

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson, Board of Management**

**Date:**

## Section C

### References

Oireachtas (2016). *The Misuse of Drugs Act*  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/act/9/enacted/en/html>

The Department of Health (2017). *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery. A Health-Led Response to Drug and Alcohol Use in Ireland 2017-2025*. <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Reducing-Harm-Supporting-Recovery-2017-2025.pdf>

The National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol (2001). *Drug Use Prevention*. The Stationery Office.

## **Section D Appendices**

### **APPENDIX 1**

#### **Definitions**

##### **The school:**

The school includes buildings, grounds, play areas and any other area where school activities are taking place.

##### **Banned or Prohibited Substances:**

This includes all substances covered by the misuse of drugs legislation, non-validated prescription medicine, all alcohol and tobacco products used contrary to the law of the land and any substance determined by the school to be a prohibited substance.

##### **An abuse Incident:**

This refers to any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occur in the school, or during school functions or outings. The school reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the Policy.

##### **Parents:**

For the purposes of this policy, parents includes all natural parents, foster parents, step parents or guardians of the student concerned as applicable, or any person acting in loco parentis, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of the abuse incident.

##### **Principal:**

In the policy, the Principal means the principal for the time being as appointed by the school and defined in the Education Act (1998), or the deputy principal where the principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the deputy principal, or any other person authorised by the Board of Management to act on their behalf.