

Substance Misuse Policy

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance misuse. We believe that students, teachers, parents and the Board of Management must work together for the successful acceptance and implementation of this policy. We also believe that this policy should apply to students, teachers, parents, the Board of Management and all visitors to the school. In drawing up this policy a Substance Misuse Policy Working Party consisting of representatives of students, teachers, parents and the Board of Management was established. These people then carried out a survey among the various groups that they represented. The Principal, who is a member of every working party in the school, collated these results. In this way an overall picture of the various partners in the school community in relation to substance misuse emerged. Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School acknowledges that it has an important role to play in relation to substance misuse education. This school also acknowledges that such substances, both legal and illegal, are available in the community. It is therefore almost inevitable that we may have incidents involving such substances in the school. In managing these incidents the welfare, care and protection of the students and the school community is vital.

For the purposes of this policy a drug is defined as “any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally.” This definition not only includes the whole range of illegal substances available in modern society it also includes legally available products such as over the counter and prescription medicines, tobacco, alcohol and solvents.

Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs (as defined) in the school or on school activities by any student.

Disciplinary procedures in relation to this rule are outlined in Section Three, Paragraph (e) of this document. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use provided the school authorities have been properly informed. The procedures concerning the administering of such medicines are outlined in Section Three, Paragraph (g) of this document.

2 SECTION TWO: DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAMMES.

Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School is committed to providing a planned, developmental and timetabled drug education programme for all our students. At Junior Cycle level each student will study Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Religious Education (RE). Social, Personal Health Education (SPHE) was introduced in September 2003. All students enrolling in the First Year class in the school since September 2003 will take SPHE as part of the core Junior Certificate curriculum offered by the school. At Senior Cycle level drug education will be included in RE, in Transition Year, Fifth Year and Sixth Year, and in Health Education in Sixth Year, until CSPE and SPHE are introduced for all years.

At both Junior and Senior Cycle these programmes aim to provide our students with a broad range of life skills and to increase their self-esteem and selfconfidence. They also aim to provide the appropriate

age related knowledge about legal and illegal drugs. These programmes will therefore enable our students to make informed, healthy and reasonable choices. All teachers, who are involved in SPHE and CSPE, will be encouraged to seek appropriate training and will be given the opportunity to avail of it. All teachers will be offered drug information and drug awareness training through in-service. While Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School believes that trained teachers are the people best placed to carry out drug education it may be appropriate, on occasions, to use an outside speaker to support the work done in class. It is our belief that such speakers have the greatest chance of being effective when they are invited to make a presentation as part of an on-going, planned programme developed within the school. Parents will be informed of the drug education programme through the Parents' Council. On occasion, particularly when parental involvement in this drug education programme might be needed, the Principal will write to parents directly.

SECTION THREE: MANAGING DRUG RELATED INCIDENTS.

It is important that in all suspected or confirmed drugs incidents a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed of such incidents on a need-to-know basis. However, it may not be possible, legal or desirable to give assurances of total confidentiality even if a person wants it. The following are examples of a drug incident. (Please note that this list is not exhaustive.):

- Use or suspected use of drugs by a student on the school premises or on school activities.
- Bringing, sharing or selling drugs on the school premises or on school activities. • Disclosure about drug use to a teacher.
- Students under the influence of drugs including emergency situations where the individual is unconscious or seriously ill.
- Finding drugs or drugs paraphernalia on the school premises or on school activities.
- School grounds being used for drug activity.

In managing such an incident the following points are important:

(a) Where there is an immediate danger the student's doctor (or a doctor chosen by the school if the student's doctor is unknown or unavailable) will be contacted immediately and the Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Head will be informed. Parents/guardians will also be informed as soon as possible.

(b) Parents/guardians will always be involved if there is a drug incident in the school. In the case of smoking this involvement will occur after investigation by the school authorities. In all other cases involvement will be immediate and parents/guardians will be invited to attend an interview with the Principal and whatever teachers the Principal considers appropriate. A written record will be kept of this interview. Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School will endeavour to handle the situation sensitively and will understand that parents/guardians are likely to be feeling as shocked and anxious as the school.

The school will at all times aim to work with, rather than against, parents/guardians while acknowledging that in all situations involving drugs there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school. In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered and in some cases referral to a substance misuse counsellor may be required.

(c) The Gardaí will always be contacted in the case of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances. This contact will normally be made via the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO).

(d) A drug incident in the school can draw adverse media attention. If this happens the Principal will act as spokesperson. The Principal will never comment on the individual case. Where necessary the Principal will inform the media that Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School has a policy in place to deal with any drug related incident and that this policy ensures that the appropriate support services will be provided or accessed in such an incident.

(e) In dealing with a confirmed drug related incident Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School acknowledges that the appropriate balance between care and discipline is essential. However, where the school's rule in relation to drugs is broken the following sanctions will be imposed:

- Tippex is banned from the school premises and will be confiscated.
- Any student found smoking or in possession of cigarettes, matches or lighters will be fined €15 for the first offence and €25 for each offence thereafter. Failure to pay or a decision not-to pay this fine will result in a two-day suspension. Pupils found aiding and abetting anyone smoking will be subject to the same sanctions as the smoker. Any student found selling cigarettes to others will receive a three-day suspension.
- Any student found in possession of or under the influence of alcohol will receive a two-day suspension following due process.
- Any student found offering alcohol will receive a three-day suspension following due process.
- Any student selling alcohol to another student will have their case referred to the Board of Management. The Board will consider all options open to it.
- Any student found in possession of or selling of illicit substances will be reported to the authorities. Parents/guardians will be informed. The matter of the complaint will be referred to the Board of Management where all options up to and including expulsion will be considered. The student will be immediately suspended pending an emergency meeting of the Board. The parents/guardians will have a right to attend the Board meeting and present their case. The parents will be asked to withdraw from the meeting when the Board is making its decision. The decision of the Board will be communicated to the parents/guardians. The parents/guardians have a right to appeal the decision firstly to the Trustees but ultimately to the Secretary General, Department of Education under the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act.

- Any student found under the influence of illicit substances may be suspended. The parents/guardians and the appropriate authorities will also be informed. The matter of the complaint will be referred to the Board of Management where all options up to and including expulsion will be considered. The student will be immediately suspended pending an emergency meeting of the Board. The parents/guardians will have a right to attend the Board meeting and present their case.

The parents will be asked to withdraw from the meeting when the Board is making its decision. The decision of the Board will be communicated to the parents/guardians. The parents/guardians have a right to appeal the decision firstly to the Trustees but ultimately to the Secretary General, Department of Education under the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act.

(f) Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School may ask that other agencies, e.g. the Health Board or the medical services, be involved once confirmation of an incident has taken place. Counselling/drug testing may be requested for those students suspended under this policy.

(g) An increasing number of pupils are being prescribed a range of medicines that need to be administered during the school day. Parents/guardians should inform their daughter's Class Tutor if their daughter is ill or receiving any medication. Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School cannot accept any responsibility for the administering of such medications.

SECTION FOUR: TRAINING.

- The Board of Management of Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School has a strong commitment to on-going staff development and training. The school will, therefore, make available training to staff in delivering the SPHE programme.
- As the need arises in-service may be provided to all staff in drug related topics.
- The school will continue to offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their CSPE and SPHE classes and other classes.
- As part of the induction process for parents/guardians of First Year students this policy will be examined in detail at the annual First Year Information Meeting held every October.
- On occasion, or as the need arises, the school will provide opportunities for parents to attend information evenings in relation to drugs and the school's policy.

SECTION FIVE: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW.

The Principal of Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School will monitor this policy on an on-going basis. A full evaluation of the policy will be undertaken by the Substance Misuse Policy Working Party at the end of the first full school year following its introduction. If necessary an amended policy document will be prepared. The policy will be reviewed thereafter by the Board of Management as the need arises or in the light of changing information.

SECTION SIX: DISSEMINATION OF THIS POLICY.

Copies of this policy will be included each year in our official homework journal. The policy will also be included as an appendix to the Admission's Policy of Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's code of behaviour. This code of behaviour outlines the school's procedures for suspension and expulsion.