



LORETO SECONDARY SCHOOL, ST MICHAEL'S

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Substance Possession, Abuse and Misuse Policy

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Ratification

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

Chairperson

Principal

Date

Date

Section 1 - Mission Statement and Philosophy

Here in Loreto Secondary School St Michael's we provide a happy and secure student-centred place of learning. Inclusivity, respect, kindness and encouragement are central to everything we do.

As a Catholic school we endeavour to be an educational community where:

- The Loreto Values of justice, freedom, truth, sincerity and joy are lived,
- We are all accepted,
- We all belong,
- Shared leadership comes with shared responsibility,
- Critical thinking, Restorative Practice, digital and social-awareness are fundamental,
- Being responsive to, and reflective of, a modern world are important,
- We are respectful of our traditions,
- Global citizenship, interconnectedness and creativity are celebrated,
- Staff, students, parents, past-pupils, and management co-operate for the common good.

Section 2 - Introduction

Rationale

The National Drugs Strategy, 'Building on Experience' 2001 –2008 is now Government policy and requires schools to have a substance use policy in place. In recognising its duty of care to the whole school community, the Board of Management of Loreto Secondary School St Michael's has drafted this policy to address the possession or use by anybody within the school buildings, grounds, or on school related events, of both legal and illegal substances. The central objective of a school's substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every student attending Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and, in the case of students and others over 18 years of age, in common law.

Relationship to School Mission Statement

In Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's we provide a safe and supportive environment for all our students by fostering a culture where students are educated about the consequences of abuse of both legal and illegal substances. At all times we aim to empower our students to share concerns or questions they may have in a safe space. Our students' welfare is at the centre of all our decisions at all times.

Scope

This policy applies to all areas (buildings and grounds) of the school campus including areas owned and managed by the Loreto Sisters. The policy will always apply during normal school hours and during times in which students and those who accompany them are involved in school related activities¹

This policy relates to any substance that changes the way the body functions mentally, physically, and emotionally. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, medicine, and solvents etc. and all come under the general heading of drugs. Any reference to smoking in this document includes the use of electronic cigarettes (also known as vaporising cigarettes, vapes or e-cigs) and all vaping paraphernalia.

Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment for all members of the Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's community.
- Provide clear guidelines regarding the possession and/or use of alcohol, cigarettes/vapes and/or other potentially harmful substances by students
- Via education programmes promote greater awareness, understanding and clarity on the dangers of drug/alcohol/addictive substance misuse.

¹ The term 'school related activities' applies to any activity on the school premises, on the way to and from school and during any school related activities in any location outside the school, where students are deemed to be participating in school related activities, representing the school, or working as part of a school programme.

Relationship with other School Policies

This policy takes cognisance of and operates in conjunction with other school policies including:

- Anti Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Statement
- Data Protection
- Suspension and Expulsion Policy
- Wellbeing Policy

Schools Stance on Banned or Prohibited Substances.

Loreto Secondary School St Michael's does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school, on school trips and outings, or during any school-related activity.

The school acknowledges that the only exception is for the use of properly prescribed drugs and requests that parents of students taking prescribed medication inform the school in writing of that fact.

Section 3 - Definitions

3.1 A banned or Prohibited Substance includes all substances covered by the Misuse Of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol, and tobacco used contrary to the law of the land. A substance/drug can be defined as a chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels.

The policy covers substances including, but not limited to:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Vaping substances and paraphernalia
- Medicines
- Over the counter remedies eg: paracetamol etc.
- Illegal drugs
- Solvents
- Cleaning agents
- Gases
- Aerosols

- Laboratory chemicals
- Performance enhancing substances
- Prescription drugs used for non-medical purposes

This list is not exhaustive and may be added to from time to time as the need arises.

3.2 The school prohibits the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school building, grounds, on school trips and outings, or during any school related activity. This includes vapes or vaping paraphernalia. The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found in the circumstances set out above is a banned substance. Drug paraphernalia includes all items associated with the use of illicit substances and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances. The policy should also be adhered to while in school uniform, on the way to or from school or any school activities on or off site.

3.3 Validly prescribed medical drugs may be taken in school on receipt of written notification from parent(s)/guardian(s). No staff member will give a student any prescribed or 'over the counter' medication except in exceptional circumstances and with prior written consent of the parent/guardian.

3.4 Students may not give another student any prescribed medication during school time.

3.5 Smoking or vaping on school grounds is prohibited. Students are expected not to smoke or vape on their way to and from school. They are prohibited from doing so on school trips or on any other school related activity.

Section 4 - Education concerning substance use

The school takes a proactive approach in relation to education in substance abuse prevention via

- The integration of substance abuse education into the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. Religion and CSPE classes may also be used to support and reinforce the work done in SPHE class. At Senior Cycle the issue of substance use is dealt with in Religious Education classes and visiting speakers.
- Providing age-appropriate resources to students to equip them with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions.
- Training staff will to identify signs and symptoms of substance abuse

Section 5 - Procedures for Management of Alcohol / Tobacco / Vaping Related Incidents

5.1 All suspected incidents shall be reported to the Year Head.

5.2 The Year Head shall investigate any suspected incident involving smoking (tobacco) vaping, alcohol and other substances.

5.3 . The school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student suspected to be, or to have been, involved in a substance abuse incident, while the incident is investigated. Furthermore, the school's Code of Behaviour applies and, on the completion of the investigation, it shall be a matter for the Board of Management to consider if suspension or permanent exclusion is appropriate

5.4 Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall be informed immediately by the Year Head of the incident

5.5 The school recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practical, the number of people involved in investigating a suspected substance abuse incident. The school shall involve only those directly concerned with the student. In addition to the Year Head, these may include the Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher, Guidance Counsellor and specific staff directly involved with the incident.

5.6 The Year Head shall seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the suspected incident and shall record these statements. Each student against whom an allegation is made shall have the right to reply.

5.7 In the event that the investigation concludes that the student is in breach of the Substance Use policy and/or the Schools Code of Behaviour the Year Head shall inform the student and their parents/guardians the sanctions imposed.

5.8 The Yearhead may refer the incident to the Principal to discuss options regarding sanctions.

5.9 The Principal may decide to refer any finding of a breach of this Substance Use policy to the Board of Management for further consideration. In such an event the student and their parents/guardians shall be given an opportunity to make a reply to the matters at issue. The decision of the Board shall be conveyed in writing and where necessary further procedures for appeal.

5.10 The school shall ensure that pastoral support in the form of the Guidance Counsellor are offered to those affected by an incident of substance abuse.

Section 6 - Procedures for Management of Drug Related Incidents

6.1 All suspected incidents shall be reported to the Principal by any member of the school community. In the event that the Principal is absent the incident will be reported to the Deputy Principal.

6.2 In the event of an abuse incident, the school will balance the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community.

6.3 The Principal shall investigate or oversee the investigation of any suspected substance abuse incident within the school or while on school related activities.

6.4 The school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student suspected to be, or to have been, involved in a substance abuse incident, while the incident is investigated. Furthermore, the school's Code of Behaviour applies and, on the completion of the investigation, it shall be a matter for the Board of Management to consider if permanent exclusion is appropriate.

6.5 Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall be informed immediately by the Principal of the incident.

6.6 The school recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practical, the number of people involved in investigating a suspected substance abuse incident. The school shall involve only those directly concerned with the student. In addition to the Principal, these may include the Deputy Principal, the Year Head, the Guidance Counsellor and specific staff directly involved with the incident.

6.7 The Principal, in the presence of a reliable witness, shall take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drugs paraphernalia associated with a suspected substance abuse incident recording all such items. All items will be handed to the Gardaí at the earliest opportunity.

6.8 . The Principal, or a person nominated by the Principal, shall seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the suspected substance abuse incident and shall record these statements. Such persons shall be advised that these statements may be forwarded to the Gardaí.

6.9 The Principal may, in their absolute discretion, liaise with any appropriate outside authority and may seek advice or assistance in relation to the investigation of the incident. The Principal shall maintain a record of all communications with outside agencies.

6.10 On completion of the preliminary investigation and in the event that they conclude that further investigation is warranted, the Principal shall afford the student or students alleged to have been involved in the suspected substance abuse incident the opportunity to respond to the allegations. They shall put the full particulars of the incident to the student or students concerned and their parents/guardians and make copies of all records deemed relevant to the allegation against the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations, available to the (each) student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

6.11 The school will consider any response and representation made and any other relevant considerations, including but not limited to mitigating and aggravating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.

6.12 The Principal shall inform each student and their parents/guardians of the school's findings. In the event that the investigation concludes that the student is in breach of the Substance Use policy, the Principal shall inform the student and their parents/guardians of the sanctions to be considered and or imposed in accordance with the relevant procedures as outlined in the Code of Behaviour.

6.13 The Principal may decide to refer any finding of a breach of this Substance Use policy to the Board of Management for further consideration. In such an event the student and their parents/guardians shall be given an opportunity to make a reply to the matters at issue. The decision of the Board shall be conveyed in writing and where necessary further procedures for appeal.

Section 7 - Media Queries

The Principal, or their representative will be the point of contact in relation to all media inquiries. No other staff member should make official or unofficial public comments on the matter in any format.

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 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.

Section 8 - Provision for Training and Staff Development

8.1 Staff will receive training on recognizing signs of substance abuse, reporting procedures, and supporting students.

8.2 The school fully supports staff members attending SPHE in-service training programmes.

Section 9 - Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 Board of Management

- To approve the policy
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy

9.2 Principal and Deputy Principal

- To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy
- To monitor the implementation of the policy
- To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated annually
- The Principal has the day to day responsibility for the implementation of the policy, for ensuring that In-Service training takes place and that all staff are adequately informed to implement the policy

9.3 Year Heads

- To familiarise themselves with the policy
- To implement the policy in their own area of responsibility
- To bring any incidents to the attention of the Principal/Deputy Principal

9.4 Teachers

- To familiarise themselves with the policy
- To implement the policy in their own areas of responsibility
- To bring any incidents to the attention of the designated people

9.5 Parents

- To support school policy
- To fully cooperate with the school in the implementation of this policy

Section 10 - Monitoring and Review Procedures

Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's 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.

