



## **Substance Use Policy for Sancta Maria College**

This policy is based on our pastoral care of our students and the hope of providing a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment for each student. As a Catholic school, Sancta Maria College aspires to be a place where students feel safe and cared for, where each person is respected both as an individual and also as part of a larger learning community, where justice and fairness are mediated in its procedures.

### **RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY**

The policy is based on a concern regarding the prevalence of the misuse of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. This prevalence poses a challenge for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education. The health and well-being of students is a concern of the school.

Having a policy in place with a strategy for responding to the issue of drug misuse, in all its forms, will make the school more effective in preventing and responding to drug-related incidents should they arise.

The Education Act 1998 provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for students.

### **AIMS OF THE POLICY**

The policy aims to:

- address the issue of the welfare, care and protection for our students in light of the prevalence of the misuse of drugs
- address education relating to the use of drugs
- provide procedures for managing incidents related to drug use.

### **SCHOOL POSITION ON DRUGS**

Given that involvement on the part of students of Sancta Maria College with banned or prohibited substances detrimentally affects the academic performance and behaviour of both the students concerned and other students, and given also that such incidents impinge adversely on the harmonious operation and safe environment of the school.

Sancta Maria College does not accept or tolerate:

- the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances
- the possession, use or supply of drug paraphernalia
- organisation of the supply of banned substances or drug paraphernalia to students in the school

by any student in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school-based or school-related activity. *In the school* in this instance includes school buildings, grounds and play areas.

Sancta Maria College acknowledges its duty to support, as best it can, those members of our school community who find themselves drawn into any incident of substance abuse.

Sancta Maria College acknowledges the use of properly prescribed drugs and requests that parents of students taking prescribed medication inform the school in writing of this fact.

## **DEFINITIONS**

*Banned or prohibited substance* is here defined as 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. Sancta Maria College reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

*Drug paraphernalia* includes any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, and items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

*Substance 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, or to other students. Sancta Maria College reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of this policy.

## **Education Programmes**

Within the resources available to it, Sancta Maria College will provide appropriate education programmes for all students. The programme will be age-appropriate and will seek to build on and complement programmes in Social, Personal, Health Education; Religious Education; Science; Physical Education; Civic, Social and Political Education etc.

## **ROLE OF PARENTS**

Parents are requested to:

- acknowledge the importance of these programmes
- recognize their partnership with Sancta Maria College in relation to informing their children regarding substance use
- assist and co-operate fully with Sancta Maria College as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

To assist parents in their role, Sancta Maria College will:

- provide parents with information regarding education programmes
- encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

## **MANAGEMENT OF A SUBSTANCE ABUSE INCIDENT**

If Sancta Maria College finds itself having to investigate a substance abuse incident, school personnel will be motivated by the concerns of this policy; concerns regarding the health and well-being of all

students in the school. Sancta Maria College will seek to have a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole.

1. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, Sancta Maria College reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
2. Sancta Maria College reserves the right to request that students suspected of involvement in the use of banned or prohibited substance present for medical examination as determined by the College in consultation with the parents concerned.
3. An Abuse Incident Report form will be completed in all instances of the investigation of an abuse incident.
4. Sancta Maria College will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
5. In the event of an incident the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
6. Sancta Maria College will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
7. Sancta Maria College will liaise, at its own discretion, with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
8. A statement that if the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
  - (a) Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and her parents — at the discretion of the school — in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that she would wish to make or have made on her behalf
  - (b) Sancta Maria College will allow the student concerned and her parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
  - (c) Sancta Maria College shall shortly thereafter inform the student and her parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that a student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.

9. Sancta Maria College reserves the right to adopt the following measures in appropriate circumstances:
- To expel from the school a student found to be in breach of the policy which prohibits the use, possession, supply or organisation of supply of banned or prohibited substances on school grounds or at school-based or school-related activities
  - In relation to a verified and investigated incident, Sancta Maria College may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: oral warning, written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion
  - To require a student who tests positive for the first time under the stated policy, to enrol in a counselling programme as determined by the College in consultation with the parents of the student
  - To expel any student who tests positive for a second time
  - To impose sanctions, which may include expulsion, based on the evidence after investigation, on a student who refuses to accede to the College's reasonable request for medical examination
  - To require, as a condition of re-entry to the College after suspension, a student to undertake regular mandatory testing.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN AN INVESTIGATION**

### ***The Principal***

The Principal may nominate the Deputy Principal or a Year Head or other nominated staff to act on her behalf in the investigation of a substance abuse incident. The responsibilities of the Principal (hereafter to be understood as meaning the Principal or her nominee) include the following:

- i. all reports of substance abuse incidents or suspected incidents should be reported to the Principal
- ii. the Principal makes decisions regarding the investigation of an incident; communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation
- iii. the Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed of the investigation developments
- iv. the Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident
- v. the Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with such items upon appropriate advice
- vi. the Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, Year Head and/or guidance counsellor in conducting an incident investigation.

### ***Communication regarding suspected abuse incident***

In the instance of a suspected abuse incident, the Principal may decide to contact the parents, particularly where there is concern for the health and welfare of a child. The Principal may decide to share any available information they may help parents in attending to their child's health and wellbeing and will keep the student informed.

### ***Confidentiality***

Sancta Maria College recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing an abuse incident and that it is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. However, it is important that students and parents accept that:

- The duty of staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with an abuse incident or suspected abuse incident
- The school may, in a given situation, contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Gardaí, the Health Service Executive, Probation Service, or Officers of the Courts
- The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident
- The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and/or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations or Department of Education and Science guidelines.

### ***Media Inquiries***

If contacted by the media, 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. The Board of Management will decide whether there is any need to clarify the school's position on an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Students***

The school will offer programmes on drug education within its educational programme, such as within SPHE, Religious Education, CSPE, Science etc.

### ***Staff***

The school will offer:

- education programmes related to drugs
- training of staff in recognition of symptoms of drug use
- specific training of staff in the management and investigation of an abuse incident
- on-going training of staff in the above areas.

## **PARENTS AND THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

The school will:

- offer opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops related to drug use
- provide appropriate information, guidance and support to the Board on issues related to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

## **REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

The school will monitor the policy and procedures as it invokes them to investigate and report on any incidents. The policy will be reviewed by staff in 2012.

Adopted by the Board of Management on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Sean Gilroy \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Denise Burns \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009 \_\_\_\_\_

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