

Our Lady of Mercy College

Beaumont,

Dublin 9



Substance Use Policy

Approved by Board of Management 7th February 2024

Substance Use Policy

Mission Statement

The core value of Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential, academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school and wider community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

Relationship to Mission Statement:

The underlying philosophy of this policy is one of concern and support for the wellbeing of all members of the school community. Our mission statement states that the core value of Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

Scope:

This policy applies to Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Students, Board of Management, other school personnel and all those who enter the school premises at any time or those on school related activities. This applies to the misuse of substances on the school premises or on school related activities.

Rationale:

The school seeks to enable each student to develop their potential in a safe and secure environment. Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont adopts a pastoral approach in order to promote a healthy, caring and supportive environment. The National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 sets out a detailed programme to combat the very serious problem of drug misuse in our society. The central objective of this schools substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person and other members of the school community in line with the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Tobacco (Health Promotion, Protection) Act 1988, Misuse of Drugs Act 1977, 1984 & amendments 2015, Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

Objectives:

These are to:

- ❖ Ensure the safety, health & wellbeing of all members of the school community.
- ❖ Equip the school to deal with issues to do with substance mis- use.
- ❖ Provide clear procedures for dealing with substance related instances.
- ❖ Offer support to students and other members of the school community who require assistance.
- ❖ Provide training and educational opportunities to support and implement this policy.

Definition:

A drug is any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally.

Policy Content

This school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use of or supply of banned or prohibited substances and/or drug paraphernalia, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes in the school, during any school related activities or on school trips and outings. This also covers the suspected use of the above. Except where stated this policy applies to all members of the school community and is in force at all times, on the school premises, during the school day and during school related activities. Smoking and vaping is prohibited. It is illegal to smoke on school grounds. Students should not smoke/vape while in school uniform or while representing the school.

Exception:

1. Prescribed legitimate medical reasons/use; where a student is in possession of medication for legitimate medical use the Year Head must be informed in writing. Prescription and non prescription drugs cannot be supplied or administered by school staff or other students except in exceptional circumstances where parent/guardian have given permission in writing to the Principal/teacher in charge.

Prevention Education and Prevention Strategies

Our Lady of Mercy College will provide appropriate education programmes for all its students.

This programme will be age appropriate and will seek to build on and complement existing programmes already being taught in the school - SPHE, PE, Science, Religion and CSPE.

Parents are asked/expected to:

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes.
- Recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse.
- Assist and cooperate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

To assist the parents in their role the college will:

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the college regarding education programmes (e.g. SPHE)
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available, resources in community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

Procedures for dealing with substance related instances:

(i) Reporting: Any alcohol or illicit drug incident or suspected incident will be reported to a staff member & investigated by Deputy Principal/Year Head and other staff as appropriate. Students are encouraged to inform a teacher if an incident occurs. During school trips the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of this policy.

(ii) Medical assistance: The situation is assessed by the Principal/Deputy Principal/staff member. If medical assistance is needed this will be sought and if possible the staff member should stay with the student until assistance arrives. Contact will be made with a parent/guardian to inform them that medical assistance has been sought.

(iii) Recording of Instances: If the offence relates to alcohol or an illicit drug incident a report will be written and recorded. Smoking/alcohol substance use incidents will be recorded as set out in the Code of Behaviour.

(iv) Search: If the school believes that a student may have hidden in school property, on their person or in a school or other bag banned substances or property the school reserves the right to require the student to turn out her pockets and/or the contents of any such bag and to search any property. Students must agree to cooperate fully with this or any other request if the school believes a substance in breach of this policy is being stored. A breach of this clause will be treated as a major offence (see Code of Behaviour incl. Suspension and Expulsion Policy).

(v) Confiscation of Illegal Drugs/Alcohol/Prohibited Substances: If an illegal drug/prohibited substance or suspected illegal drug is found on school property or during school activity, it should be brought to the attention of the Principal or person in charge. The school will exercise its discretion in the manner in which it deals with these substances.

(vi) Informing/Involving Gardaí: The Gardaí may be informed/involved when an incident occurs. Garda advice may be sought in incidents involving illegal drugs, the decision to seek this advice will rest with the Principal and other key staff. The school has a positive working relationship with local Gardaí who like the school have the welfare of the student(s), other students and the wider school community to consider.

(vii) Confidentiality: Although students sometimes request confidentiality, this cannot be guaranteed. The teacher must attempt to retain the respect and confidence of the student, while ensuring that the information is acted on. Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members, the parents/guardians of those involved or an appropriate external agency. Appropriate discretion will be observed.

(viii) Informing/Involving Parents/Guardians: It is standard practice to inform parents/guardian if their child has been involved in an alcohol or illicit drug incident in breach of this policy. Parents may ask the school Principal or Counsellor to put them in contact with an appropriate external agency if they seek further support. Parents with concerns about the actual or possible misuse of alcohol or illicit drugs by their daughter are invited to discuss these with the Principal/Deputy Principal/Staff member. Support and information will be offered.

(ix) Sanctions/Disciplinary Issues

Those who remain in the company of students who smoke or use alcohol or other mood altering substances, during school activities or at any time while in school uniform, and make no obvious effort to leave the scene will be liable for serious disciplinary sanctions.

If a member of staff suspects that a student is in possession either of a prohibited item (cigarettes, vapes, alcohol, etc.) or of the property of another, students should note that they are liable to be asked to empty their pockets and/or be liable to a locker, bag, footwear inspections. This will be witnessed by another member of staff. A student who refuses to agree to such an inspection may face serious sanctions. If deemed necessary, Parent(s) / Guardian(s) and / or a member of An Garda Síochána may be called to the school to assist in such inspections.

The Code of Behaviour & Expulsion Policy outline a graded system of firm and consistent sanctions which will apply to students involved in alcohol or illicit substance incidents. The Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2001-2015 also applies.

(x) Media: The Principal or in her absence the Deputy 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 procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.

(xi) Support for those involved: Students directly involved in substance misuse incidents will be referred to external agencies as necessary/requested by parents/guardians. Students or other members of the school community who wish to get help for their own misuse of alcohol or drugs or that of another for whom they are concerned may seek the advice of the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Counsellor. Support and information about external services will be offered. Where such student disclosures are voluntary they will be seen as a desire for help and will therefore not be subject to disciplinary consequences but will be subject to the confidentiality outlined above.

Related Policies

Child Protection Policy
Health & Safety Policy
Code of Behaviour
Expulsion Policy
Anti Bullying Policy
Pastoral Care Policy
Guidance & Counselling Policy
Critical Incident Policy
SPHE Policy
CCTV Policy

Staff Training & Support

Staff are offered training to implement the policy in relation to substance abuse. The Parents Association, will where appropriate, organise information evenings for parents on drug or other substance related issues.

Monitoring and Implementation

This policy will be supported and implemented by students and staff. Staff will be alert for signs of harmful substance abuse among the students. The Principal/Deputy Principal will monitor the use of the policy.

Communication of Policy

Parents will be informed about this policy prior to the entry of their child. New staff members will be provided with a copy of the policy. Copies of the policy are available from the school office.

Roles and Responsibilities

This school believes that from time to time a range of people will be involved in the care and management of students involved in substance use incidents. Such personnel will include:

- Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Class Tutor/HSCL
- Counselling personnel, internal & external
- Parents & Guardians
- Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLO) and the Gardaí
- Care Team
- Board of Management.

Review Procedures

This policy will be reviewed every three years. However practices and procedures will be continually considered to ensure legal compliance and best practice.

Ratified by the BOM 7th February 2024