



# **Substance Abuse Policy**

**OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL  
GIRLS' SCHOOL**

**JOHNSTOWN**

**DUN LAOGHAIRE.**

**Current draft October 2022**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Introductory Statement**

A drug can be defined as any chemical, which causes changes in the way the human body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. In this policy we are concerned with drugs which have the power to change a previous mood and the way in which a person thinks as well as drugs on which the user may become physically or psychologically dependent. It is generally accepted that alcohol and tobacco are the most widely abused drugs; however, illicit substances such as cannabis and ecstasy are increasingly becoming a problem in all areas.

### **1.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

The overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of school supervision/routines rests with the Principal. Ms. Lisa Breen. The Deputy Principal sets out supervision rotas for yard duty on a daily basis. The class teacher is responsible for classroom supervision and teachers on yard duty are directly responsible for the supervision of pupils at break time.

### **1.3 School Ethos**

This policy re-enforces the elements of the school mission statement which advocates providing a safe and secure learning environment for each child and ensuring a duty of care at all times when the school is in operation.

### **1.4 Aim/Objective**

To ensure the physical safety and well-being of all staff and pupils.

## **2. Education Concerning Substance Abuse**

The school sees itself as having a role in the process of enabling students to manage over and improve their health. As a staff we endeavour to promote the well being of students by: -

- Providing a safe and healthy environment.
- Promoting positive health behaviour.
- Increasing knowledge about health.
- Promoting students' self esteem.
- Working in partnership with parents and students.

Our policy includes:

- Strategies for the prevention of problems surrounding drugs, alcohol and tobacco.
- Procedures for dealing with such incidences in the school.
- Guidelines and information for teachers to improve their resources in response to the problems of substance abuse.

It is intended that this policy is to be interpreted in accordance with the following:

- The school's SPHE Education Programme, which includes. RSE, Stay Safe and Well-Being programmes.
- Health and well-being initiatives in the school.

## **3. Procedures for Dealing With Substance Abuse Incidents**

### **3.1 Illicit Drugs**

- Students are prohibited from being in possession of or using illicit drugs or solvents on the school premises.
- Illicit drugs found on the school premises will be confiscated and locked away.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs the advice and assistance of the Garda Junior Liaison Officer will be sought leading to an investigation if appropriate. The appropriate school authorities will contact the parents or guardians of any students named in such an investigation away and the Gardai will be contacted to dispose of them. An investigation will be made into the origin of the drugs found.
- The school expects parents to inform the principal or deputy principal if they suspect their child of drug taking.
- If students are suspected of drug taking outside of school every effort will be made to support them and ensure that they get the counseling and help that they may need.

## **3.2 Alcohol**

- Alcohol will not be available at any after hour's activities for students arranged by the school.
- When a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol their parents or guardians will be called in to take them home.
- The behaviour causing concern will be reported to the Deputy Principal who will meet with the student on his/her return to school and the teacher concerned. Concern will be expressed for the consequences of this behaviour and as much information as possible will be elicited from the student.
- A report of the incident will be written and presented to the school Principal. The Principal will then arrange a meeting with the parents or guardians of the student informing them of the behaviour and of the school's concern. The parents will have the opportunity to voice their own worries and fears.
- A referral will usually be made with the consent of the parents or guardians to a counselor for a full assessment of the extent of the problem. If further incidents occur at school the parents or guardians will be called in again.
- Where a student has been suspended in line with the school code of discipline, their return to the school will usually be on the condition that they receive external counseling.
- The school in dealing with any drug-related issue expects parental co-operation and support.

## **3.3 Medication**

- The school should be informed by parents or guardians of any special requirements that students may have regarding prescribed drugs. This information should be available to the Principal, Deputy Principal and class teachers and documented in the school files.
- Any request by students for non-prescribed medication should be directed to the school Principal. (See Administration of Medicine Policy in our Health & Safety Policy).

## **3.4 Tobacco**

- If a pupil is found in possession of cigarettes and or smoking, the cigarettes will be locked away and the parents will be contacted to dispose of them. An investigation will be initiated.
- The Principal will contact the parents/guardians of any students named in the investigation.
- Students breaking our anti-smoking rules will be dealt with according to the school code of discipline.

#### **4. Staff Training & Development**

There is ongoing support and commitment from the Board of Management. The Eastern Region Health Board also provides a wide range of supports for schools including Health Education and Health Promotion, Smoking Cessation Support and Adolescent Counseling Services.

#### **5. Ratification & Review**


This policy will be regularly reviewed. This ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based program and feedback from parents/guardians, teachers and students.

The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning. It will be reviewed annually at the September meetings of the staff and Board of Management.

*This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management:*

  
Frank Keenaghan

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

  
Lisa Breen

(Principal)

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022

*Date of next review: September 2023*

## **Appendix 5**

### **Signs and Symptoms of Drug Use**

Very often there are no clear signs attached to irregular experimental drug use. It is usually when drug use becomes problematic for the young person that some of the symptoms may manifest themselves. The signs and symptoms must not replace careful observation, listening to and talking with the young person. Many of the signs and symptoms listed are normal aspects of growing up.

Changes in behaviour, which may indicate drug use:

- Erratic mood swings.
- Lying and secretive behaviour
- Changes in appearance. In serious cases, the person may begin to look unwell, mixed with periods of more energetic behaviour.
- Changes in eating habits. Regular use of some drugs can lead to a loss of appetite.
- Gradual loss of interest in school, hobbies and friends.
- Changes in friendship patterns. If a young child is misusing drugs, s/he will tend to mix with older children and drop former friends.
- Involvement in stealing and 'bartering' personal and family possessions for money.
- Possessing unusual items and apparatus. Apart from tablets, powders, aerosols, etc.
- which may be found, some forms of drug taking require equipment, e.g. pieces of foil, syringes, straws, plastic bags, cigarette papers, 'Wraps' (square folds of paper) • Unusual smells around the child.
- Stains on hands, fingers or clothes.