



VIRGIN MARY GIRLS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

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2023 Substance Use Policy

The central objective of the school's Substance Use Policy is the welfare, care, and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act, 1998.

What is a drug?

A drug can be defined as a chemical, which causes changes in the way the human body functions 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 about things and drugs or which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent.

While the school accepts that it has an important role to play, it wishes to make clear that the primary role in substance use prevention rests with the parents.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to students, teachers, auxiliary staff members, users of the school premises, visitors, i.e. every person who enters the building. It is applicable during school-time – including breaks and to ALL school related activities. It applies to the school building and grounds and to any area where a school related activity takes place, e.g. School Tour.

Aims of Policy

The aim of the substance use policy of Virgin Mary Girls National School is primary prevention. We aim to protect our pupils from the harmful effects of substance misuse and try to prevent them from using tobacco, alcohol, solvents and illegal drugs. We aim to develop in our pupils' better self-esteem, through providing a positive school climate and atmosphere and through giving our pupils age appropriate information from educational programmes.

Relationship To School's Mission, Vision And Aims

The characteristic spirit of this school has been developed and agreed with our partners in education. This substance use policy reflects the school policy by:

- Drawing together teachers, parents and the school Chairperson, to formulate the policy.
- Including reference to substance use in the enrolment policy.
- Including reference to substance use in our Code of Discipline and School Rules.

Rationale

Why is this policy necessary?

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges, which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

The Education Act 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. The National Drugs Strategy '*Building on Experience*' is now government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place. The recent report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled '*Drug Use Prevention*' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.

The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug misused in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average.

For the population as a whole, alcohol consumption 54% of 18-75 year old drinkers were classified as harmful drinkers in 2014. Ireland now has the second highest per capita binge drinkers in the EU @39% just behind Austria @40.5%.

The school authority in Virgin Mary Girls National School has a moral and legal obligation to ensure compliance with the criminal law.

Implementation Procedures

Copies of the policy were distributed to the Chairperson for ratification September, 2021. When ratified and amended, copies were given to:

- All staff members
- School Community on request

Monitoring and Review Procedures

A record will be kept in school of all substance use incidents. There will be an annual meeting to monitor and review procedures each year. A copy of this policy will be issued to all staff members and a reminder of its contents will be given in September of each year. The Principal has will take responsibility to monitor procedures annually and ensure they are being adhered to.

Policy Content

Education concerning Substance Use

Education concerning substance use in Virgin Mary Girls National School will be provided within the broad context of the subject of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) by following our Whole School Plan.

Active learning strategies are advocated in the SPHE curriculum will inform our selection of methodology. Our work will be reinforced by project work and the possibility of talks from local Gardaí and Public Health Nurses as long as the content of their talk is in keeping with the school curriculum on the topic.

Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents

Young people are most at risk in relation to substance use in Virgin Mary Girls National School in recreational areas, on the way to and from school and at out of school related activities supervised by staff members of Virgin Mary Girls National School.

The school's shared understanding of a 'drug related incident' is:

- Any unusual or unbecoming behaviour resulting from intake or use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs
- The sale or passing on of any illegal substance,
- The possession of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs on school grounds or at school related activities
- Disposal of drugs or related items (e.g. syringes) found on school property.

The reporting procedure for such incidents is:

Step 1: Witness to drug related incident informs teacher/staff member/Principal

Step 2: Principal inform parents/guardians

Step 3: Principal informs School Chairperson

Step 4: Gardaí informed depending on seriousness of incident

Step 5: Area Health Board informed for disposal of items

Management of school drug related issues:

Smoking

- The school is a non-smoking area.
- Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes on the school premises or in any other place.
- Visitors are not permitted to smoke on school grounds.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises will be reported to the Principal and parents will be informed. A period of suspension will ensue. (Please see behaviour code for further details).

Alcohol

- The school is an alcohol free area.
- Pupils will not be allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence at school/of alcohol, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents will be called in to take them home.
- Students breaking these rules will be dealt with according to the school's disciplinary procedure.

Illicit Drugs and Solvents

- Students are forbidden from being in possession of or using illicit drugs or solvents in the school premises.
- Illicit drugs found on school premises should be locked away and the Gardaí contacted to dispose of them.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken. The D.L.P. should be informed as per child protection guidelines.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs an investigation will be carried out. Parents of any student involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer will be sought.
- The school B.O.M will expect parents to inform the Principal or teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking. Suspension will normally ensue. Code of Discipline will apply for school related activities.

Prescription Drugs and administration of drugs:

- Teachers must be informed of any medicine needed by children during a school day.
- Medicines for same use must be kept under teacher's supervision in teacher drawer.
- Medicating pupils during school day will be administered as per INTO guidelines (please see Administration of Medicines Policy).

Solvents and cleaning agents:

- All cleaning agents must be stored out of children's view in appropriate cupboards and store rooms.
- Markers with a solvent base, tippex and other such products should be kept under strict teacher supervision.
- Aerosols are not allowed; roll-on antiperspirants are permitted.

Parents will be involved by accepting the school's Code of Behaviour and Enrolment Policies. They will be informed of an incident involving their own child and will be asked to accept responsibility, co-operate with the school authorities and with the Gardaí if necessary.

Parents will be involved in incidents involving another child only if deemed necessary by the school authorities; if parents are aware that another child is involved in drug-related incidents under the scope of this policy they should inform the teacher, Principal or the School Chairperson.

This policy puts the following procedures in place to deal with an incident requiring medical intervention:

- 'Universal Precautions' will be applied; e.g. wearing of proper protective gloves etc., washing and making safe an area after an incident;
- Copies of all relevant phone numbers are attached (see Appendix 1)
- The development of a Critical Incident Policy.

The school has established a rapport with the local Garda station and will invite representatives from the local Garda station to speak with senior pupils. Whether or not to inform the Gardaí of minor incidents will be at the discretion of the Principal and the Chairperson, but they will be involved in any serious substance abuse incidents.

At local level the following support agencies are available to which students involved in substance misuse might be referred:

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| 1. | N.A. (Narcotics Anonymous) | 01-6728000 |
| 2. | YAP – Ballymun Youth Action Plan | 01-8428071 (www.byap.ie) |
| 3. | Juvenile Liaison Officer | 01-6664400 |
| 4. | Community Garda | 01-6664400 |
| 5. | Ballymun Family Support Services | 01-8467930 |

In the event of media interest in relation to a 'drug related incident', the matter will be referred to the Chairperson and he will issue a prepared statement to the media.

Management of Persons in the Workplace Under The Influence of Drugs And/or Alcohol

The Chairperson shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that pupils and other persons in the workplace are not exposed to risks to their safety, health or welfare from persons under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The term "in the workplace", in the preceding sentence includes all school related activities taking place under the supervision of a teacher, with the Chairperson's approval, and both within and away from the school premises.

Every school employee shall, while at work, ensure that he or she is not under the influence of an intoxicant as required by Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that a staff member is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace, in the interests of the safety, health and welfare of the employee and others. In the case of employees who are at work under the influence of an intoxicant, disciplinary procedures may be implemented.

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that an employee of any contractor is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask the contractor to remove his/her employee from the workplace.

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe any person, other than a staff member or employee of a contractor, is unfit to be on the premises, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the staff member shall report his/her belief promptly to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal, who shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace.

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe that a parent or adult collecting a pupil from school or presenting themselves on the premises for another reason is unfit to be on the premises or to take care of the said pupil, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal will be informed and the duty of care will apply to the pupil. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the pupil and safeguard their best interests.

In the event that a staff member or any other person, referred to above, refuses a reasonable request to remove him/herself from the premises, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal may call the Gardaí to forcibly remove the person in question.

The Chairperson acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of teachers. An Employee Assistance Service (Spectrum Life @ 1800 411 057) is available to teaching staff. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the teaching staff, the Chairperson may request such staff member to contact the Employee Assistance Service.

The Chairperson also acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of all other staff members. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the non-teaching staff, the Chairperson may request such staff member to seek counseling or other professional intervention.

All incidents, relating to the presence of persons at school, under the influence of an intoxicant, shall be recorded and reported as soon as possible to the Chairperson.

The Chairperson shall consider all such reports and decide on the appropriate action to be taken in the circumstances of each particular case.

Ratification & Communication



Chairperson of the Board



Principal (Acting)

Date : 5/10/2023

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The BOM officially ratified this policy in 2023.

The policy will be available on the school website following ratification and thereafter prior to enrolment.